

found in Aristophanes and more particularly at Theocritus, *Id.* 7.141: ἄειδον κόρυδοι καὶ ἀκανθίδες, ἔστενε τρυγῶν, '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,<sup>7</sup> 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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<sup>7</sup> 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<sup>1</sup> rightly cite Archilochus, fr. 122.6–9 West, μηδεῖς ἔθ' ὑμέων εἰσορέων θαυμαζέτω | μηδ' ἐὰν δελφίσι θήρες ἀνταμείψωνται νομόν | ἐνάλιον, καὶ σφιν θαλάσσης ἡχέεντα κύματα | φίλτερ' ἡπείρου 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:

ὄπον τράγος ἄλμυρόν οἶσμα  
ἀμφαγαπαὶ 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,<sup>2</sup> delivered to the founder Phalanthus<sup>3</sup> 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<sup>4</sup> 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<sup>5</sup> for the wild fig tree whose silvery branches dip into the stream.' We are told, in connexion with the related oracle given to Aristomenes,<sup>6</sup> that among the Messenians τράγος = ἐριβεός, the wild fig.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Including David Mankin (Cambridge, 1995), p. 259.

<sup>2</sup> Besides *Odes* 2.6.11–12 (quoted below), cf. *Odes* 3.5.56, *Sat.* 1.6.105.

<sup>3</sup> 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).

<sup>4</sup> *The Poetics of Colonization* (New York and Oxford, 1993), p. 50.

<sup>5</sup> At this point Dougherty (p. 50, n. 24) refers to L. Maurizio, *Delphic Narratives: Recontextualizing the Pythia and her Prophecies* (Diss., Princeton, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> N. 3 above (from Pausanias 4.20.1–2, cf. Dion. Hal. 19 fr. 1, Suid. τ 897 Adler s.v. τράγος).

<sup>7</sup> LSJ s.v. τράγος V.

Is there any hint of this in Horace? Certainly *hircus* in Latin does not denote any kind of fig tree.<sup>8</sup> But Horace sometimes clearly expects his readers simultaneously to be aware of a Greek usage. We must also attend to the epithet 'levis', which alone does not have a counterpart in the Greek oracle. A 'levis hircus' would be a contradiction in terms, since *hircus* was popularly connected with *hirtus* and *hirsutus*;<sup>9</sup> likewise in Greek *τράγος* with *τραχύς*.<sup>10</sup> So there is a double adynaton in the one line: 'the goat would exchange its normal shagginess for the "smooth" skin of a fish or dolphin' (Mankin).<sup>11</sup> But in oracle-speak a 'levis hircus' may not be a *hircus* at all, just as a 'wooden dog' is not a dog but the dog-briar (*κυνόσαυρον*).<sup>12</sup> 'Levis' could suit a tree with smooth bark, as we see from Pliny, *N.H.* 16.126, 'cortex aliis tenuis . . . aliis *levis*, ut malo, *fico*'. Among the multiplicity of meanings possible for Horace's 'amet', which include 'hug' (closest to the Greek *ἀμφαγαπᾶν*), 'caress', 'keep close to',<sup>13</sup> and 'like' (of food or drink),<sup>14</sup> *OLD* has a special heading (11b) for the application to plants, of a congenial environment (e.g. Virgil, *Georgics* 4.124, 'amantis litora myrtos'). So perhaps Horace shows himself aware of the Greek oracle in which a goat was not a goat.<sup>15</sup> Not the least of many paradoxes in this poem is that the portent which indicated a new home for Phalanthus and his colonists has become for the Romans the vain hope of eventual return to their original dwelling place.

Consider now the opening adynaton of the series (25–6):

sed iuremus in haec: simul imis saxa renarint  
vadis levata, ne redire sit nefas.

In *CQ* n.s. 27 (1977), 356, Margaret Hubbard voiced a very natural reaction: 'I suppose that we have all at some time been puzzled by Horace's substitution of boulders for the iron mass that the Phocaeans threw into the sea when they took their oath . . . Why did Horace write *saxa*<sup>16</sup> when Herodotus [1.165] had presented him with a *μύδρος σιδήρεος*?' She suggests that Horace may have relied on Callimachus (fr. 388.9–10), who does not say that the *μύδρος* was made of iron. It is hard to believe that Horace was unaware of Herodotus. But the problem remains—and one may ask<sup>17</sup> whether the *saxa* were deliberately thrown into the sea (as *renarint*

<sup>8</sup> Though *τράγος* and *hircus* do share one unobvious meaning, in that both can refer to a kind of comet (LSJ *τράγος* VIII, *OLD hircus* 3 (dub.)).

<sup>9</sup> R. Maitby, *A Lexicon of Ancient Latin Etymologies* (Leeds, 1991), p. 279.

