The Myth of Alcyone

GERALD K. GRESSETH
UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

The essentials of the myth of Alcyone as reported in the handbooks of mythology are:

> Alcyone married Ceyx, son of the Morning Star, and they were changed into birds, she into a halcyon, he into another sea-fowl called *keyx*, because of their impiety (they called themselves Zeus and Hera) or because he was drowned at sea and she mourned for him so piteously that the gods released her[1].

The sources of this story are Apollodorus 1.7.4 and Ovid, *Met.* 11.270–748. The two sources, however, are not exactly alike. Besides the considerable elaboration of the story in Ovid, which has little to do with the essential myth, we find the couple in Apollodorus changed into different birds, of which transformation there is no hint in Ovid. The aetiologies, too, are different: jealousy in Apollodorus, pity in Ovid. Further, Zeus is the agent in Apollodorus while it is the gods in general in Ovid. These variances are not very important, but they do show that the transformation or bird form came first and the explanations later in the development of the tale. The most striking difference between the two accounts, though, is the pendant to the Ovidian story, completely ignored by Apollodorus; this is the tradition that during the winter solstice the hen halcyon builds her nest on the sea and that her father Aeolus then stills the wind and sea for his grandsons (*praestat nepotibus aequor*, *Met.* 11.748).

The myth has a certain surface simplicity to it; it is usually classed under A2260, Animal characteristics from transformation,[2] alluding to the mournful cry of the halcyon (*polythrênos kai polydakros*, Lucian, *Alcyon* 1). Such transformation stories, as a general type, are very common, especially of lovers. All

[1] H. J. Rose, *Handbook of Greek Mythology* (London 1950) 257–58.

[2] Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*[2] (Bloomington 1955–58), hereafter cited as **Index**.

this does not accord well with the mode of the halcyon's nesting at sea (quite unzoological, of course), the time of year, and the evident concern for the hatching of the eggs. What has all this to do with a love story? The myth is really quite complex and presents many difficult and unsolved problems. "It is," as Norman Douglas says,[3] "a puzzling chapter in birdlore."

The first point to make in solving it is that we have two myths here and not one, and that the second part of the story, a quite different myth, is heavily overlaid with other folklore elements. As we saw from Ovid's account, the story falls into two parts which have little to do with each other. Now the first part, the love story and metamorphosis, presents no difficult problem; there are numerous parallels to this type.[4] It grew doubtless from a simpler form. It is the second part, the halcyon days and the nesting at sea, that presents all the real problems. As D'Arcy Thomson says,[5] "The myth of the halcyon days is unexplained;" and that includes his explanation, I believe.

It may help to see how some parts of the whole story were formed if we run through in chronological sequence some of the more important sources of our tale. The oldest evidence is that of Homer and Hesiod. In *Iliad* 9.434–605, in the context of Phoenix' advice and warning to Achilles, there is a series of mythological references built up in the manner of Chinese boxes: within the tale of Meleager and his wife, Cleopatra, reference is made to her mother, Marpessa, and the famous story of Idas and Apollo; and, within this reference, lines 561–64 read literally:

> In their palace did the mother and father name her (561, τὴν δὲ) Alcyone since her mother, suffering the fate of the grieving alcyon bird, wept because Apollo had taken her away.

The passage is not without its own difficulties. I have intentionally left the ambiguity of the pronominal reference in the Greek.

[3] Norman Douglas, *Birds and Beasts of the Greek Anthology* (London 1928) 109.

[4] For the general type see *Index* A2260 ff., A2270 ff., D100–D199. Such transformation stories form a considerable part of Greek mythology and literature: Io and Callisto are obvious examples of animal transformation, Clytie and Daphne of the transformation to flowers and trees. Love is a frequent literary aetiology, as in the Greek examples above; but often the story is not romanticized, and other aetiologies are employed, e.g. jealousy in the case of Arachne. These later aetiologies of course must be kept distinct from their earlier ethnological provenience.

