MUSEUM HELVETICUM
Vol. 20 1963 Fasc. 3

Arion and the Dolphin[1]

By C. M. Bowra, Oxford

The story of Arion and the Dolphin is known in the first place from Herodotus (1, 23–24), and most other versions of it can, despite additions and embellishments, be traced back to him[2], but information outside the common round comes from Aelian, who, in discussing the predilection of dolphins for song and the music of the flute (N. A. 12, 45), refers to a monument of Arion on Cape Taenarum and proceeds to quote first an epigram inscribed on it and then a song which, he claims, Arion composed on being delivered from the sea. Aelian is deplorably unreliable and uncritical, but what he says is sufficiently provocative to call for some examination. It may not in the end tell us anything about Arion, but it should throw light on his legend and the way in which it was kept alive. The monument to which Aelian refers must be that of which Herodotus, at the end of his account of Arion, says *καὶ Ἀρίονος ἔστι ἀνάθημα χάλκεον οὐ μέγα ἐπὶ Ταινάρῳ, ἐπὶ δελφῖνος ἐπεὼν ἄνθρωπος* (1, 24, 8). The statue was extant in the time of Pausanias (3, 25, 7, cf. 9, 30, 2), and may still have been in position in the time of Aelian, but, even if it was not, he would have been able to get his information from good sources and have to reckon that, when he spoke of it, his audience would not be entirely ignorant. Herodotus certainly speaks as if he himself had seen the statue and carefully places his mention of it after the story of the dolphin which he twice claims to have been told by Corinthians and Lesbians. The statue, then, existed in the fifth century, but Herodotus gives no hint of the date of its erection. Aelian does not explicitly say that it was erected by Arion, and indeed his words *τὸ τῶν δελφίνων φῦλον ὡς εἰσι φιλῳδοί τε καὶ φίλαυλοι τεκμηριῶσαι ἱκανὸς καὶ Ἀρίων ὁ Μηθυμναῖος ἔκ τε τοῦ ἀγάλματος τοῦ ἐπὶ Ταινάρῳ*, might seem to do no more than quote as testimony to the adventure of Arion the actual figure of him on a dolphin. But since in the next sentence he says that the epigram on the monument was written by Arion, he suggests that both are of the same date. A bronze statue of a man on a dolphin before 600 B.C. is not easy to accept. Arion's date is given by the Suda s.v. *Ἀρίων* in the 38th Olympiad (628–625) and by Eusebius in the fourth year of the 40th Olympiad (617), and we are asked to believe that at this date a bronze statue, demanding work of considerable skill, could have been made. Much may depend on what Herodotus means by saying that it was *οὐ μέγα*. At least it cannot have been life-size, and it may conceivably not have been beyond the powers of such Corinthian artists as those who made

[1] I am greatly indebted to Mr T. C. W. Stinton for generous help and criticism.
[2] See W. Crusius, RE II 837ff.

for Cypselus the famous *χρυσοῦς σφυρήλατος Ζεύς* at Olympia (Strab. 353. 378; Paus. 5, 2, 3; Plat. Phaedr. 236 b; Diog. Laert. 1, 96). None the less, since the earliest bronze statue now surviving of any size is not earlier than the third quarter of the sixth century, the existence of such a monument of Arion in the time of Periander seems highly questionable. What matters is that it existed in the time of Herodotus and that to it Aelian relates two documents.

The first of these is an elegiac distich which Aelian claims to have been written by Arion. He does not explicitly state that it was on the base of the statue, but we may assume that this was the right place for it, and the word *ἐπίγραμμα* confirms that it was inscribed. Aelian quotes it as evidence for the music-loving habits of dolphins:

ἀθανάτων πομπαῖσιν Ἀρίονα, Κυκλέος υἱόν,
ἐκ Σικελοῦ πελάγους σῶσεν ὄχημα τόδε.

