

## ΛΗΚΥΘΙΑ AND STYMPHALIAN BIRDS STILL IN THE AIR

ΛΗΚΥΘΙΟΝ ΑΠΩΛΕΣΕΝ  
(and Theocritus ii 156)

With reference to Dr Graham Anderson's note on *ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν* (Ar. *Frogs* 1198–1248),<sup>1</sup> I would like to add the following remarks.

First, terracotta aryballoi fashioned and painted in the likeness of male genitals seem to have been widely distributed in archaic Greece. Examples are known from the East, Attica, Corinth, Sicily, and Tuscany.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to believe that the analogy responsible for these objects no longer operated in Classical times.<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, turning to the Hellenistic era, I submit that only in the light of the equation *lekynthion* = genitals is it possible to understand Theocritus ii 156. Simaitha relates how she heard from a third party that it is Delphis' custom to take a 'strong draught of love' (151 f.) and then disappear. She compares this with her own experience:

155 ἦ γάρ μοι καὶ τρεῖς καὶ τετράκις ἄλλοκ' ἐφοίτη,  
καὶ παρ' ἐμὴν ἐτίθει τὴν Δωρίδα πολλάκις ὄλπαν·  
νῦν δέ τε δωδεκαταίος ἀφ' ᾧτέ νιν οὐδὲ ποτεῖδον.

Here *παρ' ἐμὴν ἐτίθει* means 'served me up', while *ὄλπαν*, of course, = *lekynthion*.<sup>4</sup> Then *πολλάκις* makes sense. This combination of pre-Classical archaeological and post-Classical literary evidence seems to negate Henderson's objections.

Finally, I would prefer not to press *Frogs* 1203, *καὶ κωδάριον καὶ ληκύθιον καὶ θυλάκιον*, for anatomical distinctions as Anderson does ('*θυλάκιον* = scrotum, *lekynthion* = testicles').<sup>5</sup> All three diminutives are meant as examples of the effeminately precious language used in this regard by a certain type of person—i.e., Euripides.

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<sup>1</sup> *JHS* ci (1981) 130 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See F. Johansen, *Meddeleser fra Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek* xxxiii (Copenhagen 1976) 85–101 (including photographs). I wish to thank the curator of the Carlsberg Glyptotek for generously supplying me with this reference in response to my inquiry.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. B. Snell, *Hermes* cvii (1979) 133.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. K. J. Dover, *Theocritus* (Basingstoke/London 1971) *ad loc.*, '... Theokritos's point may be not "the Dorian (type of) oil bottle" but "what Dorians call ὄλπα".'

<sup>5</sup> Anderson (n. 1).

## ΛΗΚΥΘΙΟΝ and ΑΥΤΟΛΗΚΥΘΟΣ

I read with pleasure Graham Anderson's learned and amusing note, but am unconvinced. One might question his methodology, in that he does not really go into the question of what shape or shapes the words mean at what times; and illustrates 'an aryballos' without indicating its date or place of origin (it turns out to be redrawn from an engraving after an archaic Etruscan tomb-painting). However, these are not, I think, points of substance. *λήκυθος* and *ληκύθιον* seem to have been loosely used over a long time and wide area for any form of portable oil-flask; and there is evidence for round aryballoi in fifth- and fourth-century Athens.

Also the expressions may have long been in common use, though for us they only surface in Aristophanes and Demosthenes. I cannot, though, myself see any force in Henderson's view that the standard shapes of *lekythia* do not resemble male genitals; not in detail, certainly, but the white *lekythos*, the *lekythos par excellence* in Aristophanes' Athens, is surely phallic enough. If one dreamed of one, Freud would be in no doubt what it meant.

It is the complexity of Anderson's interpretation that worries me. In the context of the dirty joke, there is one thing a man is liable to lose, and to raise a laugh by losing: not (unless he has Abelard's bad luck) his testicles, but his erection; and if *ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν* has a sexual connotation (as no doubt it has), 'lost his erection' is surely what Aristophanes' Aeschylus meant. A simple jest, but perhaps more effective in deflating Euripides than Anderson's elaborate construction.

As to *αὐτολήκυθος*, if the original meaning is 'carrying one's own flask' because too poor to keep a slave, the most natural sexual application is autoerotic, masturbator; but of course expressions like this change meaning, and Demosthenes' use may well be, as Anderson suggests, more complicated.

