Singin’ in the Night

German Nachtigall with Its Cognates and Delocatival Compounding with “Night” in Proto-Germanic and Proto-Indo-European

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Abstract

Starting from present-day German Nachtigall ‘nightingale’, which shows an uncommon and unexpected i-linker, this article provides a morphological analysis of the word and its cognates. Through the frame of historical linguistics, and in particular the historical phonology and morphology of Proto-Germanic, it can be shown that Nachtigall and its Germanic cognates witness a relic word-formation that can be traced back to a delocatival compound in Proto-Indo-European. Comparative evidence allows for just such an etymology within poetic phraseology as well.

Keywords

nightingale – Proto-Germanic compositional vowel – delocatival word-formation – areal linguistics – Proto-Indo-European poetic language

1 Introduction: A “Weird” i-Linker

The practice of compounding to form words in the Germanic languages is well attested and remains very much alive in most of the current languages. Indeed, present-day Standard German (henceforth only German) in particular shows specific linking elements, such as -s- (Arbeitsplatz ‘working place’), -e- (Badetuch ‘bath towel’), -n- (Deckenleuchte ‘ceiling lamp’), -es- (Tageslicht ‘daylight’), -en- (Präsidentenwahl ‘presidential election’), -er- (Kindergarten), -ens- (Herzenswunsch ‘heart’s desire’). These linkers derive mostly from old
genitive endings, but synchronically not all of them are productive in German, except for -(e)s- and -en-. These, in fact, simply represent just a joining element between the two compound members, conditioned only by the phonetic environment (see Kopf 2018: 100–101 and Schlücker 2012: §3 and 2019: 71n6).

In German, there are – as far as I could find – three compounds which surprisingly and unexpectedly attest -i- as the linking element, namely Nachtigall ‘nightingale’, Bräutigam ‘bridegroom’ and Rüdiger (male personal name), as already noticed in the Grimms’ dictionary (DWB 7: 188). From a synchronic point of view, within German itself, this i-linker is generally considered a regional feature conditioned by its position before phoneme /ɡ/ (Kluge & Seebold 2011: 646). Thus, historically speaking, Wegener (2008: 344) has suggested that the Old High German (henceforth OHG) linking elements -o-, -a- and -i-, originating from their respective noun stems, have been reduced into the sound [ə] (IPA: mid central vowel) and have merged into the wider graphically attested e-linker, whose spelling predominated in Late OHG (see Nübling & Szczepaniak 2013: 70) and also sounded schwa.¹

1.1 The Problems of a Phonological Approach

The phonological approach as described above does not provide any fully convincing explanation. In particular, the change presented in Kluge and Seebold (2011: 646) seems to be a reverse rule based on the samples, rather than a phonological rule. As far as I was able to establish, Kluge and Seebold’s claim appears only in the three words mentioned above (Nachtigall, Bräutigam and Rüdiger), but the scholars do not provide any explanation for the geographical origin of this phonological change nor the clarification of the ‘original’ linking element, which was then modified by preceding /ɡ/. I have been unable to find any similar dialectal sample.

With the aim of finding a reason for this, Kluge and Seebold’s explanation for regional outcomes seems to be attributed to complementary distribution, as named in general linguistics and theoretical phonology (see Hayes 2009: 36–40). Thus, if such a change in German were ascribable to complementary distribution, every German compound with a second element beginning with /ɡ/ would attest <i> as a preceding vowel, because complementary distribution works in the same phonological environment, and paradoxically even in forms such as Cremigel ‘cream-gel’ not †Cremigel (from Creme + Gel), and

¹ Scholarship in German Studies collects these three words together, thus I am researching and studying all of them. However, I personally think that they belong to two different Proto-Germanic and Proto-Indo-European word-formations, after considering the presence or absence of i-mutation. For reasons of coherence, the present article is concerned only with Nachtigall ‘nightingale’, its cognates and original “night”-words; I mark the analysis of Bräutigam ‘bridegroom’ and Rüdiger (male personal name) for further research.
Gemeindegrundsteuer ‘municipal land tax’ not †Gemeindgrundsteuer (from Gemeinde + Grund + Steuer), where their compound members are perfectly recognisable and autonomous. Since complementary distribution does work without exceptions, it is difficult to consider Kluge and Seebold’s claim as a rule or valid explanation.

