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The Birds of Diomedé

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well-known chorus in the *Hippolytus* gives expression

ξύνεσιν δὲ τιν' ἐλπίδι κέθων
λείπομαι ἐν τε τυχαῖς θνατῶν καὶ ἐν ἔργμασι λείσσω·
ἄλλα γὰρ ἄλλοθεν ἀμείβεται,
μετὰ δ' ἴσταται ἀνδράσιν αἰὼν
πολυπλάγητος αἰεί.¹

At such times such a nature is likely to find a symbolical, or mystic, truth in doctrine which, upon a cruder and more literal interpretation, it rejected outright in the confidence of younger years.² Such is the spirit of the *Bacchae*

σοφὸν δ' ἀπέχειν πρᾶπιδα φρένα τε
περισσῶν παρὰ φωτῶν·
τὸ πλήθος δ' τι τὸ φαυλότερον
ἐνόμισε χρῆται τε, τὸδ' ἂν δεχοίμαν·³

and it is best to see what is good in acknowledged doctrine and not try to set oneself up above it

οὐ
γὰρ κρείσσον ποτε τῶν νόμων
γινώσκειν χρῆ καὶ μελετᾶν.
κούφα γὰρ δαπάνα νομί-
ζων ἰσχύει τὸδ' ἔχειν,
ὅτι ποτ' ἄρα τὸ δαιμόνιον,
τὸ τ' ἐν χρόνῳ μακρῷ
νόμιμον αἰεὶ φῶσει τε πεφυκός.⁴

Passages such as these lead Dr. Thomson to say that Euripides 'wearied with questionings and heart-searchings which led to no definite or satisfactory issue,

¹ *Hipp.* 1103.

² Cf. the rejection by thinking undergraduates of some Christian dogmas which a maturer judgment and riper reflection leads theologians of equal intellectual sincerity to retain.

³ *Bacchae* 417.

⁴ *Bacchae* 890.

seems to have come to the conclusion that his task was a bootless one and his labour lost, that his philosophic doubt was barren of benefit either to himself or to others, and that even an avowedly imperfect religion was perhaps better than none.⁵ But this, I submit, is to give a wrong emphasis to things, to imply that Euripides had no religion before he wrote the *Bacchae* (which is not true) and to take the religious fervour of that play as the abandonment of despair rather than the glorious outburst of fruition.

There is one more point that I should like to add. It seems to me that the moral and religious teaching of Euripides is in conformity with that of contemporary philosophical speculation as represented by Socrates and Plato. But he is said to be 'opposed to the *dictum* οὐδεὶς ἐκὼν κακός.⁶ If we mean by this that man has no moral responsibility for his vice, but is helpless in the hands of ἀνάγκη, then, of course, Euripides is opposed to it; but if we mean by it what Socrates and Plato meant—that no man, who thoroughly understands what being κακός implies, would voluntarily choose to become such—then Euripides is by no means opposed to it.

R. B. APPLETON.

⁵ *Euripides and the Attic Orators*, p. 36.

⁶ W. H. S. Jones, *The Moral Standpoint of Euripides*, p. 31.

THE BIRDS OF DIOMEDE.

LET me add a note or two to Dr. Warde Fowler's article in the last number of the *Class. Rev.*, and let it be done in a spirit of penitence, for I dealt ill by the *Birds of Diomedes* when I wrote my *Glossary of Greek Birds* some five-and-twenty years ago. That Dr. Fowler is right in identifying these birds with Shearwaters I thoroughly believe; but after all, though various commentators have gone astray,¹ the roots of this identification are old.

The Shearwaters of the Diomedean Islands, or Isole de' Tremiti, were well known to a society of Augustinian friars resident of old upon the islands, and it was they who sent the bird to Gesner, and again afterwards to Aldrovandi; we may take it that they were interested in and attached to their birds all the more that S. Augustine had more than once referred to them in the *De Civitate Dei*. Aldrovandi is not quite certain that these are the original Birds of Diomedes, for after refuting various other opinions

¹ Otto Keller (*Antike Thierwelt*, ii. p. 235) identifies the bird with the Sheldrake (*Anas tadorna*, L.), his argument being (like that of

Dr. Warde Fowler) that the Sheldrake makes its nest in a burrow.