[5] D'Arcy Thompson, *Glossary of Greek Birds*[2] (Oxford 1936) 49, hereafter cited as **Glossary.**

Some translators (Murray in the Loeb Edition) take the τὴν δὲ as referring to Marpessa; but it seems better, as the majority (e.g. Owen; Leaf; Lang, Leaf and Myers; Rouse) have done, to interpret this as referring to Marpessa's daughter, Cleopatra. The point is not an unimportant one in the interpretation of the myth. If Marpessa was named Alcyone, then the meaning is that the bird mourned for the loss of its child or children. But if it is Cleopatra who is so named, then she was so called because of the sorrow of her mother, Marpessa, who was snatched away from Idas, her husband, by Apollo. The latter interpretation is certainly more consonant with what we know of the myth of Marpessa and Idas. Perhaps, though, the Homeric passage is most noteworthy for what it does not say. Not only is no mention made of a husband (i.e. Ceyx) but we hear nothing of halycon days, eggs, the halcyon's nest or, indeed, even of any transformation from human to bird form, though the word οἶτος (fate) might imply this.

In the collection of poems under the name of Hesiod is one with the title, "The Marriage of Ceyx." There is really nothing remaining that will help us very much. Presumably, though the name is not found in the extant material, the bride was named Alcyone.[6] What we have apparently, then, in the first part of the Alcyone myth is the conflation somehow of a story about the Thessalian couple, Ceyx and Alcyone, with an already current folktale about the halcyon bird (usually identified with the kingfisher) wailing for its lost mate or possibly its child.

The next body of evidence is of a later date; I assume that it was during this period (7th–6th cen.) that the Alcyone myth took on its final shape. We see at this time a considerable change in our story. There is a fragment of the poet Alcman,[7] apparently written in old age, in which he says:

[6] J. Schwartz (*Pseudo-Hesiodeia* [Leiden 1960] 209) thinks there was no transformation in the poem. Wernicke (*RE* 1 [1894] 1580–81, s.v. "Alkyone") attributes Apollodorus' version (also in scholia *ad Il.* 9.563), however, to the Hesiodic poem, though there is no evidence to support such an attribution. Stoll (Roscher's *Lex. Gr. Myth.* 1.2 [Leipzig 1884–86] 250, s.v. "Alkyone") is correct, I think, in saying that this particular Ceyx and Alcyone (in the Hesiodic poem) became confused with the other pair (the transformed couple). That is, the Hesiodic poem contained no transformation. This confusion was helped by the fact that there was a real bird, the *kêx* (cf. *Od.* 15.480), the tern or gannet. The form *kêyx* seems never to have been used for a "concrete, specific bird name" (see Glossary, s.v. καύαξ).

[7] D. L. Page, *Poetae melici Graeci* (Oxford 1962) No. 26, Alcman, Frag. 26.

> Would that I were, O would that I were the ceryl bird who flies o'er the sea with his halcyon mate.

The fragment is preserved in the *Historia mirabilium* attributed to Antigonus of Carystus,[8] who explains that the ceryl bird (the *kêrylos*)[9] is the name for the male halcyon and that, when it has grown old and weak and unable to fly, it is supported on the wings of the female—a most curious passage and difficult to interpret. Fortunately Plutarch (*De soll. animal.*, *Mor.* 983A) gives us a rather fuller account of this aspect of our story. In speaking of the halcyon's devotion to her mate (her *philandria*) he says that she is with him not for one season (*kairos*) but throughout the year (*di' etous*). When the male grows weak and heavy (*barys*) and is unable to follow her, the female then carries and feeds him and stays with him to the end (*achri teleutês*). The following section (983B) in Plutarch tells of the halcyon's love and concern for the protection of her children. The passage reads: "When she perceives that she is pregnant straightway she turns to the construction of the nest . . ." It is implied in the foregoing passage that the year's association is for this purpose. But where is her mate at this time, and what has happened to him? Plutarch does not say; but the cryptic "to the end" certainly implies that it is the end of his life. I would like further to call attention to the order of events. The male and female halcyon are constantly together through the course of a year; then mysteriously but apparently quite regularly and in the natural course of their lives the male, who has another name, grows weak, is fed and carried about by his mate, and finally dies. The female then turns her entire care to the birth and protection of her offspring.