Then, even Wegener’s (2008: 344) phoneme–grapheme historical explanation for the schwa-sounding linking element in the earliest stages of German does not fit with the three words mentioned (Nachtigall, Bräutigam and Rüdiger). This is because in OHG spilohūs > spilihūs [ə] ‘toy house, theatre’ > German Spielhaus (from Spiel + Haus) ‘toy house’ (compare Nübling & Szczepaniak 2013: 70), this change generally occurs with all schwa-sounding vowels, which drop off in unaccented syllables, as in Middle High German gelicke > German Glück ‘luck, joy, happiness’. As a matter of fact, in German compounds with e-linkers, <e> is pronounced as schwa and both compound members are easily recognisable even separately and prosodically marked or pitched in a more contrastive way, as in Bad[ə]tuch ‘bath towel’, Hund[ə]-hütte ‘(dog) kennel’, hund[ə]müde ‘dog-tired, exhausted’, Pferd[ə]stall ‘(horse) stable’, Schwein[ə]fleisch ‘pork’, Wart[ə]zimmer ‘waiting room’, Maus[ə]falle ‘mouse trap’. On the contrary, the three words, as a starting point of the present investigation, attest a sound [ɪ] (IPA: near-close front unrounded vowel), as in Nacht[ɪ]gall, Bräut[ɪ]gam and Rüd[ɪ]ger. Moreover, the stress is only on the first syllable and the compound elements (most notably, the second one) are synchronically unrecognisable and, inasmuch as they can be recognised, they are not semantically autonomous in the present-day language, nor within a historical and comparative Germanic and Indo-European perspective.

The same complementary distribution seems to appear in German nouns like König ‘king’, Honig ‘honey’ and adjectives ending in -ig, in which the i spelling and pronunciation would be determined by the following /ɡ/, after considering Middle High German forms such as künec, honec and adjectives ending in -ec respectively. In those kinds of samples, Middle High German forms can be considered simple script variants, since from the old to the middle stages there was a tendency to spell <e> what in OHG was <i> (see Braune & Heidermanns 2018: §64).

Moreover, the noun Königin ‘queen’ in Middle High German is spelled both küniginne and küneginne, the latter of which openly contradicts the complementary distribution argument.2 Diachronically speaking, these German

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2 The possible reflection of different or areal utterances is here not denied: it would be interesting to analyse the chronology and geolocalisation of the manuscripts attesting such <ec> spellings, but it of course goes beyond the purposes of the present essay. I thank Luca Panieri (IULM University, Milan) for having brought this issue to my attention (p.c.).
ig-forms attest from the beginning Proto-Germanic nominal suffixes *-inga- (OHG kuning > König) and *-anga- (OHG honag) → *-inga- (Honig, without i-mutation due to the secondary analogical word-formation) from Proto-Indo-European velar suffixes (compare Casaretto 2004: 574–575, Kroonen 2013: 255 and EWA 4: 1125). Thus, such German ig-forms do not belong to the same types of words as Nachtigall, Bräutigam and Rüdiger, in Kluge and Seebold’s frame as presented above.

1.2 A New Morphological Approach
At least two elements can be highlighted that take the issue from the purely phonological level to a morphological (and syntactical) one, and further support etymologising German Nachtigall: (1) the fact that the word is no longer perceived as a compound in present-day language and use, and (2) the absence of the umlauted first compound member. As for the latter issue, since in the history of German phonological changes, umlauted vowels are developed from word-formation issues, such as suffixes or other morphemes, they also belong to morphological changes (compare samples in Cercignani 2022: 49–50).

As for issue (1), noun Nachtigall consists of the composition of German Nacht ‘night’ + OHG galan ‘to sing’, but the second element is no longer alive in current German use. This feature opens up the possibility of operating in terms of comparative and historical morphology in addition to pursuing the purely phonological approach.

2 Nachtigall: the Bird and the Word
Nightingales are small birds of the family of passerines, known for their powerful and melodious voices, the object of metaphors and variously praised and described by poets. Among the three subspecies, the so-called “European” one (Luscinia megarhynchos) is geographically distributed all around western, central and southern Europe: in fact, temperate climates favour nightingales’ own natural habitats (see EEA 2019: 3).

The geographical distribution of the bird species justifies the fact that the Germanic word for “nightingale” is attested only in West Germanic languages. The nightingales’ natural habitat does not include Scandinavia and more northerly areas: thus, the most isolated languages of North Germanic, such as Elfdalian (Övdalian) and Old Gutnish, do not attest this word, as far as I have been able to find.3 The word shows a compound of “night” + and a

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3 Present-day Icelandic næturgali, Faroese náttargali, Norwegian nattergal, Danish nattergal, Swedish näktergal and Gutnish naktagal do not belong to the earlier stages of North
Proto-Germanic verb for “singing”, where the meaning ‘the female singer of the night’ appears quite obvious even synchronically in each language (since *DWB 7:188, see also *EWA 6:777). Different linguistic issues, however, complicate the word-formation in Proto-Germanic (henceforth PGmc), which is synonymous with Proto-West-Germanic in the present case study.