Herodotus says nothing of any inscription, but his mention of the statue is no more than a brief note, and there was no reason for him to expand on the subject. So we must try to assess the worth of Aelian's account by internal evidence, and at once doubts arise. First, the name *Κυκλεύς* given to Arion's father is uncomfortably close to the *κύκλιοι χοροί* which Hellanicus relates that Arion founded (4 F 86 Jacoby; cf. Procl. Chrest. ap. Phot. Bibl. p. 320 Bekker). The name is too patently aetiological to be at all convincing, and though it was known to the Suda s.v. *Ἀρίων*, that proves no more than that with the passage of years it had come to be accepted as part of the tradition about Arion. It is as plain an invention as Homer's ascription of a father called *Τερπιάδης* to the bard Phemius (Od. 23, 330). Secondly, though an elegiac epigram for a dedication is perfectly possible about 600 and the remains of one have been found on the rim of a clay kettle in th

Aelian uses words in a way which smacks of a rather later age. The plural *πομπαῖσιν* is alien to the epic, which uses in much the same sense the singular *πομπῇ* (Il. 6, 171; Od. 5, 32; 7, 193), but we find the plural in Hom. Hymn 15, 5, which cannot be dated with any assurance but could be of the sixth century, in an Aeschylean chorus (Pers. 58), and in Euripides (Her. 580; Hel. 1121), while Pindar has *Ζεφύροιο πομπαί* (N. 7, 29). The use of the plural seems to be a feature of mature poetry rather than of the age of Periander. A similar point rises with the epigram's use of *ὄχημα*. Originally this means no more than "carriage", but it can, by the addition of a suitable epithet, be applied to a ship (Aesch. P.V. 468; Soph. Trach. 656; Eur. I. T. 410). When the epigram uses it in the different sense of a "mount", the closest parallel is when Aristophanes makes Trygaeus speak of his dung-beetle as *ὄχημα κανθάρου* (Pax 866), though it is possible that a similar meaning should be given to *ὄχῳ πτερωτῷ* for the mounts of the Oceanids at P.V. 135. The application of the word to Arion's dolphin does not look archaic, but, though neither it nor *πομπαῖσιν* suggests a pupil of Alcman (Suda s.v. *Ἀρίων*), whatever

[3] P. Friedländer and H. B. Hoffleit, *Epigrammata* no. 94 p. 94.

that may mean, or the end of the seventh century, there is no difficulty about their belonging to the fifth.

A different question is raised by the way in which the epigram is composed. If we compare it with other dedicatory epigrams of almost any period from archaic to Graeco-Roman, we find obvious differences. First, the dedicator normally names himself, but here no dedicator is mentioned. Secondly, the god to whom the dedication is made is normally named, but here nothing is said of him. Thirdly, a dedication usually reveals its character by some such word as *ἄγαλμα*, *μνῆμα*, *ἀπαρχήν* and the like, but here the character of the dedication is specified indirectly by *σῶσεν ὄχημα τόδε*. These divagations from common form might perhaps suggest that the couplet is a literary exercise of a late date. Such exercises are common as imitations both of dedicatory epigrams and of epitaphs, but this couplet lacks their conscious literary flavour and sticks more closely than they usually do to its central theme. An alternative is that it is not, strictly speaking, a dedication at all, but an inscription to explain what the statue represents, and there is much to be said for this. A good example of such an inscription is that on the base of the statue of Harmodius and Aristogeiton at Athens[4]. Such inscriptions have something in common with dedications, and Arion's dolphin may be illustrated by a parallel from the last years of the sixth century. Shortly before 506 a horse called Aura, which belonged to Pheidolas of Corinth, lost its rider in the horse-race at Olympia, but none the less won the race and was awarded the prize (Paus. 6, 13, 19). A couplet celebrates this victory and would be appropriately inscribed on the pedestal of the horse's statue (Anth. Pal. 6, 135):

οὗτος Φειδόλα ἵππος ἀπ' εὐρυχόροιο Κορίνθου
ἄγκειται Κρονίδᾳ μνᾶμα ποδῶν ἀρετᾶς.

