THE LARK ASCENDING: *CORYDON, CORYDON* (VERGIL, *ECL.* 7.70)

At the end of the singing contest of Thyrsis and Corydon in the seventh *Eclogue*, the narrator Meliboeus summarizes its result in the poem's last lines (69–70):

> haec memini, et victum frustra contendere Thyrsim:
> ex illo Corydon Corydon est tempore nobis.

As many have observed, this conclusion plainly echoes the similar summary of the singing contest between Daphnis and Menalcas at the end of Theocritus *Id.* 8 (8.92): κἠκ τούτω πρᾶτος παρὰ ποιμέσι Δάφνις ἔγεντο, 'and from that day Daphnis was first amongst the herdsmen'. Commentators have debated the meaning of the repetition of the name at *Ecl.* 7.70, generally favouring one of two interpretations. The first interpretation is ably summarized by T. E. Page: 'a peculiar way of saying "Corydon is peerless in our judgement", the name Corydon being substituted for an adj. expressing unrivalled merit'.[1] This has some virtue in having roughly the same sense as the Theocritean model, and in seeing that the second 'Corydon' is most obviously interpreted as predicative, but fails to explain the particular emphasis on the name which the repetition imparts; there is no other evidence in the *Eclogues* or elsewhere that 'Corydon' is synonymous with 'supreme singer', and in the only other poem where Corydon's singing appears it is described as *incondita*, 'unpolished' (2.4, admittedly at a point when the singer is distressed and perhaps not as competent as usual). The second is implicit in the translation of R. D. Williams: 'ever since then it's Corydon, Corydon for us', i.e. 'all we have heard since then is "Corydon, Corydon" '.[2] The name of the victor is repeated to celebrate the victory. This again seems difficult to parallel, even though Greek and Roman victory exclamations generally feature iteration of various terms.[3] Thus neither interpretation seems satisfactory: indeed, a recent scholar has suggested emendation as a solution, removing the first *Corydon* and conjecturing *primus Corydon* to match πρᾶτος in Theocritus.[4]

I should here like to propose a new interpretation which allows full weight to the proper name and explains its repetition. The name 'Corydon', like a number of the names in the *Eclogues*,[5] is a 'speaking name' with an obvious sense in Greek. κορύδων in Greek means 'lark' (though as often in ancient ornithology there is some controversy amongst experts as to precisely which bird is meant[6]): that form of the name is found only at Aristotle, *Hist. An.* 609 a 7, but the commoner form, κόρυδος, is

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[1] T. E. Page, *P. Vergili Maronis Bucolica et Georgica* (London, 1898), p. 155; this view is that adopted by W. Clausen, *Virgil:* Eclogues (Oxford, 1994), p. 232. Callimachus *Ep.* 51.8 Pf., ἇς ἄτερ οὐδ' αὐταὶ ταὶ Χάριτες Χάριτες, 'without whom not even the Graces are Graces', adduced by Jeffrey Wills, *Repetition in Latin Poetry. Figures of Allusion* (Oxford, 1997), p. 53, would be syntactically similar, but of course the Graces are unlike Corydon in being already quasi-proverbially supreme in their own field. My interpretation clearly matches this one in regarding the second 'Corydon' as predicative.

[2] R. D. Williams, *Virgil. The* Eclogues *and* Georgics (London, 1979), p. 121; this view is also that adopted by Robert Coleman, *Vergil:* Eclogues (Cambridge, 1977), p. 225.

[3] Cf. Wills, op. cit. (n. 1), pp. 58–60.

[4] S. J. Heyworth, *PCPS* n.s. 30 (1984), 73.

[5] Cf. J. J. O'Hara, *True Names. Vergil and The Alexandrian Tradition of Etymological Wordplay* (Ann Arbor, 1996), pp. 243–52, recording Greek etymological plays on the names *Alexis* at *Ecl.* 2.6, *Scyllam* at 6.74, *Daphnide* at 8.83, and *Hylax* at 8.107.