Within the extant West Germanic languages, the distribution of the word “nightingale” appears as follows in Table 1 showing only the earliest attested forms for each language:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Old</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Present-day</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>nectigale, nictigale, n(i)htegale</td>
<td>ni(ʒ)ti(n)gale, (nyghtgale)</td>
<td>nightingale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>/ˈnɔrtɪŋgəl/</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frisian</td>
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<td></td>
<td>West</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(nachte)geal(e)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[ˈnɔxtəɡəl, ˈɡəl]</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>East</td>
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<td></td>
<td>noachtegoal</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>[ˈnɔxtəɡəl]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saxon</td>
<td>nachtigala, nachtagala</td>
<td>nachtegale, nachti(g)al(e), nachtegael</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>nachtegaal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>/ˈnɔxtəxəl/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High German</td>
<td>naht(a)gala, nachtigala</td>
<td>nachtegal, nahtigale, nahtigall</td>
<td>German</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nachtigall</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>/ˈnɔxtəɡəl/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cimbrian</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cimbrian</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>natigalle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1 **English**

During the early period, the word “nightingale” is attested only in glossaries and various linkers can be found in the manuscripts, such as -e-, -a-, -æ- and -i-. The form with no linker, *nyght-gale*, is attested only at a later stage of Middle English and within isolated forms and manuscripts of the 15th century (see [Germanic: they are more recent formations with night: gen.sg + *galan-*, likely based on or borrowed from Middle German (compare Pfeifer 1993: 2.907 and *EWA 6: 777–778), just as Old Icelandic *niktigala* from Old English *nictigale* (Fischer 1909: 183–184; not for this one specifically, but for loanwords in medieval Icelandic, see Tarsi 2022). For these reasons North Germanic samples are excluded from the present investigation.}
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OED³ to: 414). Such a variety in script suggests an original scenario with two possibilities: either (1) graphic mute vowels actually attest the absence of vowels between the two compound members or (2) graphic vowels represent glide insertions sounding as schwa (see Gick 1999: 37–38). Through a comparison within West Germanic, the latter hypothesis appears preferable.

The forms with an i-linker appear different from the others: they are spelled with Latinised orthography, as necti-gale and nicti-gale. The Old English form nictigale has been borrowed into Old Icelandic as niki-gala (see footnote 3 above), because this was probably the cultivated form, attested in Latin–English glossaries arriving in Iceland.

It could be said that, because of the prestige of Latin and the presence of original Latin compounds with nocti- as first member (see §4.3 below), the i-linker in Old English could be due to a process of Latinisation. Although such a scenario is in principle possible, Old English forms nictigale and nectigale show in the first member a clear and “authentic” Germanic and Anglo-Saxon vowel in line with the natural development of the word “night”, thus the i-linker can find a Proto-Germanic explanation (see §3 below).

Then, the so-called i-linker prevailed in the evolution of the English language and had to be clearly pronounced as /ɪ/. Later in Middle English, an intrusive -n- was added to the i-forms (even in Romance loanwords, such as farthingale, colander, messenger), whose intrusion is generally considered a glide (Dobson 1968: 2. §438) and was finally fixed during the standardisation of English spelling in its middle and early modern stages.

2.2 Saxon

As for Saxon and Low Franconian, the earliest spellings in Old Saxon texts show a plurality of linking elements, such as -i-, -a-, -e- or the absence of linkers, the oldest of which are both nachti-gala and nachta-gala (Tiefenbach 2010: 285). In Saxon diachrony, linkers appear way more ‘confused’ in the spelling, leading to the conclusion that already in the earliest period, linkers in “nightingale” were pronounced [ə], including the i-linker (see §3.1 below).