The lemma in the Palatine Anthology ascribes the lines to Anacreon, but such an ascription, like all ascriptions of unsigned verses on monuments, is open to grave doubts, and in this case the forms *εὐρυχόροιο*, *μνᾶμα*, *ἄγκειται* and *ἀρετᾶς* are alien to his manner[5]. But this need not mean that the couplet is not ancient. Though Pausanias does not mention it, he may have known it, for he says that the Eleans told Pheidolas *ἀναθεῖναι τὴν ἵππον ταύτην* (6, 13, 9), and this is picked up in the *ἄγκειται* of the couplet. It looks authentic, and may well come from just before 500 when the victory was won, and it has something in common with our lines. First, negatively, it does not give the name of the dedicator as such directly but suggests him in *Φειδόλα*, and second, positively, it says what the subject of the statue is and why it is there. It is possible that the couplet on the statue of Arion served a somewhat similar purpose in explaining an unusual subject. The manner is sufficiently terse and factual for a date in the fifth century, though perhaps in the later part of it, when the lines could have been composed for the actual statue known to Herodotus. So far Aelian's information is not

[4] Friedländer-Hoffleit no. 150 p. 141.
[5] L. Weber, *Anacreontea* 31; R. Reitzenstein, *Epigramm und Skolion* 107.

worthless in its main substance and tends to confirm what we might surmise from Herodotus, that the statue of Arion was an object of general interest and known beyond its immediate vicinity.

Having quoted the epigram, Aelian proceeds to quote what he calls a *ὕμνος*, which he says that Arion wrote as a *χαριστήριον* to Poseidon for his delivery from the sea and as his *ζωάγρια* to the dolphins who saved his life. The text may be presented as follows[6]:

ὕψιστε θεῶν,
πόντιε χρυσοτρίαινε Πόσειδον,
γαιάοχ' ἐγκύμον' ἀν' ἅλμαν·
βραγχίοις δὲ περί σε πλωτοὶ
θῆρες χορεύουσι κύκλῳ
κούφοισι ποδῶν ῥίμμασιν
ἐλάφρ' ἀναπαλλόμεναι, σιμοὶ
φριξαύχενες ὠκύδρομοι σκύλακες, φιλόμουσοι
δελφῖνες,
κουρᾶν Νηρεΐδων θεᾶν,
ἃς ἐγείνατ' Ἀμφιτρίτα·
οἵ μ' εἰς Πέλοπος γᾶν
ἐπὶ Ταιναρίαν ἀκτὰν ἐπορεύσατε
πλαζόμενον Σικελῷ ἐνὶ πόντῳ
κυρτοῖς νώτοισι φορεῦντες,
ἅλοκα Νηρεΐας πλακὸς
τέμνοντες ἀστιβῆ πόρον,
φῶτες δόλιοί μ' ὡς ἀφ' ἁλιπλόου νεὼς
εἰς οἶδμ' ἁλιπόρφυρον λίμνας ἔριψαν.

Aelian professes to believe, and expects others to believe with him, that this is a Hymn composed by Arion, who first pays a tribute to Poseidon as lord of the sea and then, by an easy transition, tells his own tale in the first person and indirectly gives thanks to the dolphins who have saved his life. The poem seems to be complete, since it is hard to imagine what could have preceded or followed the surviving words, and Aelian certainly suggests that it is when he introduces it with *καὶ ἔστιν ὁ ὕμνος οὗτος*. There is in it nothing which contradicts Herodotus' story of Arion. The poem is no masterpiece, but it is not without interest as a relic of a relatively unfamiliar kind of poetry. We ought to be able to find a place for it in the scope of Greek literature and relate it to what we know of Arion.

As Van der Hardt saw in 1723[7] and Boeckh argued in 1836[8], a poem of this kind cannot conceivably have been composed in the time of Periander. We must

[6] The latest and best text, especially in punctuation and division of lines, is that of D. L. Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci* 506–507. I have in the main followed this, but have adopted Hermann's correction in 3 and Page's own proposal in his apparatus in 15.

[7] Quoted by H. W. Smyth, *Greek Melic Poets* 207.