Aristotle (*Hist. an.* 542B, 4 ff.) in the course of his discussion of the halcyon quotes the following verses from Simonides;[10]

[8] *Hist. mir.* 27 (23). The passage is given by Page, *loc. cit.* (above, note 6).

[9] The word *kêrylos* is apparently a diminutive type of formation on the base *kêr-/kêl-* (see H. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* 9 [Heidelberg 1959] s.v. κηρύλος). This opens the way for a number of phonologically possible derivations. Walde–Hofmann (*Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*[3] [Heidelberg 1938] s.v. *caeruleus*, *caerulus*) note the perfect phonological correspondence *caerulus: κηρύλος*. Hesychius gives the form κίρυλος, related doubtless to κεῖρις, a sea hawk or halcyon (Hesych.). As a loan-word in Latin it is the title of a poem attributed to the youthful Vergil.

[10] Page, *op. cit.* (above, note 7) No. 508, Simon. Frag. 3. In addition to Aristotle's comment compare Aelian, *De nat. animal.* 7.17. Cf. Eur. *Bacchae* 1365.

in D'Arcy Thompson's translation[11] they read:

> God lulls for fourteen days the winds to sleep
> In winter; and the temperate interlude
> Men call the Holy Season, when the deep
> Cradles the mother Halcyon and her brood.

The reference here of course is to the famous halcyon days. Aristotle gives further detail on this aspect of the myth. We are told that the halcyon days comprise the seven days preceding the winter solstice, which the mother bird uses to build her nest, and the seven days immediately following the winter solstice when she lays and hatches her eggs. Aristotle must admit that actually these days are not always found in Greece, and that the halcyon itself is a real *avis rara*, the most rarely seen of birds, he says. In any case, what we have here is a frequent enough theme in folktale, the magical control of the weather by birds.[12]

As D'Arcy Thompson said, there is no explanation of the myth of the halcyon days. I feel however that it must be the copestone of the whole edifice of interpretation. It would be possible—and much easier—to emphasize other aspects of the mythical halcyon. For example, in the passage from the *Historia animalium* referred to previously, Aristotle says, "When ships are lying in the roads, it (the halycon) will hover about a vessel and then disappear in a moment." In an interesting passage in the *Argonautica* (1.1084 ff.) the halcyon flies about the golden head of Jason and foretells a calming of the winds. The verb used here is *thespizein*, and the word for voice is *ossa*, with all their associations of the oracular and mysterious. This theme is a frequent one in myth and folktale, too, that of the prophetic revenant or divine visitant in bird form, come usually to warn or instruct the living.[13] This concept has a long history and literature behind it; there is no need of my elaborating on it here. The point, however, I wish to

[11] *The Works of Aristotle* 4, *Historia animalium* (Oxford 1949) *ad loc.*

[12] Cf. Theocritus 7.57–58, where the halcyons calm the sea and winds. The writer of the article on the kingfisher in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*[11] (s.v. "Kingfisher") relates without source reference that the dried body of the kingfisher is said to avert thunderbolts, and, if hung from the ceiling, will point out the wind direction. Cf. also Aristoph., *Aves* 778 ff. It is because of this control of the weather that Aeolus and Phosphor became associated with the story. Typical of the development of myth, Aeolus thus becomes the father of Alycone; and the control of the weather is assigned to him.

[13] Index E423.3, Revenant as bird.

make is that in our tale this aspect is an overlaid element from the vast stock of birdlore. Our halcyon has no message from the beyond and no one to deliver it to.