At the middle stages of the languages, there is a sort of “standardisation” of the e-linker, which is the most wide-spread in the manuscripts. In particular, Middle Low German witnesses the forms nachte-gal and nachte-gāl(e), while Early Middle and Middle Dutch the forms nachte-gāle, nachte-gael and nagte-gale (> Afrikaans nagte-gaal). The latter forms are perfectly reflected in the present-day Dutch outcome nachte-gaal, where there is the typical Middle Dutch lengthening of ā in open syllables (see Sytsema & Lahiri 2018 and de Vaan 2017: 431–432), while the spelling -e- for the linking element has been standardised in orthography, because <e> is the grapheme generally used to represent [ə].
2.3 Frisian

There are no attestations for “nightingale” in the oldest and middle stages of Frisian. Present-day West Frisian forms *nachte-ga(e)l* and *ga(e)* and the Hindeloopen variants [næːtəʊɡɔːl] and [nɑkstɑʊɡɔːl] are considered Middle Dutch loanwords (*WFT* s.v. *geal*, *nachtegaal*). This emerges from the disyllabic outcome of West Frisian /1.a/ from Middle Dutch /aː/ (open syllable lengthening) in West Frisian second member -g[1.a]l(e) and the hypocorism g[1.a]l(e), as explained by Arjen Versloot (2012: 109–110, compare de Vaan 2017: 432).

I add among the Dutch loanwords also the East Frisian form *noacht-e-gaol*, as lemmatised by Pyt Kramer (1961), where the written diphthong of East Frisian Low German (which is a geographical name for a Low German language, other than Frisian) can be seen in both compound members. Spelling <oa> is phonetically realised as [ɔː], that might find an explanation within the typical Dutch lengthening in open syllables (see §2.2 above); while vowel harmony might likely explain the unexpected presence of <oa> in the first member. As an alternative explanation, East Frisian *noacht-egoal* could less likely be a Low German borrowing, although it is worth noting that even present-day East Frisian Low German shows a wide influence from Dutch phonology and morphology.4

In principle, from the present-day Frisian words already presented, a Proto-Frisian form with *naxti-* can be imagined, a form developed directly from Proto-Germanic. In fact, from older stages, Frisian original compounds with nacht- ‘night’ do not show any linking element, as in nacht-lamp(k)e ‘night lamp’ (Old Frisian nacht-liāchtene ‘night light’), nacht-rāf ‘night thief’ (Old Frisian nacht-rāf) or nacht-merje ‘nightmare’ (Old Frisian nacht-merie). Thus, in principle, West Frisian nacht-e- and East Frisian noacht-e- could attest an old and unproductive first compound member (see §3 below), later variously grammaticalised. However, there are not sufficient linguistic grounds to support such a hypothesis.

2.4 High German

In High German, the linguistic situation seems close to those of English and reconstructed Frisian (see §2.1 and §2.3 above), but manuscripts show a variety of linking elements as in Saxon (see §2.2 above), such as -i-, -e- and -a-.

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4 The old dictionary of East Frisian (Saterland, in Germany) by ten Doornkaat Koolman (1879–1884: 2.635) and the most recent one by Fort (2015) both lemmatise the form nachtigal, while for North Frisian (Helgoland, in Germany) Eigenhuis (2004 s.v. *geal*, nachtegaal) records the forms nächtigal and nachdigal. All forms sound as German loanwords, because of the i-linker and the short vowel in the second compound member.
or absence of linker: the oldest forms are *naht-gal(a)*, *nahta-gal(a)* and *nahti-gal(a)*, attested in several manuscripts of the same glossary from between the 9th and the 10th century (*AWB* 6: 1017–1018).

According to Braune and Heidermanns (2018: §16), those linking elements might represent a schwa; however, the exception of the *i*-forms has to be considered. In fact, in the middle and early modern stages of German (from the 14th century onwards, see *AWB* 6: 1018), the forms with *i*-linker started prevailing in script and this is likely due to the pronunciation of -*i* as [ɪ] in present-day language, not as [ɔ] (see §1.1 above).

In Middle High German, the bird-name is spelled both equally *nahte-gal* and *nahti-gal* (see Howard & Howard 2019: 459, 468, 632). The former of these can represent a traditional spelling, following the use and wider presence of *e*-linkers in Middle High German manuscripts (see Nübling & Szczepaniak 2013: 70) whereas the latter might represent an actual pronunciation, reflecting an old and, linguistically speaking, historical spelling.

Furthermore, as for Cimbrian, the most southerly and isolated High German language spoken in Veneto (Italy), Schmeller’s dictionary from 1855 (digitalised by Kroonen 2012) records a form *nati-galle* ‘nightingale’, which perfectly continues Middle High German *nahti-gal(l)* and which no longer seems alive in present-day Cimbrian, as studied in the on-going and constantly updated dictionary by Panieri (2014). Old Cimbrian *natigalle* cannot be a loanword from German, like it is in East and North Frisian (see footnote 4 above), but an original Proto-Germanic word-formation and proof of it (see §3.1 below).