<sup>10</sup> Suid. τ 897 Adler *τράγος*: παρὰ τὸ τραχὺ δέρμα ἔχειν, *τράχος τις ὢν*.

<sup>11</sup> (N. 1 above), pp. 159–60. Similarly in line 28, 'Padus Matina laverit cacumina', it is doubly impossible that the low-lying river of the North should wash the hills of the South (Nisbet, per litteras). See also Mankin on line 32.

<sup>12</sup> Dougherty (n. 4 above), p. 49, from Plutarch, *Mor.* 294e–f (cf. Ogden [n. 3 above], p. 81). In the oracle given to Deucalion and Pyrrha, 'ossaue post tergum magnae iactate parentis' (Ovid, *Met.* 1.383), the pair should have taken a hint from 'magnae' that the goddess was not speaking of their actual mothers.

<sup>13</sup> These three from *OLD amo* 4.

<sup>14</sup> This might suit the image of the *τράγος* drinking the water, as in the Aristomenes oracle (Pausanias 4.20.1; cf. nn. 3 and 6 above).

<sup>15</sup> Professor Nisbet, however, wonders whether Horace knew a fuller form of the oracle in which *λεῖος τράγος* referred to the smooth-barked fig-tree; he saw the oxymoron but not the meaning of *τράγος*, and so produced another sort of adynaton, one which made no pointer to a particular place.

<sup>16</sup> Professor Nisbet was moved to consider emendation 'simul imis *massa* renarint' (Porphyrio actually cites the verb in the singular) but adds that this is perhaps too abrupt, since nothing has been said about dropping weights in the sea.

<sup>17</sup> With Mankin (n. 1 above), p. 257.

seems to imply), or whether they had always been there.

I would like to suggest that at this point Horace has left behind the example of the Phocaeans, and that he is directing the minds of his more learned readers to an incident which allegedly happened in primitive Italy: *saxa* which had been thrown into the sea did indeed miraculously resurface. The context is relevant to the Sixteenth Epode, since it is a question of reclaiming lost territory. And (once more) Horace had reason to know the story, since this time it concerned his native region, the land of Daunus.<sup>18</sup> When Diomedes came to Italy, he gave Daunus military help, in return for a promise of land (which Daunus broke). In order to establish his claim, Diomedes marked the boundaries with stones taken from the demolished walls of Troy. After Diomedes' death Daunus threw the stones into the sea, but they miraculously resurfaced and took up their former positions. All of this can be found in Lycophron's *Alexandra* (615ff.), a suitable source for this Epode in which Horace speaks as a *vates* (line 66). I quote *Alexandra* 625–9:

στήλαις δ' ἀκινήτοιςιν ὀχμάσει πέδον,  
 ᾧς οὔτις ἀνδρῶν ἐκ βίας καυχήσεται  
 μετοχλίσας ὀλίζον. ἧ γὰρ ἀπτέρως  
 αὐταὶ παλιμπόρευτον ἴζονται βάσιν  
 ἀνδρῶν ἀπέξοις ἴχνεσιν δατούμεναι.

The scholiast on 625 explains<sup>19</sup> τοῦ Διομήδους στήλας ποιήσαντος περὶ ὅλον τὸ πέδιον, ἡνίκα ἀπέθανε, Δαῦνος ἐβουλήθη ταύτας καταποντίσαι, αἱ δὲ ῥιφείσαι πάλιν ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος ἀνήλθον καὶ εὐρέθησαν ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ τόπῳ ἐστηκυῖαι, ὅθεν καὶ ἐπήρθησαν.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Compare *Odes* 3.30.11–12, 'et qua pauper aquae Daunus agrestium | regnavit populorum', and Nisbet and Hubbard on *Odes* 1.22.14 'Daunias' ('Horace is speaking of the northern part of Apulia, which included his native Venusia').

<sup>19</sup> Vol. III, p. 210, ed. E. Scheer (Berlin, 1858).

<sup>20</sup> I am grateful to Professor R. G. M. Nisbet for comments on an earlier draft of this article.

#### AENEID 4.622–3

tum vos, o Tyrii, stirpem et genus omne futurum  
 exercete odiis

R. G. Austin's translation of these famous imprecations of Dido's seems to me perfectly representative, 'and then do you, my Tyrians, hound with hate and hate again all his stock and all his race to be'.<sup>1</sup> I see no strong arguments against such an interpretation of this sentence, but I think that an alternative—and very different—understanding of these words is likely.<sup>2</sup>

*stirpem et genus omne futurum* need not refer to the descendants of Aeneas. The

<sup>1</sup> In his commentary *ad loc.* (Oxford, 1963).

<sup>2</sup> In support of the traditional view, one may note that in antiquity curses commonly 'invoked destruction not just upon a transgressor, but upon his whole γένος "family" as well' (L. Watson, *ARAE: The Curse Poetry of Antiquity* [Leeds, 1991], p. 33).