[8] Sitz. Berl. Akad. 1836, 74.

therefore ask what it is, and it is natural to claim that it is a forgery fashioned from whatever obscure motives impel forgers to fill the gaps in the works of famous authors. It has indeed been claimed that Aelian himself wrote it[9], but though Aelian has many faults, there is no reason to think that he was a conscious swindler, still less that with his meagre gifts he was capable of writing even such a poem as this. A superficially more attractive candidate is Lobon of Argos, who has in modern times been credited with a formidable array of works ascribed to famous authors[10], and, if he was guilty of this, must have been quite a gifted cheat. But in fact nothing is known about him except that he wrote a work *Περὶ ποιητῶν* (Diog. Laert. 1, 112) and said that Thales' writings ran to about two hundred lines (Id. 1, 34). This is hardly enough to brand him as an energetic and successful swindler, and he may be ruled out of account. The poem might still be a forgery by someone else, and when the Suda says that Arion *ἔγραψε ᾄσματα, προοίμια εἰς ἔπη β'*, there may have been among these pieces some which were deliberate forgeries foisted on to him with dishonest intent. Yet the poem may in its own way be authentic, written by some poet whose name is lost, and ascribed, ignorantly but not fraudulently, to Arion because of its obvious connection with him. It has the appearance of having been composed in the period when reforms in music had prompted reforms in language[11], and especially it recalls the experiments of the dithyrambic poets which found their culmination in the Persae of Timotheus. Premonitions of this style may be found in Pratinas, but with him it was probably intended to create a comic or satirical effect, as later in the *Δεῖπνον* of Philoxenus of Leucas, but Timotheus is in deadly earnest. His style may owe something to Aeschylus, whose *ὄγκος* it tries to imitate, but in aiming at too much it fails. In our poem we can see this spirit, not indeed sensationally but still purposively, at work. It has been thought that this change in language was due to the growing predominance of music over words, which meant that words had to fit the tune instead of being chosen for their own sake[12], but this does not explain why the change in words took the strange direction that it did. The poets of this school tend to load every word with an equal weight, and this in the end destroys variety and balance. We can see something of the kind in our piece.

First, as Aristophanes notes, the new dithyramb likes compound words (Pax 827ff.) and his view is shared by Plato (Crat. 409 c–d) and Aristotle (Poet. 1458 a 10; Rhet. 1406 b 2), while Demetrius, in recommending the use of compound words, makes an exception for *τὰ διθυραμβικῶς συγκείμενα* (Eloc. 91). The point of his criticism is that the compound words of the new style tended to be neologisms of an almost brutal ingenuity and are well exemplified by a sample from Timo-

[9] K. Lehrs, *Populäre Aufsätze* 204.
[10] W. Kroll, RE XIII 931ff.
[11] See amongst others H. Flach, *Geschichte der griechischen Lyrik* 351ff.; G. S. Farnell, *Greek Lyric Poetry* 397; H. W. Smyth, *Greek Melic Poets* 205ff. An important pioneering article is that of F. G. Welcker, *Kleine Schriften* I 89ff.
[12] A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb, Tragedy, Comedy*[2] 56.

theus's Persae, which offers such oddities as *ὀξυπαραυδήτῳ* (66), *ὀριγόνοισιν* (77), *κλυσιδρομάδος* (81), *μακραυχενόπλους* (89), *μαρμαροφέγγεις* (92), *δενδροέθειραι* (106), *μελαμπεταλοχίτωνα* (123), *σιδαρόκωπος* (143), *μουσοπαλαιολύμας* (216), and many other words formed on similar lines. Now our poem offers nothing so bizarre as these, but it has a liking for compound words, and in its short compass produces *χρυσοτρίαινε* (2), *γαιάοχε* (3), *φριξαύχενες*, *ὠκύδρομοι*, *φιλόμουσοι* (8), *ἁλιπλόου* (18), *ἁλιπόρφυρον* (19). But at once we notice a difference. These words are not new inventions, but come from the language of earlier poetry. *χρυσοτρίαινε* is to be found at Aristoph. Equ. 559, *γαιάοχε* at Aesch. Sept. 310 as well as commonly in Homer, *φριξαύχενες* in an anonymous tragic fragment about a boar (Trag. Ad. fr. 383 N), *ὠκύδρομοι* at Eur. Bacch. 872, *φιλόμουσοι* at Aristoph. Nub. 358, *ἁλιπλόου* at Il. 12, 26, *ἁλιπόρφυρον* at Alcman fr. 26, 4 P. Our poet is certainly much less reckless than Timotheus and finds his compounds in highly respectable places. At the same time the dithyrambic style liked to pile up adjectives, especially compound adjectives. So Philoxenus makes his Cyclops address Galatea