D'Arcy Thompson has made the only serious attempt I know of to interpret this part of the Alcyone story:[14]

> I conjecture that the story originally referred to some astronomical phenomenon, probably in connexion with the Pleiades, of which constellation Alcyone is the principal star. The Pleiad is in many languages associated with bird-names. Suidas definitely asserts that the Pleiades were called *Ἀλκυόνες*.

The association of the names is of course a strong point, and there is no doubt about the connection of the Pleiades with birds. But the Pleiades are connected with the spring and autumn equinoxes, not with the winter solstice. The express statements of Simonides and Aristotle on this point, including the exact number of days, make any other interpretation unthinkable—unless, of course, one interprets the myth as having nothing to do with weather phenomena, a viewpoint which seems to me equally unthinkable. Nor is there any attempt by Thompson to account for the mode of nesting, the halcyon days themselves, and the concern for the birth of the offspring. Any interpretation to be acceptable must attempt to account for these important features of the story as well.

I would like now to present my own interpretation, which does not account for everything in the story but at least attempts to account for the main features of this myth and to indicate how in all probability they came to be related to each other. Briefly stated, my view is that in comparative myth the sun is frequently symbolized as a bird; further, that, as in the case of the Phoenix, birds in myth often renew themselves. In the myth of Alcyone these motifs were combined to form a story of the rebirth of the sun at the time of the winter solstice. Thompson points out[15] that some birds, e.g. the hoopoe, the crested lark, the woodpecker, the cock were undoubtedly symbolic of the sun, because of the bright crest. The purple crest of the mythical Ciris, which may be etymologically connected with *kêrylos*, is most probably

[14] Glossary, s.v. *ἀλκυών*, page 49.

[15] Glossary, s.v. *ἔποψ*, *init.* Cf. *ibid.*, s.v. *ἀετός*, for the Assyrian crested eagle as solar emblem.

also symbolic of the sun.[16] Among the Hopis the solstice dances are performed by hawk men.[17] The winged disk of the sun is an extremely frequent symbol in Egyptian art; there are representations in Egypt of the soul bird flying through the darkness with an image of the sun on its head.[18] No doubt this is the origin of the unzoological crest which many birds of myth have; that is, as I interpret it, a purely symbolic way of expressing the fact that the sun, like a bird, flies through the air. As such, it is not the crest so much as the bird that is symbolic of the sun. That such symbolism reached Greece there can be little doubt, however these symbols may have been reinterpreted or otherwise changed. The Greek Phoenix is simply the Egyptian *bennu* bird, which is said[19] to have embalmed the body of his father from which he himself sprang. Much more evidence could be added. I have tried, however, in the evidence cited to show that in mythology birds are frequently associated with the sun, that this feature of mythology is quite widespread (American Indian myth), that it is found among a people (the Egyptians) from whom the Greeks could easily have borrowed—and apparently did—many elements of this nature and, finally, that this identification is found in Greek literature and myth itself.[20] If the mythical halcyon, which I assume to be symbolic of the sun ultimately in the myth, is to be equated with the kingfisher (the usual assump-

[16] D'Arcy Thompson however (Glossary, s.v. ἀλιάετος, page 45) understands Ciris to symbolize the old moon. In a puzzling reference the *Etymologicum Magnum* cites *Κίρρις* (a.f. *κεῖρις*) . . . *παρὰ Κυπρίοις κίρρις ὁ Ἄδωνις · παρὰ Λάκωσι δέ, ὁ λύχνος;* an odd bit of information, not referred to by Frazer, though he mentions that some have taken Adonis as symbolic of the sun (see *Golden Bough*, Part IV, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, Vol. 1 [London 1922] 228).

[17] *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend* (New York 1949–50) s.v. "solstice dance."

[18] R. T. Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Egypt* (London 1959) Plate 17, facing page 240—symbolic doubtless of the nighttime sun. In another Egyptian illustration (see Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* [New York 1948] Fig. 10) we see the winged disk of the sun issuing (i.e. being born) from the mouth of Nut, the sky.