In fact, Cimbrian life, isolated as it was from the High German area, meant that Italian and especially the dialects from Veneto and Trento have mostly shown linguistic and cultural influences on Cimbrian, even more so than German (Panieri 2014: 13).

3 The Proto-(West-)Germanic Scenario

With the apparent exception of Saxon (see §3.1 below), West Germanic languages agree on the reconstruction of an original PGmc *nāχti-galō(n)*-, a feminine *n*-stem on verb *galan*– ‘to sing’ as second element (see *EWN* s.v. *nachtsgaal*, where the *i*-linker is not assumed as a locative and the translation ‘night-singer’ follows a synchronically Germanic word-formation).

Within Germanic, the meaning “the female singer of the night” is synchronically valid, because of the genitival first compound member in North Germanic loanwords (see footnote 3 above) and because all West Germanic languages witness the form night: gen.sg as the adverb ‘at night, by night’,
such as Old English nachtes, Old Saxon nahtes, Old Frisian nachtes, OHG nahtes > German nachts (compare also EWA 6: 777 for High German phraseology).

As for the first compound member PGmc *naχti-, I think that this i-linker traces back to a Proto-Indo-European (henceforth PIE) i-locative ending, as a relic word-formation (see §3.2 below), whose meaning is ‘the female singer in the night’ (die Sängerin in der Nacht, see DWB 7: 188) and has to be explained within poetic diction (see §4 below) and a PIE word-formation (see §3.2 below).

3.1 An Areal Feature in West Germanic
The so-called /ɡ/-condition, producing the sound /ɪ/ as claimed by Kluge and Seebold (2011: 646), in my opinion, is not sufficiently grounded on samples or theory (see §1.1 above). As for German Nachtigall and its Germanic cognates, the i-linker might likely show an areal feature concerning West Germanic. The geographical distribution of PGmc *naχti-galō(n)-’nightingale’ in the daughter languages (see Table 1 above) seems to witness an analogical process of leveling, through which all linking elements started being uttered as [ə]. Consequently, old manuscripts attest different spellings and graphic linkers before an orthographic standardisation in each West Germanic language.

This schwa-change of linking elements seems to have originated in a Saxon or Low Franconian area (see §2.2 above), where from the beginning there is a plurality of linkers that witness an early utterance change. This Saxon innovation spread throughout the whole of West Germanic, but prevailed in middle stages, until surviving only in present-day Dutch and, consequently, Frisian. On the contrary, peripheral areas of this innovation, such as High German and English, were touched in the earliest stages, albeit not so strongly as to show a fixation of it: in fact, present-day stages of the languages attest the original i-spelling, phonemically sounding /ɪ/. Isolated Old Cimbrian natigalle (see §2.4 above) might be proof of the original PGmc word-formation with the i-linker (actually, PIE i-locative), which remained untouched by the “schwa innovation” from the Saxon area, as already described within areal linguistics.

3.2 A Relic Delocatival Compound in Proto-Germanic
Decasative derivation has been a long-lasting problematic issue within Proto-Indo-European reconstruction. Nowadays, it has been mainly criticised for its lack of naturalness from a typological viewpoint (see Fortson 2020: 50–57), although Indo European languages do witness some secure decasative derivatives, such as Classical Armenian arambi ‘married woman’, which is a feminine *o-stem on aramb man: instr.sg (from ayr) with an original meaning
*the woman with a man’ (see Fortson 2020: 73–75 for a wider discussion and more samples).

There is much agreement among scholars on decasative compounding, in particular, within diachronic morphology and mutations. Languages do attest phrases of a previous stage that have become compounds in later stages, such as Latin terrae motus (earth: gen.sg; motion: nom.sg) ‘tremor of the earth’ > Italian terremoto (N) ‘earthquake’, not perceived as an original compound, but consisting of an analogical basis for maremoto (N) ‘seaquake, tsunami’; or Latin obstinātā mente (persist: ptcp.pf.abl.f.sg; mind: abl.(f.)sg, in Catullus 8.11) ‘with a resolute mind’ > Italian ostinatamente (Adv) ‘obstinately’, which still productively makes modal adverbs, with an Italian word-formation, synchronically describable as Adv: f.sg -mente. Such compounds are named “phrasal univerbations” (Lehmann 2020: 214–220) and from a diachronic point of view univerbated phrases become new words, variously metaphorised during language evolutions.

As far as PGmc *nahti-galō(n)- is concerned, the original phrase expressed in Grimms’ words (DWB 7: 188) as die Sängerin in der Nacht ‘the female singer in the night’ has been univerbated into a new word and metaphorised into ‘nightingale’ (compare Lehmann 2020: 246).