ὦ καλλιπρόσωπε χρυσεοβόστρυχε
χαριτόφωνε θάλος Ἐρώτων (fr. 821/8 P)

and Timotheus achieves even more astonishing effects such as *ἐπ' ἰχθυοστέφεσι μαρμαροπτύχοις κόλποισιν Ἀμφιτρίτας* (Pers. 38–39), *μάχιμον δαΐον πλόϊμον Ἕλλαν* (112–3), *κατακυμοτακεῖς ναυσίφθοροι αὖραι* (132–133), *παλίμπορον φυγὴν ταχύπορον* (162–163), and much the same kind of thing is to be found in Telestes, *νυμφαγενεῖ χειροκτύπῳ φηρὶ Μαρσύᾳ* (fr. 805/1 a 4), *ἀερὸν πνεῦμ' αἰολοπτέρυγον* (ibid. c 2 P). Our poet tries this once on a generous scale, when he describes the dolphins as *σιμοὶ φριξαύχενες ὠκύδρομοι σκύλακες, φιλόμουσοι δελφῖνες*. Yet even this is not comparable with most of Timotheus' effects, and we are left with the impression that for some reason or other our poet uses this mannerism, as he uses compound adjectives, with more caution than other dithyrambic poets.

Secondly, the dithyrambic style was condemned as being inflated and having, as Philostratus says, *λόγων ἰδέαν φλεγμαίνουσαν ποιητικοῖς ὀνόμασι* (Vit. Apollon. 1, 17), which the scholiast explains as *διθυραμβώδη συνθέτοις ὀνόμασι σεμνυνομένην καὶ ἐκτοπωτάτοις πλάσμασι ποικιλλομένην*. The desire to get more out of words by stretching their meaning to serve new purposes is not necessarily a fault, and though our poet is adventurous in this direction, he is not always unsuccessful. At 5 he calls dolphins *θῆρες*, and this certainly they are not; for in Greek usage, as we can see from Homer (Od. 24, 291), Hesiod (Op. 277) and Archilochus (fr. 74, 7 D), *θῆρες* are contrasted, as animals on land, with fish in the sea and birds in the air. But by giving them the adjective *πλωτοί* our poet suggests that they are like animals in the sea, and he is justified in this because, when he says that they dance, he has behind him precedents in Pindar (fr. 125, 69–71 Bo.; 140 b Sn.), Sophocles (fr. 762 P) and Euripides (Hel. 1454). We see why he takes a risk with *θῆρες*, and the result is quite happy. Again, when he calls the dolphins *σκύλακες* (8), we might find an excuse for it in Euripides who speaks of *φύσιν*

ὀρεσκόων σκυλάκων πελαγίων τε (Hipp. 1276), but our poet uses the word in a more specific sense. In origin it means "puppy" and, when it is applied to dolphins, it suggests that they gambol like puppies over the sea. In 7 they are called *σιμοί*, which means "snub-nosed", and is applied variously to human beings, whether Ethiopians (Xenophanes fr. 16 D–K) or Scythians (Hdt. 4, 23, 2), to dogs (Xen. Cyn. 4, 1), to hippopotami (Hdt. 2, 71, 1) and to ponies (Id. 5, 9, 2). It is not obviously appropriate to dolphins, who have a long snout rather than any feature that can be called snub, but in so far as this tapers off at the end, the word is permissible, but its special point is that it anticipates the comparison with puppies in the next line. In 16 the words *ἄλοκα Νηρεΐας πλακός* apply the language of the land to the sea, and there is some affinity with Timotheus' *σμαραγδοχαίτας δὲ πόντος ἄλοκα ναίοις ἐφοινίσσετο σταλάγμασι* (Pers. 32–34), but our poet treats the trope with less violence and accommodates it to his picture of dolphins as racing and leaping animals. He practises the dithyrambic device of extending the meaning of words, but with much less bravado than Timotheus, and this may indicate that he is of a less adventurous temperament or that he wrote when the new style had not fully permeated all ranks of writers.