[19] *Standard Dictionary of Folklore* (see above, note 17) s.v. "Phoenix." The first mention in Greek literature is Hesiod, *Chironis praecepta* 4 (=Frag. 171, Rzach); a fuller mention is Herodotus 2.73. Cf. Frankfort, *op. cit.* (above, note 18) 97, "The Phoenix is the Ba—the manifestation of Re." The Ba is a kind of soul-bird; Re is the personified sun.

[20] Both Helios himself is pictured with wings in Greek art (see illustration in Roscher's *Lex. Gr. Myth.* 1.2, 1995, s.v. "Helios") and his horses are frequently so represented (e.g. a vase in the British Museum and the statuary group pictured in F. Guirand's *Greek Mythology*, Engl. ed. [London 1963] page 57. Eos is customarily winged and the other sister, Selene, bears the epithet *tanysipteros* (*Hymn Hom. to Selene* 1),

tion), then it is not difficult to see how this identification came about. The kingfisher has bright sky-colored markings, for one thing; moreover, a further correspondence, which I think applies to my interpretation of this myth, is that the kingfisher plunges almost vertically into the sea and rises again, as mythologically does Helios in Ocean.

To come to the next point, the weak and apparently dying mate and the birth of the offspring, it is indeed surprising in our story and in the various accounts (some, like Plutarch's, quite circumstantial) that, in spite of the halcyon's boasted *philandria*, we hear of no decent burial—or indeed of any burial at all—for her cherished mate. What has become of the male at the end of the year's time? We have here in imperfect form, I believe, a story of rebirth rather than one of death and birth. I think also that the widespread belief that birds can reincarnate or renew their youth has much to do with our story. The myth of the Phoenix is well known; but it is often not realised how frequently this magical ability is attributed to other birds, real and mythical. The theme of the eagle renewing its youth[21] is found in the Bible (Ps. 103.5). Further, there is a passage in the *Physiologus*[22] in which it is said that the young of the hoopoe so tend their old parents, nestling them under their wings, that they thus renew their youth. The case of the male halcyon supported on the wings of the hen would seem to be the same theme. In an even more interesting passage in the *Physiologus*[23] it is said of the eagle that, when he feels he is getting old, when his wings get heavy and he loses his sight, he then flies to a fount of pure water, flies up toward the region of the sun, burns his old wings, rids himself thus of his blindness and, returning to the fount of water, baptizes himself thrice and thus renews his youth. There are other matters involved in this passage, but the points I wish to emphasize are those of the sun-bird and rebirth from water. It should be noted that the eagle first loses its sight (i.e. its light); then its sight is restored, and it is reborn from water.

Another important aspect of our story as yet unexplained is the nest and manner of nesting of the halcyon. First of all, and quite

[21] Index E758, B594.1. Cf. Aelian, *De nat. animal.* 3.23 on the metempsychosis of the stork.

[22] Quoted by Thompson, Glossary, s.v. ἔποψ in the Greek version.

[23] Francis J. Carmody, "Physiologus Latinus Versio Y," *Univ. of Calif. Publ. in Class. Philology* (Berkeley/Los Angeles) Vol. 12, No. 7 (1941), VIII De aquila.

unzoological, as I say, the nest is floating at sea; then, in Aristotle's description (*Hist. an.* 616A, 19), it is some kind of hard ball with a narrow opening. As D'Arcy Thompson says,[24]

> It is impossible to understand why Aristotle does not give a plain account of this nest . . . The account of Aelian is similar but wholly fabulous. That there was some religious mystery associated with the so-called nest is indicated by the conclusion of Plutarch's description.