4 Comparative Evidence in Proto-Indo-European

Such formations are known in ancient Indo-European poetries and poetic languages (for delocatival derivation, compare the survey in Nikolaev 2009: 465–479 and Muscianisi 2020: 237–238 for PIE “right”). I present here only compounds with “night” as first member, such as Greek nukti- and Indo-Aryan *naktán-, which are closer to the Germanic scenario even synchronically (on PIE “night”, see Morani 2012). It is noteworthy that, both in first-millenium Greek and Proto-Germanic, case syncretism does allow an ambiguous

5 Italian maremoto technically is a juxtaposition of Italian mare ‘sea’ + Italian moto ‘tremor’, in fact Latin mare is not inflected as in Latin maris stella (sea:gen.sg; star:nom.sg) ‘star of the sea’ (epithet of Virgin Mary) > Italian Maristella, Stellamaris (female personal names).

6 I am aware that the topic of this section could be considered a bit far from the interests of this journal’s readership. However, I think that the insertion of Proto-Germanic delocatival word-formation within a Proto-Indo-European framework is relevant even for Germanic philologists for a broader linguistic point of view on the topic. In fact, decasative morphology is clear and somehow unproblematic in each Indo-European branch, but, in this section, I aim at contributing to the description of this process as an original and inherited word-formation.
interpretation, after PIE locative *-i morphologically merges into dative *-i in both daughter languages (see Kloekhorst 2018: 189–192). Furthermore, as for Indic material, the Proto-Indo-Aryan paradigm *nakt- ‘night’ witnesses an internal process of leveling, thus delocatival compounding might be a plausible hypothesis. Then, the comparison of Greek and Indo-Aryan reveals that both branches attest the same compound with the same PIE etymology. This cannot be neglected. Finally, Latin phraselogy will show the clearest sample of original locative.

4.1 Greek
There are some compounds in Greek poetry that lexicographers explain with a locative meaning. Hesychius attests this pair of words, namely nuktí-bios (Adj) ‘feeding by night’ and nuktí-lókhos (N) ‘thief’:

\[
\text{nuktíbios}· \text{ό ἐν νυκτὶ ὡς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ διάγων. τοιαῦτα δὲ τὰ θηρία καὶ τὰ πλεῖω τῶν πτηνῶν.}
\]

hesychius ν 699

\[
nuktíbios (\text{nom.sg}): \text{the one who lives at night [en nuktí] as during the day [en hēmérāi]. So are the wild beasts and the majority of birds.}
\]

hesychius ν 704

\[
nuktílókhous (\text{acc.pl}): \text{those who lie in wait at night [nuktí]. Or thieves.}
\]

In two choral passages of Attic tragedy, there is twice nuktí-pólos (Adj) ‘wandering at night’:

\[
\text{[the mountain, w]here Dionysos quickly walks holding the twin-fired torches together with the Bacchants who wander in the night}
\]
O Ennodia, daughter of Demeter, (you) who lead the night-wandering assaults [= ghosts, nuktipólōn ephódōn], direct the content of the death-giving cups even during the day.

Like in Hesychius ν 699 en nukti ‘by night’ and en hēmérāi ‘by day’, Euripides makes the same opposition between “night” and “day” using locative constructions, such as nukti-pólōs (verse 1049) ‘wandering at night’ (from PIE i-locative + Greek verb pélomai ‘to bestir, move’) and adjective meth-āmérios (verse 1050) ‘day-time’ (Doric spelling, from Greek metá ‘(with)in’ + hēméra ‘day’). Within the same Dionysiac cult of performing mysteries and rituals, Hjalmar Frisk (GEW 2: 327) convincingly explains nuktélios (epithet of Dionysos) as a haplogamy of *nukti-telio- after Hesychius ν 694 νυκτελεῖν· ἐν νυκτί τελεῖν ‘to perform at night [en nukti]’, where again the explanation consists of a locative phrase.

4.2 Indo-Aryan

In Proto-Indo-Aryan, the word “night” has been newly grammaticalised with a regular paradigm *nakt-. In the R̥gveda (10.93.5a), there is náktam (Adv) ‘by night’, also attested in Middle Indo-Aryan (Pāḷi) nattam, morphologically witnessing an ACC.SG of *nakt-a- ‘night’, but it is used as an adverb with the locative meaning ‘in the night’:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{útà} & \text{ no náktam apām vrṣaṇ_vasū,} \\
\text{PTCL we:ACC night:ADV water:GEN.PL rich_good:VOC.DU} \\
\text{sūryā_māsā sádanāya sadhanỳā} \\
\text{sun_moon:NOM.DU seat:DAT.SG comrade:NOM.DU}
\end{align*}
\]

RV 10.93.5a

Thus, O both possessors of wealth [= the Aśvins], the Sun and the Moon are in the night [náktam] comrades for us to the abode of the waters.