With this in our mind we may look at the metrical structure of the poem, recognizing that any analysis of it may be disputable at some points. None the less a main pattern emerges:

	– – ∪ ∪ –	anapaests
	– ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ – –	4 dactyls
	– – ∪ – / – ∪ ∪ – –	iambic, adonius
	– ∪ – ∪ ⏑ ∪ ∪ – –	trochaic dimeter
5	– – ∪ – / – ∪ – –	iambic, trochaic
	– – ∪ ∪ – / – ∪ ∪	anapaests, cretic[13]
	∪ – ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ – – –	anapaestic dimeter
	– – ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ – –	anapaestic trimeter catalectic
	– – ∪ ⏑ ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪	iambic dimeter
10	– – – ∪ ∪ – ∪ –	glyconic
	– ∪ – ∪ – ∪ – ∪	trochaic dimeter
	– – ∪ ∪ – –	reizianum
	∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ – – – ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪	anapaests
	– ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ – –	4 dactyls
15	– – – – ∪ ∪ – –	paroemiac
	∪ ∪ ∪ – ∪ ∪ – ∪ –	glyconic
	– – ∪ ∪ – – / ∪ ∪ – ∪ – ∪ ∪ – ∪ –	reizianum, ∪ ∪ glyconic[14]
	– – ∪ ∪ – ∪ – / – – ∪ – –	telesillean, iambic penthimimer

[13] This line could conceivably be analysed as two major ionics, but their rarity in choral verse makes this unlikely.

[14] The glyconic preceded by two short syllables is what A. M. Dale, *Lyric Metres of Greek Drama* 206 calls a blunt choriambic enneasyllable, with the first long resolved.

In this there is nothing unusual, and most of the metrical elements are to be found in the Persae of Timotheus, and so far there is no reason why our poem should not belong to more or less the same period. But it uses three metra which do not appear in the Persae, notably anapaests at 1, 6, 7, 8 and 13; reiziana at 12 and 17; and an adonius at 3. We cannot argue too much from this, since of course these metra may well have been in common currency in the time of Timotheus, but it is perhaps significant that not only the other metra of the poem but these three also are to be found in Euripides[15]—the anapaestic sequences at Hec. 154. 177, Ion 144. 859, Tro. 153, Andr. 841, Her. 1190; the reiziana at Her. 1049, I.T. 894, Tro. 1086; and the adonius at Cyc. 661, Med. 855, Her. 786. Euripides was certainly touched by the new style, and a not very adventurous poet who felt that he must conform to fashion might take him in some respects as a model. In that case the metre suggests that the poem may have been written when the influence of Euripides was still strong and had not been finally displaced by that of the dithyrambic poets. This does not give a firm date, but it suggests that some time about 400 may not be far out.

The ascription of the poem to Arion can be explained simply by the part which he plays in it in telling of his adventure, and if the Suda is right in reporting the existence of *ἄσματα* in his name, this may conceivably have been one of them[16], especially if it is unlikely that any authentic poems by him survived into later times[17]. The poem is a genuine production in its own kind and certainly seems to be complete, but this kind is unfamiliar and calls for attention. We cannot doubt that this is a solo song performed by a single actor who takes the part of Arion. This is clear from the use of *μ'* in 12 and 18, which must refer to a single person, who is the chief actor. But secondly there are undeniable signs that he is supported by a chorus who act the role of dolphins. This is most obvious when the song says that they *χορεύουσι κύκλῳ* (5), which indicates that they form a *κύκλιος χορός* and dance round the actor in their midst. This is strengthened by *κούφοισι ποδῶν ῥίμμασιν ἐλάφρ' ἀναπαλλόμεναι* (6–7). The last word recalls Homer's *ἀναπάλλεται ἰχθύς* (Il. 23, 692) and is perfectly applicable to dolphins, since the notion that they dance is, as we have seen, well established in Greek thought. But to ascribe *πόδες* to them is by any calculation extremely odd. Euripides may seem to do something of the kind for ships (Hec. 940. 1020), but he is simply exploiting the familiar image of a journey, and though Timotheus calls oars *ὀρείους πόδας ναός* (Pers. 90), it is an extension of the same notion. But to ascribe feet to fish is unexampled and would be absurd if there were not a good excuse for it. What the poet means is that the dancers who enact the dolphins leap into the air and throw their feet about, no doubt imitating the way in which dolphins leap out of the sea. The singer has his eye more on the actors than on any actual fish, and this