(such as Belon's that they were pelicans) he adds 'ea forte avis quam . . . Canonici regulares D. Augustini Laterani nonnullis abhinc annis mihi transmiserunt Diomedea fuerit'; and then he goes on to describe and to figure the Shearwater in unmistakable fashion (*Ornith.* iii. p. 58, 1637); Gesner had likewise described it as the Bird of Diomede, in the *Paralipomena* to his *Ornithology* (iii. p. 771, 1555). Beckmann, in his edition of the *De Mirabilibus Auscultationibus* (clxxx), was well aware of this identification, and Heyne also was inclined to accept it, though he desired more information and evidence. Linnaeus was not far off the mark when he gave the name *Diomedea* to an Albatross; and lastly Mr. A. H. Evans, in his edition of Turner (1903), says of Pliny's story of the Birds of Diomede, that 'apparently Shearwaters of some species are meant.'

We may perhaps go a little further than Dr. Fowler has done in the way of bringing the ancient accounts of the Birds of Diomede into relation with the known habits of the Shearwater: and firstly, as to Pliny's account, given on the authority of Juba. The passage is a much better description of the Shearwater's nest than appears from the version quoted by Dr. Fowler; and, by the way, Dr. Fowler has made a curious slip in ascribing this to 'our oldest English ornithologist,' instead of to his recent editor and translator. The bird does not 'dig furrows with his beak, and cover them with wattle-work;' for *scrobes* are (of course) holes, such as one plants trees in, just as *scrobiculi* are little holes to dibble bulbs in; and these holes were not roofed in, but bestrewn, or lined, or floored with some sort of loose twiggy stuff, *crate constrati*. 'They make a slight nest,' says Hewitson, 'of dry plants, usually about the depth of a man's arm from the entrance of the hole, although sometimes a good deal beyond his reach.' The laborious construction or excavation of this bird-city of subterranean dwellings is aptly likened by Lycophron (v. 601) to the fabled building of Thebes, ἀγιοπλαστήσαντες ἐμπεδοῖς τομαῖς, πυκνὰς καλιὰς, Ζῆθρον ἐκμμούμεναι. As to Pliny's (or Juba's) statement that the birds have teeth (*eis*

esse dentes, oculosque igneo colore), it is a hard saying, and devoid of all corroboration; the sense is bad, and the Latin of the sentence is not very good. I am inclined to question the text, and I think we might consider some such a reading as <can>*dentes oculos*; this would agree with Aldrovandi's statement, 'oculi autem Antennae nostrae mirum quantum ad instar flammae splendeant.' Their lamentable cry, the fact that '*scopulos lacrymosis vocibus implent*,' is abundantly confirmed. To Colonel Fielden at Malta it sounded like *ōwyah, ōwyah*.¹ Lord Lilford mistook it for the lowing of a pack of seals; it is the same wailing nocturnal cry that makes the Turks at Constantinople call them 'damned souls' (as Dr. Stanley, the bird-loving Bishop of Norwich and many others have told us); and Bernadetto Cocharella, in his description of the Isole de' Tremiti (quoted by Beckmann), uses almost the very Virgilian words, '*sub primum noctis crepusculum, scopulos aestate clamoribus implent: earum garritus veluti vox vaginantis infantuli*,' etc. Gesner tells us how a certain Duke of Urbino, visiting the monastery, '*cum noctu harum avium vocem audivisset, infantium esse vagitus putavisse:*' so that the good friars fell under his displeasure, '*donec ave ab illis illato, et praesentis auditu clamore, se deceptum intellexisse.*'

The gracious welcome which the birds extended to Greek visitors, stripped of fable, means no more than that they were tame and fearless. They sit so close on their one egg that they may be lifted off by the hand. And Professor Angelini, describing the great flocks fishing in the Straits of Messina ('una scena ed uno brulichio indescrivibile') goes on to say 'Colla mia barca mi spinsi in mezzo a loro, e non si mostravano per nulla timorosi.' Only after many had been shot did the rest move slowly away. 'At night they circled round the yacht like great bats,' says Colonel Fielden; and we are reminded (without pressing the parallel too far) of Ovid's '*numerisque et agmine*

¹ Hence the name of 'Cahow-bird,' applied to a species of Shearwater once immensely abundant, now extinct or nearly so, in the Bermudas.

maior | Subvolat et remos plausis circumsonat alis (Met. xiv. 506).