After considering the meaning “in the night”, Old Indo-Aryan náktam can reflect an older *naktán, endless locative of a hysterodynamic (or amphikinetic) n-stem, which is likely a relic in INSTR.PL naktábhiḥ < *naktń-bʰis (hapax, RV 7.104.18c), as suggested by Émile Benveniste (1935: 10; for a different opinion, see EWAia 2: 3).

Arguments contrasting Benveniste’s hypothesis are, in particular, the accent in náktam and the wrong distribution of ablaut in *naktń(-bʰis), which does not reflect the hysterodynamic locative type *CC-éC-(i). As for the placement of accent, Proto-Indo-Aryan has grammaticalised PIE “night” with a static a-stem, then the accent takes its regular place on the root, just like the regularisation of root accent in the originally hysterodynamic n-stem paradigm for
rájan- ‘king’ with NOM.SG rájā ("CéC-ōn-Ø), GEN.SG rájñāḥ ("CC-n-ós), LOC. SG rájan(i) ("CC-ón-(i)), where the paradigm ablaut witnesses some alterations as well. Thus, endingless locative "CC-ón-Ø might plausibly be represented by náktam, according to Indo-Aryan language evolution and grammaticalisation.

Finally, classical Sanskrit witnesses the compound naktam-cara- ‘nocturnal demon (rākṣasa)’, attested even in Prakrit nattaṃ-cara- (see EW Aia 2: 3, 12). After the semantic and morphological comparison with Greek nukti-pólōs (Adj) ‘wandering [pél-ōmai ‘to move’ < PIE *kʷel- ‘to turn (around)’] in the night [LOC=DAT.SG nuktí], these Indic compounds can have a literal meaning as ‘the one who wanders [√car ‘to move’ < PIE *kʷel- ‘to turn (around)’] in the night [LOC.SG *naktán]’, later metaphorised as ‘demon’ (see §4.1 above).

4.3 Latin
In Latin, ADV nox (Lex XII+), ADV noctū (Naev.+), ABL.SG nocte (Cato+) and DAT.SG nocti (Cic.+) have all an adverbial meaning ‘by night’. Some scholars have tried to interpret nox and noctū as relic locatives (see Nishimura 2022: 142–143 and de Vaan 2008: 416–417 for the most recent literature). Although such an interpretation is conceivable, they do not take into account all the material together, in particular Latin nocti-compounds. A clear ū-locative, metrically assured as short, can be found in Noctī-lūca (epi-

the of Diana/Luna), attested in Horace and phraseologically explained by Varro:

rite Latonae puerum canentes,
rite crescentem face Noctilucam,
prosperam frugum celeremque pronos
ouluere menses.

HORACE Odes 4.6.37–40 (Sapphic stanza)

[boys and girls, w]ho celebrate the son of Latona according to the rite (and) according to the rite (they celebrate) Noctiluca [= Diana] who increases with the light [= crescent moon], favourable to the crops, quick in rolling the remissive months.

The Sapphic eleven-syllable verse has the following fixed metrical scan-
sion: − ⏑ − ⏓ − ⏑ ⏑ − ⏑ − −. In verse 38, the last four syllables are occupied by Noc.tī.lū.cam, whose short ū in light syllable is assured without further possibilities. It can be objected that, after Latin nox ‘night’ has been internally grammaticalised as an i-stem (GEN.PL noctium), the first member Nocti- could represent the original thematic vowel. However, Varro’s and Plautus’ phrase-
ologies lead to the conclusion that nocti- is a locative:
Luna, uel quod sola lucet noctu. itaque ea dicta Noctiluca in Palatio: nam ibi noctu lucet templum. hanc ut Solem Apollinem quidam Dianam uocant.

VARRO De lingua Latina 5.68

Luna [= goddess Moon], because she solely brights at night. Thus, she is named Noctiluca on the Palatine Hill, because she lights up the temple at night [noctū lūcet]. Some people call her Diana just like (they call) the Sun Apollo.