[6] For ornithological discussion see D'Arcy W. Thompson, *A Glossary of Greek Birds*[2] (Oxford, 1936), pp. 164–8, and F. Capponi, *Ornithologia Latina* (Genoa, 1979), pp. 47–50.

found in Aristophanes and more particularly at Theocritus, *Id.* 7.141: ἄειδον κόρυδοι καὶ ἀκανθίδες, ἔστενε τρυγών, 'larks and finches sang, the dove moaned', a source which would naturally be familiar to Vergil. Though the song of the κόρυδος is not universally admired in antiquity,[7] this Theocritean context is plainly a *locus amoenus*, and the song of the various creatures is intended to be pleasant rather than the opposite. Corydon, then, has the name of a Greek bird which in at least some contexts is seen as a pleasant songbird. This is what explains the repetition of that name: 'since that time Corydon (The Lark) has been the lark for us', i.e. Corydon has lived up to his name by his acknowledged expertise in singing.

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[7] For adverse verdicts cf. *A.P.* 9.380, 11.195; for a positive verdict cf. Marcellus, *De Medicamentis* 29.30 *corydallus avis... quae animos hominum dulcedine vocis oblectat.*

TWO ADYNATA IN HORACE, *EPODE* 16

In connexion with line 34, 'ametque salsa levis hircus aequora', commentators[1] rightly cite Archilochus, fr. 122.6–9 West, μηδεὶς ἔθ' ὑμέων εἰσορέων θαυμαζέτω | μηδ' ἐὰν δελφῖσι θῆρες ἀνταμείψωνται νομόν | ἐνάλιον, καί σφιν θαλάσσης ἠχέεντα κύματα | φίλτερ' ἠπείρου γένηται, τοῖσι δ' ὑλέειν ὄρος. 'Ametque' could pick up φίλτερ'. But Archilochus does not specify what kind of land creature he has in mind, and a much closer parallel to Horace's adynaton elsewhere in Greek poetry may have escaped attention:

ὅπου τράγος ἁλμυρὸν οἶδμα
ἀμφαγαπᾶι τέγγων ἄκρον πολιοῖο γενείου.

Horace had good reason to know these lines (quoted by Diodorus Siculus 8.21) since they come from the foundation oracle of one of his favourite places, Tarentum,[2] delivered to the founder Phalanthus[3] whom Horace mentions in *Odes* 2.6.11–12, 'regnata petam Laconi | rura Phalantho'. It is a regular feature of such oracles that, however absurd and impossible they may seem, they will be fulfilled in a quite unexpected way. As Carol Dougherty writes[4] of the Tarentum oracle, 'The practically impossible, namely a goat that loves salt water, becomes possible when we recognize that, in this instance, τράγος does not mean a goat, but functions as a metaphor[5] for the wild fig tree whose silvery branches dip into the stream.' We are told, in connexion with the related oracle given to Aristomenes,[6] that among the Messenians τράγος = ἐρινεός, the wild fig.[7]

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[1] Including David Mankin (Cambridge, 1995), p. 259.
[2] Besides *Odes* 2.6.11–12 (quoted below), cf. *Odes* 3.5.56, *Sat.* 1.6.105.
[3] See H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* (Oxford, 1956), I, pp. 72–3 and II, pp. 20–1 (nos. 46 and 47), J. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle* (Berkeley etc., 1978), p. 280 (Q34), and, for more on Phalanthus, D. Ogden, *The Crooked Kings of Ancient Greece* (London, 1997), pp. 51, 73–80. Compare the similar oracle given to the Messenian Aristomenes (Parke and Wormell, II, p. 148, no. 366; Fontenrose, p. 275, Q20).
[4] *The Poetics of Colonization* (New York and Oxford, 1993), p. 50.
[5] At this point Dougherty (p. 50, n. 24) refers to L. Maurizio, *Delphic Narratives: Recontextualizing the Pythia and her Prophecies* (Diss., Princeton, 1992).
[6] N. 3 above (from Pausanias 4.20.1–2, cf. Dion. Hal. 19 fr. 1, Suid. τ 897 Adler s.v. τράγος).
[7] LSJ s.v. τράγος V.