Lastly, it is a very curious and exceptional habit of the Shearwaters to dive with outspread wings and to rise again with wings still fully extended, and so to repeat the manoeuvre again and again.¹ This is a pretty point for us: for it is nothing less than the origin and explanation of the legend that they asperge or besprinkle with water the temple and the tomb of Diomede, *'acdemque eam quotidie . . . madentibus pennis perluunt et purificant'* (Pliny).

In my Glossary, I took the Birds of Diomede to be herons, i.e. *ἐρωδιόι* (*sensu stricto*), influenced, however wrongly, by various considerations: by the definite statement of Aelian (*H.A.* i, 1) *καλεῖται τις Διομήδεα νήσος, καὶ ἐρωδιούς ἔχει πολλούς*: by the similar statement of Antigonus; by the authority of S. Augustine, of Isidore, of Servius and of Tzetzes; and also by certain apparent coincidences in the mythology of *ἐρωδιός*. But *ἐρωδιός*, and *ardea* also, are very difficult words, much more so than we are apt to think them—as difficult indeed as *fulica*, or as *mergus*; and it is more than probable that in classical times, as well as later, they were applied to various birds, in various places, times, or circumstances. Aldrovandi is within the mark in saying (*op. cit.* p. 365) *'Eandem tamen dictionem alii aliter vertunt. Etenim Erodium aliqui putarunt esse avem ex iis quas Romani Diomedeeas vocant; et Ornithologus [i.e. Gesner] Diomedeeas . . . ex Ardearum genere esse contendit, etc.'* That the Diomedean Birds, or Shearwaters, were actually called *ardeae*, and perhaps also *ἐρωδιόι*, is in part indicated by the survival of the name *Artenae*—*'tanquam ardeae'* as Gesner says. And if *Artena* seem somewhat remote from *ardea*, we find the nearer form *Ardenna* still in use in the neighbourhood of Ancona, as Giglioli tells us.²

¹ Cf. (e.g.) E. A. Wilson, Report of National Antarctic Expedition, *Aves*, iv., p. 80, 1907.

² Giglioli (*Inchiesta ornit. in Italia; parte seconda, Avifauna Italica*, p. 527) gives *Artena* as the vernacular name at present in Southern Italy (Puglio, Bari): may one not suspect here a misprint for *Artena*? Reichenbach, in his *Systema Avium* (1850-52, p. iv; cf. also his

But Giglioli also gives us, as the common popular name of this sea-bird at Naples and at Lucca, the word *Pallante*, or *Fallante* in the island of Giglio in S. Italy. There is no end to the interest which lies, as it seems to me, in the rich vocabulary of Italian bird and beast names, and the surviving links in Southern Italy with the old language of Magna Græcia are innumerable. *Pallante* can scarcely be other than the 'Bird of Pallas,' or Pallas herself; and so, coming back to *ardea* and to *ἐρωδιός*, we are led to think of that *ἐρωδιός* in the *Iliad*, which *Pallas Athene* sent as her messenger to Odysseus and to *Diomede*: *τοῖσι δὲ δεξιὸν ἤκεν ἐρωδιὸν ἐγγυὸς ὄδοιο | Παλλὰς Ἀθηναίη*. The heroes only knew it by its harsh cry, *τοὶ δ' οὐκ ἴδον ὀφθαλμοῖσι | Νύκτα δι' ὀρφναίην, ἀλλὰ κλάγξαντος ἄκουσαν*: and so commentators, determined to make it out a Heron, have suggested the Night-heron (*Ardea Nycticorax*, L.). But now it seems to me likely, perhaps even plain, that it was after all the self-same Shearwater, at once a bird of Athene, and a bird of Diomede.

We may go, though it may seem venturesome, farther yet. What was that mysterious *ὄρνις ἀιοπαῖα* in the *Odyssey*, in whose likeness Athene flew away? I think it may very well have been the same *Pallante*, or Shearwater; and if so there may be more than we thought for in the old Grammarian's explanation of the word, *παρὰ τὸ διατρίβειν ἐν ταῖς ὄραις*—which brings back Pliny's description of the subterranean dwelling once more to our minds.