Diana’s epithet Noctilūca is explained by the antiquarian as noctū lūcet [night: ADV(.LOC); light: 3SG.PRS], where Latin noct-ū (Adv) ‘at night’ is a locative analogical formation after di-ū (Adv) ‘at daytime’ (see Weiss 2020: 270–271 and, for the interface between PIE instrumental and locative, see Kloekhorst 2018: 194). Likely on the basis of Diana Noctilūca, Plautus in a night-time brothel scene makes the cunning slave (seruus callidus, the trickster character) invoke Venu’ noctιuigīla “O Venus, (you) who are awake in the night!” (Curculio 196).

The two epithets are morphologically formed exactly in the same way: noctū-ui-gīl-a as night: ADV(.LOC) + be awake: VERB + FMNZ, and Nocti-lūc-a as night: LOC.SG + light: VERB + FMNZ. Plautus’ choice for ADV noctū instead of LOC.SG nocti- seems due to the clarity of noctū for the audience who had to immediately understand the neologism and hapax, created for comic purposes.

There are, moreover, other compounds with notci- as first member (see the samples in WH 2: 182 which suggested the comparison with Greek *nukti- without explaining them as relic locatives),7 such as nocti-uāgus (Adj) ‘wandering by night’ (Lucr.+), which is the most attested among the authors and is explained by Quintilian with a locative phrase:

iamiam non inquietis noctibus uagus [...] expecto.

(PSEUDO-)QUINTILIAN Declamationes maiores 15.7.9

At this point, I don’t wait wandering in restless nights.

Then, the following ancient grammatical note shows again a locative phrase:

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7 For the purpose of clarity reasons and fitting the aims of the present article and the journal’s readership, I cite here only Noctilūca and noctiuagus, but for all of Latin notci-compounds I have found phraseologies explaining them with locative phrases. The only exception consists of Noctifer (hapax, Catullus 62.7) ‘Night-bringer’ (epithet of star Vesper) which can be explained through analogy with lūcifer ‘light-bearing’ and signifer ‘standard-bearer’, because its poetic phraseology shows a genitive phrase (Seneca Medea 878 and Phaedra 750).
et “caelo concesserat” pro “in caelo” et deest “nocti” “noctiuago”.

SERVIUS’ commentary to Vergil Aeneid 10.215–216

(In the phrase) caelo concesserat [= (the Moon) retired in the sky] (caelo) stands for in caelo [= in the sky], but there is the absence of nocti [= in the night] (in the phrase) noctiuago.

It is noteworthy that Latin nocti-uagus (Adj) ‘wandering at night’ has the same meaning and locative first compound member as Greek nukti-pólos (Adj) ‘night-wandering’ and Sanskrit naktam-cara- (N) ‘nocturnal demon’ (see §4.2 above).

5 Conclusions

In the article, I have shown both synchronically and diachronically the scenario for the German word Nachtigall ‘nightingale’ and its cognates, distributed only in West Germanic (§2), attempting to analyse what is generally considered an unconventional German(ic) word-formation (§1). Nightingales’ migrations have touched different areas of research, such as the phonology of Germanic and morphology of Proto-Germanic, back to Proto-Indo-European.

As for the phonology of Germanic languages, only on the basis of the Germanic word for “nightingale”, I have hypothesised a possible Saxon origin for the change of vocalic linking elements into [ə], which spread throughout the West Germanic areas. The “schwa”-change was fixed in originally Saxon geographic areas: in fact, it is still alive in present-day Dutch and Frisian (§3.1). However, it has been lost in lateral and peripheral areas, where old Cimbrian natigalle, present-day German Nachtigall and English nightingale do witness a “weird” and unexpected compositional vowel -i-, phonemically representing /ɪ/.

After the phonological change of pronouncing all linkers as [ə] was localised in Saxon countries, the investigation moved to the morphological layer. Thus, I have reconstructed a Proto-Germanic form *naχti-galō(n)- with the original meaning *‘the female singer in the night’ → ‘nightingale’, because *naχt-i- reveals a relic i-locative from Proto-Indo-European (§3.2).

Indo-European poetic diction and phraseology show that the lexeme “night” as the first compound member comparatively witnesses delocatival compounds with the same structure and metaphorising processes of Proto-Germanic even in other branches (§4), namely Greek (nukti-pólos ‘wandering at night’), Indo-Aryan (naktam-cara- *‘wandering at night’ → ‘demon’)
and Latin *Nocti-lūca* (Diana/Luna) who lights up in the night’). Finally, both Greek and Indo-Aryan compounds cited share the same word-formation and *Dichtersprache* (§4.2) with PIE night: LOC.SG + PIE *kʷel-* ‘to turn (around)’, partially matching with Latin *nocti-uagus* ‘wandering at night’ (§4.3), in particular with the first member witnessing a locative as in Greek and Indo-Aryan.

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