I suspect that what we have here is a reminiscence of the box, chest, or whatever, found in the theme of the child exposed on water, as for instance, in the myth of Perseus.[25] More than this, is it really a nest? In Lucian's *Vera historia* (2.40) they are sailing along about midnight when suddenly they run aground on the halcyon's nest, which is said to be some sixty stadia in circumference. It sounds more like an island; and that is exactly what I think it originally—or alternatively—was, a floating island.[26]

[24] *Op. cit.* (above, note 11) note 7 *ad loc.*

[25] Cf. Index S141 and references there; M371; Frazer, *Folklore in the Old Testament* (London 1918) 2.437 ff.; and, for a psychological explanation, Otto Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (New York 1959) 91 and note 3.

That there was some religious mystery connected with this theme seems obvious to me and would explain these oblique and mysterious descriptions of the halcyon's nest. It would be a long search to try to explicate the whole matter, but I suspect that the story of Osiris and his coffin or chest (see Plutarch, *Is. et Os.* 356C–F) has something to do with it. This, too, is a story of rebirth. Interestingly enough Osiris' coffin disappears near Chemmis, another floating island (see below, note 26).

[26] Cf. D'Arcy Thompson, *op. cit.* (above, note 11) *ad* 616A, 29: "Whatever Aristotle is actually describing, it is plainly something floating on the sea and not the real nest of the kingfisher." Actually, if the reborn sun is thought of closely as a bird, then the image of the nest predominates; but sea birds flock upon islands, especially small uninhabited ones, so that the island is in a sense a nest, too. In a red-figured crater in the Louvre (see J. Harrison, *Themis*[2] [New York 1962] Fig. 51, page 200) we see Helios with Selene rising into the air on his quadriga (the horse here is without wings from convention) out of something that is half fish, half boat. The point is that rising out of Ocean, whether from a nest, floating island, or golden cup, the sun must have his *anatolai*, his launch-pad, so to speak. Further, since of course the sun rises from different points on the horizon throughout the year, a floating island or nest is an appropriate vehicle.

Aeolus, Alcyone's father in the developed myth, also lives on a floating island (*Od.* 10.3).

The motif of floating islands is probably Egyptian in origin. Herodotus (2.156) tells us of such an island in Egypt, Chemmis or Chembis, where, he was told, there was a temple of Apollo. To emphasize again the possible connection here between floating islands, floating chests, and the halcyon's nest, Plutarch ends his account of the Halcyon's nest (*De soll. animal.*, *Mor.* 983E) with the words (cf. *Od.* 6.162):

Δήλῳ δή ποτε τοῖον Ἀπόλλωνος παρὰ ναῷ.

There is an interesting connection here that pertains to the Alcyone myth. What other floating islands do we know about in Greek myth? The obvious example is Delos. Another name for Delos is Ortygia, i.e. "quail island." The Greek word for quail, *ortyx*, is a title of Artemis.[27] In one myth, to quote Rose,[28]

> Asteria, Leto's sister, took the form of a quail (Apollod. 1.21) and in that shape plunged into the sea to escape Zeus' amorous pursuit; she then became the floating island of Delos (Callim. *Hymn.* IV, 36–38).

The name Asteria of course indicates meteorological associations. The point is that deities with bird forms and meteorological associations are connected with the floating island of Delos. According to the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (*Hymn. Hom.* 3.16) Artemis was born in Ortygia.[29] Now where is this mythical Ortygia? It is certainly implied by *Odyssey* 5.121–24 that Eos lives there. And according to *Odyssey* 15.403–4 there is an island Syrie above Ortygia and there (either Syrie or Ortygia) are the "turning places" (*tropai*) of the sun. These *tropai* can only refer to the solstices, I think.[30] What we have here then in the second

[27] See Rose, *op. cit.* (above, note 1) 130, note 50 [28] *Ibid.*

[29] The writer of this poem distinguishes Delos and Ortygia, having Apollo born on Delos, his sister on Ortygia. This distinction comes probably only from there being two names, as a result of the mythical Ortygia coming to be identified with the real Delos. The Syracusan Ortygia was doubtless named not from any real locality but from the cult name of Artemis. Delos was also called Asteria (Pind. Frag. 39.42, Bowra). It seems to have been one of those places that gods and mortals called by different names: . . . ἄν τε βροτοὶ Δᾶλον κικλήσκουσιν . . . (Pind. Frag. 78, Bowra).