Though Virgil describes so aptly the lamentable crying, the *vox lacrymosa* of the bird, it by no means follows that he was well and fully acquainted with it; it is possible enough that he borrowed this as so many other similes: as he took, for instance, from Theocritus his *ἔστεινε τρυγῶν*, and drew from Aratus his weather-prophecies of the birds. His phrase *'fluminibusque vagantur aves'* suggests to Dr. Fowler's mind

Synopsis Avium, pl. ix. figs. 768-770), mentions '*Ardenna*, Aldrovandi,' as a name of the Shearwater.

that 'the birds did not confine themselves to islands, but might stray up rivers, e.g. the Aufidus.' For my own part I am rather inclined to suspect that Virgil was just a little confused as to his bird; and that here he was mixing it up with the real Heron, or *ἔρωδιός*, which, in Aristotle's words, *παρὰ τὰς λίμνας καὶ τοὺς ποταμοὺς βιοτεύει*, and whose *notas paludes* Virgil knew very well.

The identification of the Birds of Diomedea is tantamount to an identification, so far as Juba and Pliny are concerned, of the *καταβάκτης*. This is a most perplexing bird-name, and has been ascribed by commentators to all sorts of birds, to the Cormorant, the Solan Goose, the Eared Grebe, etc. The accounts are largely intermixed with fable, and are otherwise obviously inaccurate, but I fancy that the Shearwater was at the bottom of most of them.

Another of the curious modern Italian bird-names is *Aipu*, applied (according to Giglioli) to the Shearwater and also to a certain kind of Gull. I think it just possible that an echo of *αἴθουα* lingers in the word. *Αἴθουα* is a very hard word, and (like *Catarrhactes*) its meaning has all along perplexed and puzzled the commentators. We have very little evidence to go upon, for the many references to *Αἴθουα* are almost all poetical and vague, and however accurate we may find the poets now and then, I fancy that often enough they cared little, and possibly knew less, of the bird to which this or that name belonged; one bird was well-nigh as good as another, and you need not ask too many questions: *si volucrum quae sit subitarum forma requiris Ut non cynorum sic albis proxima cynis*, etc. But we are told by Pausanias (i, 5, 3; i, 41, 6) that *αἴθουα* was a title or epithet of Athene—a close parallel to 'Pallante.' Again, the *αἴθουα* was, as we all know, the bird into which Ino turned, *ἢ πρὶν μὲν ἔην Βροτὸς αὐδέησσα*. And lastly, the flesh of *αἴθουα*, as Galen tells us (*De fac. simpl. med.*, xi) and also Philostratus (*Icon.* 2, 17), was peculiarly unsavoury or nauseous, as we have been assured, ever since Gesner's time, that that of the Shearwater (save only as a nestling)

is. The reputation of *αἴθουα* in this respect was precisely that of *mergus*—'si quis nunc mergos suaves edixerit assos,' etc.; and Giglioli tells us (*op. cit.*, p. 316) that *margùn* is nowadays the local name for the Shearwater at Spezzia. We may take it that in all probability the Shearwater was at least one of the birds which went by the name of *Mergus* in antiquity,¹ as it is one, and only one, of the birds which do so to-day. And the more we think of the references to *mergus*, the more we shall find among them allusions and phrases which suit the Shearwater very well: even such as the familiar lines 'Cum medio celeres revolant ex aequore mergi, Clamoremq; ferunt ad littora.'

And so it seems that we have easily brought together, by various criss-cross threads of evidence (to which I might add a few more, if space permitted), a whole string or group of bird-names, one more puzzling to scholars than another, and not one of which admits of safe and simple definition by direct evidence. But every one of them points, whether clearly or obscurely, somehow to the Shearwater, either as a specific meaning or as part of a looser and more general signification. For my own part the simple fact is that, when I wrote my Glossary, I was little aware of the important rôle which the Shearwaters play in the Mediterranean, and little acquainted with their many striking peculiarities. They passed in all probability under various names, some local some poetical, in ancient times as they still do in modern Italy; and some of these names, apparently specific, were undoubtedly applied to more birds than one, as we again find to be the case (for instance in the various derivatives of *mergus*) in vernacular Italian. Our little group of bird-names includes, among the rest, *ἔρωδιός* and *αἴθουα*, *ardea* and *mergus*. Precisely these names (together with the more or less generic *λάρος*) are constantly mixed up by the glossographers. Thus we have in Philoxenus (Goetz, ii. 24, etc.), '*ardea*: *ἔρωδιός*, *λάρος*; again

¹ *Mergus*, in Plin. x. 65 (47), is a Skua Gull: 'inter aquaticas mergi soliti sunt devorare quae cetera reddunt.' In Plin. x. 48 (33) it is a Cormorant: 'mergi et in arboribus nidificant,' etc.