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## The Stympthalian Birds

In the course of previous correspondence about Greek waterbirds<sup>1</sup> John Buxton refers to a report that Great Crested Grebes (*Podiceps cristatus*) still breed at Lake Stympthala in the central Peloponnese<sup>2</sup> for which I was responsible, though details have never been published. Since this is the site of the Fifth Labour of Heracles in which he fought with the birds it may be useful to place an ornithological appraisal of the situation on record.

The lake is an example of one of the main waterbird habitats of south-east Europe and Asia Minor, an internal drainage basin in the hills where silt from the surrounding deforested slopes has accumulated in the central lake which is filling up and has become largely covered in reeds, though there may have been more open water in antiquity. In addition to the birds already recorded by Mr J. K. Anderson, on 16th May 1958 I saw a pair of Great Crested Grebes with half-grown chicks and other individuals, a pair of Black-necked Grebes (*Podiceps nigricollis*), a number of Little Grebes (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*), at least three Night Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), two Purple Herons (*Ardea purpurea*), a Squacco Heron (*Ardeola ralloides*), two Little Bitterns (*Ixobrychus minutus*), twenty-five Glossy Ibises (*Plegadis falcinellus*), several Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*), four Pochard (*A. ferina*), three Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), a number of Moorhens (*Gallinula chloropus*) and

<sup>1</sup> J. K. Anderson, *JHS* xcii (1972) 171, xcvi (1976) 146; Sylvia Benton, *JHS* xcii (1972) 172; John Buxton, *JHS* xciv (1974) 170; J. J. Hall, *JHS* xcix (1979) 163.

<sup>2</sup> A. Kanellis, *Catalogus Faunae Graeciae, Pars ii, Aves*, ed. M. Bauer, O. v. Herversen, M. Hodge, J. Martens (Thessaloniki 1969) 24.

Coots (*Fulica atra*), twelve White-winged Black Terns (*Chlidonias leucoptera*) and a Black Tern (*C. nigra*).

This implies that Lake Stymphala is possibly the best place for waterbirds in Greece south of Corinth. Doubtless these also once included most of the species which still survive on the larger lakes such as Prespa to the north, in which case there was once probably a mixed breeding colony of pelicans, cormorants, herons and ibises and possibly another of gulls and terns within sight of the Classical acropolis beside the lake, where judging by the appearance of the birds on the coinage they were probably conserved, if only for the pot. They doubtless made a spectacular outcry when they were disturbed, but are hardly likely to have attacked anyone. They would have been more interested in the fish than the crops, though these may also have been taken by wintering flocks of cranes and geese while they were growing and food was scarce in the early spring. It would not really be necessary to call upon Heracles to discourage them.

It seems likely that the classical Greeks would have recognised that he was poaching in one of the first nature reserves.

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#### Ancient knowledge of the birds now known at Lake Stymphalus

There seems to be no record of what the ancients knew or believed about birds actually at Lake Stymphalus, apart from the legend of the Stymphalian Birds, and the representations of birds on Stymphalian coins—one perhaps a Great Crested Grebe, and one not identifiable as any species—which have been discussed in previous notes in *JHS*;<sup>1</sup> but it will perhaps be of interest to see what knowledge ancient authors show of the birds which Dr Bourne saw at the lake and notes above.

Aristotle *Historia animalium* viii 593b1–12, 15–24 gives a list of the birds of lakes and rivers which includes most of the groups of birds mentioned by Bourne, though it is frequently not possible to identify Aristotle's birds with individual species. Thus Aristotle mentions grebe (*κολυμβίς*), heron (*ἔρωδιός*), ducks (e.g. *νήττα*, *βόσκας*), coot (*φαλαρίς*), goose (*χίην*), an ash-coloured gull (*λάρος* . . . *σποδοειδής*) and a cormorant (*ὁ καλούμενος κόραξ*, the size of a stork but with shorter legs, web-footed and black, which perches and nests on trees).<sup>2</sup> Most of these names refer, so far as we can tell, to groups of birds, not single species; however, the size of *κόραξ*, and its nesting in trees, identify it as the common Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*);<sup>3</sup> and *νήττα*, which is the commonest duck-name, and a standard of reference in describing other

<sup>1</sup> S. Benton, 'Note on sea-birds', *JHS* xcii (1972) 172–3; J. K. Anderson, 'Stymphalian and other birds', *JHS* xcvi (1976) 146.