Mythologically—there is no real geography involved here—Ortygia and Aeaea (*Od.* 12.3) are identical; that is, Dawn Island (much as Erytheia is Sunset Island). Circe is the daughter of Helios (cf. Aea, the ancient name of Colchis [Hdt. 1.2] where Aeetes the son of Helios is king). On the early evidence for the identity of Ortygia and Delos see Merry and Riddell, *Homer's Odyssey*[2] (Oxford 1886) *ad* 5.123.

[30] But cf. H. L. Lorimer, *Homer and the Monuments* (London 1950) 80 ff., and Kirk and Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge 1960) 52–54.

It is a reasonable objection to my interpretation that the sun, whether symbolized as a bird or not, does not die in Mediterranean latitudes in the winter, weak though he may be. I have no completely cogent answer to this objection. I can only conjecture that either part of the myth—or another myth that influenced this part of the myth—came from northern latitudes where the sun would seem to die in winter; or, rather, in my opinion, the daily birth and death of the sun became closely associated with his yearly waxing and waning, thereby resulting in the conflation of the two concepts. If so, then the meaning of *tropai* in this connection is either the solstices or the sun's setting and rising places.

Another objection—and one more difficult to respond to—is that I have used Helios and Apollo (i.e. Delos) almost interchangeably. While this may be correct

part of our Alcyone myth is essentially a story of the birth or rebirth of the sun, symbolized as a bird, from his nest or floating island somewhere in the sea. The emphasis upon the calming of the sea, which had become proverbial by the time of Aristophanes (*Aves* 1594), came about, I believe, by the combination of two factors: first, the magical control of the weather by birds (see above, note 12), and, secondly, the necessary calm at sea for the birth of the offspring. Such was the case in the birth of Apollo, too (Pind. Frag. 79, Bowra). Delos floats until the time for Apollo's birth, when it becomes magically anchored to the bottom of the sea. In both myths the vehicle (nest or floating island) is made still before the birth.[31] Just as golden winged Eros[32] in his birth from the egg needed a mother bird (i.e. winged Night), so the transformed Alycone from a quite different folktale became associated with the sun-bird to supply the function of mother bird. The whole story then came to be progressively romanticized until Alcyone assumed the chief role; and, as in the Ovidian version, we have a complex literary work of star-crossed love with only an incidental mention of the halcyon days tagged on at the end.

for a later date, it is not usual (see Guthrie, *The Greek and their Gods* [Boston 1955] 74 ff.) for the period (7th–6th cen.) in which I have assumed that the elements of the myth fell together. I can only say for the present that the whole question of whether Apollo is or is not a solar deity in origin is *adhuc sub lite*.

[31] It is worth the mention that the island of Rhodes, sacred to Helios, was in myth (Pind. *Ol.* 7.54–68), if not a floating island in the strict sense like Delos or Aeolus' isle, at least an emerging island, a situation which is quite in keeping with Helios himself rising from Ocean.

[32] Cf. Aristoph. *Aves* 693 ff.; O. Kern, *Orphicorum fragmenta*[2] (Berlin 1963) Frag. 78. There can be no doubt that mythologically Eros is the same as Helios. He, too, has horses and bright wings and is born from night. The ultimate provenience of the egg is, so far as I know, unknown. It is found in Hindu myth (H. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization* [New York 1962] 104, 116); in the Egyptian Book of the Dead (see R. T. Rundle Clark, *op. cit* [above, note 18] 56); in ancient Iranian and Chinese myth also (see S. N. Kramer, *Mythologies of the Ancient World* [New York 1961] 339 and 384).