'*fulica* glossed by *λάρος, ἐρωδιός, αἰθνια,*' etc.; again '*mergus: αἰθνια, αὐτῆς ὄρνις,*' and so forth. At first sight there seems to be almost indiscriminate ascription and a very tangle of error; but in reality there is a genuine thread of interconnection, of which we can now, in part at least, discern the clue.

A singularly interesting case is the Abstrusa gloss '*mergi: corvi marini*' (Goetz, iv. 538, 1). Up to now we have talked of the Shearwaters in a general way, without attempting to discriminate between their species, of which the chief (for our purposes) are the large *Puffinus kuhli*, and the little *P. anglorum*, our Manx Shearwater.¹ Both are abundant in the Mediterranean, and pass, for the most part, under identical vernacular names. But Giglioli tells us that in Genoa the Little (or Manx) Shearwater, much darker in colour than the other, is called, precisely, *crovo di m̀a* (*corvo di mare*) *negro*; and there can be little doubt that it is to this bird that the Abstrusa gloss applies: with which gloss we may also compare the Hesychian *κορώναι <εἰν>άλιαι· αἰθνιαί, κολυμβίδες*. In like manner, Canon Tristram suggested (*Cambridge Comp. to Greek Studies*, 1904, p. 32) that *κορώνη ἢ θαλάσσιος* was the Little Shearwater, as against my hesitating suggestion that it might be the Little Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*. A flood of new light is immediately thrown on a number of passages, hitherto obscure, by this evidence of a connexion between the

¹ No group of birds is more puzzling to the systematist than the Shearwaters, and ornithologists are not agreed as to the specific distinctions. *P. kuhli* is the representative in the Mediterranean of our great Shearwater, a large light-coloured bird. The small Shearwater of the Mediterranean, black upon the back, is usually distinguished as *P. yelkouan*; but Giglioli and others consider it identical with our Manx Shearwater.

Birds of Diomedea and the Sea-crow, and by the implied suggestion of a discrimination between names (such as *αἰθνια*) for the Large, and others (such as *κορώνη ἢ θαλάσσιος* and its equivalents) for the Little Shearwater. We can now understand the association of *mergus* and *cornix* in such passages as Claudian's '*Heu nimium segnes, cauta qui mente notatis, Si revolant mergi, graditur si littore cornix*' (*De B.G.* 492). We understand also the *κορώναι εἰνάλιαι* of the *Odyssey* (v. 66), *τανύγλωσσοι . . . τῆσιν τε θαλάσσια ἔργα μέμηλεν*; and the simile of the *Iliad* (xii. 418, etc.) *οἱ δὲ κορώνησιν ἴκελοι περὶ νῆα μέλαιναν | κύμασιν ἐμφορόοντο*. We are confirmed in our suspicion that it is no common crow or jackdaw, but is this seabird of ours that '*plena pluvium vocat improba voce, Et sola in sicca secum spatiatur arena*'; and we follow the same clue still more confidently among the weather-prophecies of Theophrastus, Aratus, and others; for instance in the *Geoponica* (i. 3, 7), where we also note the nocturnal habit of the bird: *καὶ κορώνη ἐπ' αἰγιαλοῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν διαβρέχουσα, ἢ πᾶσα νηχομένη, καὶ νυκτὸς σφοδρότερον κρῶζουσα, ὄμβρους προμηνύει*.

Lastly we rediscover, in Arrian's *Periplus*, a manifest allusion to the Shearwaters—the two Shearwaters—under the names *αἰθνιαί* and *κορώναι*, for their peculiar habit is recalled of dropping water from their outspread wings, under the guise of a legend precisely similar to that of the Temple of Diomedea: *οὗτοι οἱ ὄρνιθες θεραπεύουσιν τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως τὸν νεῶν. ἔωθεν ὁσημέραι καταπέτονται ἐς τὴν θάλασσαν· ἔπειτα ἀπὸ τῆς θαλάσσης βεβρεγμένοι τὰ πτερὰ σπουδῇ αὐτῶν ἐσπέτονται ἐς τὸν νεῶν, καὶ ραίνουσι τὸν νεῶν*.

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