<sup>2</sup> The identifications of these ancient bird-names are those accepted by D'Arcy W. Thompson, *A glossary of Greek birds*<sup>2</sup> (London/Oxford 1936), and by J. Pollard, *Birds in Greek life and myth* (London 1977), and seem certain. (The whole of this note is heavily indebted to these two works, and I do not indicate every obligation to them.)

<sup>3</sup> The Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*) is nearly as large, but does not nest in trees. See S. Cramp *et al.* (edd.), *Handbook of the birds of Europe* i (Oxford 1977) 205, 212.

duck,<sup>4</sup> should refer primarily to the most familiar duck, presumably the Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*). *φαλαρίς*, too, which is evidently connected with *φάλαρος*, 'having a patch of white', can hardly refer to any species but the Coot (*Fulica atra*).

*κολυμβίς* in this passage of Aristotle could denote any or all of the grebes; but particular kinds do seem to be referred to by other authors. Athenaeus 395d, quoting Alexander of Myndus, mentions *ἡ μικρὰ κολυμβίς*, the smallest of aquatic birds, which must be the Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*);<sup>5</sup> and it has been suggested in previous notes in *JHS*<sup>6</sup> that the 'Thracian birds' and *δυτῖνοι* mentioned by Dionysius *Ixeuticon* ii 14 were Great Crested Grebes (*Podiceps cristatus*) and Black-necked Grebes (*Podiceps nigricollis*).

*ἔρωδιός* was applied to herons and bitterns in general, and ancient writers knew that there were several species. It seems likely that the Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*) plus the Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*, the species familiar in Britain) are meant when Aristotle calls one kind of Heron *ὁ πέλλος*, the dark or dusky,<sup>7</sup> and when Dionysius says that some are *ποικίλοι καὶ μείζονες*.<sup>8</sup> Others, says Dionysius (*ibid.*), are *βραχεῖς . . . καὶ λευκοί*, and Aristotle speaks of *ὁ λευκός* which nests in trees;<sup>9</sup> and one of the species they meant was probably the Squacco Heron (*Ardeola ralloides*), which appears white in flight (though buff when at rest), is small for a heron and often nests in trees.<sup>10</sup> Aristotle's third heron, *ὁ ἀστερίας*, is traditionally identified with the Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*); all he says of it is that it is lazy (*τούτων ἀργότατος*),<sup>11</sup> and if that refers to its skulking by day in reed-beds or other vegetation, then it would be applicable to the Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*) and Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) also.<sup>12</sup>

Of the three ducks mentioned by Bourne, the Mallard was probably the Greek *νήττα* (see above). No Greek duck-name seems to have been referred to the Pochard (*Aythya ferina*); but Athenaeus 395c, quoting Alexander of Myndus, mentions *τὸ λεγόμενον γλαυκίον διὰ τὴν τῶν ὀμμάτων χροάν*, and this has been taken to refer to the Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*), of which the male has a conspicuously white eye.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>4</sup> E.g. *HA* viii 593b17 f., *βόσκας* is *ὁμοιος μὲν νήττη*, *τὸ δὲ μέγεθος ἐλάττων*. Cf. similar phrases in Athen. 395d–e.

<sup>5</sup> So D'Arcy Thompson 158. Pollard 70 seems to suggest that *κολυμβίς* on its own means the Little Grebe; but I can see no reason for assuming this, except when it is qualified by *μικρὰ*.

<sup>6</sup> J. K. Anderson, *Θρᾷξ, Δυτῖνος, Καταρράκτης*, *JHS* xcii (1972) 171–2; J. Buxton, 'A further note on sea-birds', *JHS* xciv (1974) 170–1; and Benton (n. 1).

<sup>7</sup> *HA* ix 609b22, 616b33.

<sup>8</sup> *Ixeut.* ii 9.

<sup>9</sup> *HA* ix 617a2–5.

<sup>10</sup> They certainly also meant the Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*), which is pure white, small and tree-nesting, presumably also the Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*) and the Great White Egret (*Egretta alba*); though that is almost as large as the Grey Heron and normally nests in reeds; and, if they knew it, the Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*; nowadays, at least, only a vagrant in south east Europe). (Aristotle clearly mentions the Spoonbill as *λευκερωδιός* at *HA* viii 593b2, referring to its long, broad bill.) On these herons see Cramp *et al.* (n. 3) i 273 ff., 352 ff.

<sup>11</sup> *HA* ix 617a7.

<sup>12</sup> See Cramp *et al.* (n. 3) i 247, 256, 263.

<sup>13</sup> So Pollard 66. D'Arcy Thompson 76 suggests other species of duck.