[15] I am much indebted to O. Schroeder, *Euripides, Cantica* 198ff.
[16] I assume that in this the *ἄσματα* are different from the *προοίμια*.
[17] Wilamowitz, *Textg. d. gr. Lyr.* 8.

determines his language. The movements of the chorus imitate those of fish both in their leaps and their speed, *ὠκύδρομοι* (8), and this is an idea familiar from Pindar (P. 2, 50; N. 6, 64–65; fr. 220 Bo.; 234 Sn.). We can form a picture of dancers leaping and running as they take the part of dolphins, while the actor, who takes the part of Arion, describes their actions in appropriate words.

A performance of this kind, conducted by a soloist who sings and a chorus which dances, is not the normal form of Greek choral *μολπή*. Before it could come into existence two steps had to be taken. First came the introduction of solo songs. This is ascribed by Aristotle to Melanippides (Rhet. 1409 b 26), but it seems to have been extended by Philoxenus of Cythera; for we hear that Aristophanes referred to him in this context, *καὶ Ἀριστοφάνης ὁ κωμικὸς μνημονεύει τοῦ Φιλοξένου, καί φησιν ὅτι εἰς τοὺς κυκλίους χοροὺς μέλη εἰσηνέγκατο* ("Plut." Mus. 30), and the contrasted collocation of *κυκλίους χορούς* and *μέλη* suggests that the latter are solo songs. It does not much matter for our purpose whether they were introduced by Melanippides or Philoxenus, but it is important that they belonged to the new dithyramb, and this would explain the part played by the soloist in our song. This change was followed by another no less decisive, when the chorus, instead of singing, played a part which called for too much action to allow them also to sing. This follows from the Aristotelian Problemata 19, 15, where, in answer to the question why nomes are not arranged in strophes and antistrophes like other songs, it is said that it is because they are delivered by professional artists, *ἀγωνισταί*, whose function is to imitate actions, and this means that the music is varied to suit the various actions. Then follows the important information that the same is true of dithyrambs, which used to be performed by amateurs, *ἐλεύθεροι*, but are now performed by professionals,— *μεταβάλλειν γὰρ πολλὰς μεταβολὰς τῷ ἑνὶ ῥᾷον ἢ τοῖς πολλοῖς καὶ τῷ ἀγωνιστῇ ἢ τοῖς τὸ ἦθος φυλάττουσιν*, "for it is easier for a single person to make many changes than for a number of persons, and for a professional actor than for those who keep the character of the music." This puts beyond doubt the conclusion that the single actor has assumed a new prominence and performs duties which are beyond the capacity of the actual chorus. His separation from them is clear from the Cyclops of Philoxenus, who made the love-lorn Polyphemus play a harp and sing a solo to Galatea (frs. 819–821/6–8 P), and it is possible that his chorus took the part of sheep and goats, since the chorus in Aristophanes' Plutus 296ff. seems to imitate them in this role. By this time, which may be placed c. 400, the soloist's duties were different from those of the chorus and called for a more professional handling. This indicates that our song is a solo sung by a professional, while the chorus dances to it. Once the solo-part gained this prominence, the role of the chorus might be limited to dancing and miming. In our song they play the part of dolphins, and it is tempting to think that, when they are spoken of as *κυρτοῖς νώτοισι φορεῦντες* (15), they mimicked what happened to Arion by making some of their number leap on the backs of others, as still happens in some traditional Greek dances.

That the chorus should take the part of fish is unusual but not unprecedented. Soon after 403 Archippus produced his comedy *Ἰχθύες*[18], and though its main purpose was political, it took its name from the chorus who were presented as fish, or more specifically as *θρᾶτται* (Athen. 7, 329c), and must have been dressed with some degree of verisimilitude. But although Archippus may have been encouraged to desert the human race for his chorus by such examples as the Birds of Aristophanes and the *Θηρία* of Crates[19], yet, like them, he may have had earlier dances in mind. Just as the Birds recalls a black-figure oinochoe which depicts men decked with feathers to look like birds as they dance to a flute-player[20], so a black-figure skyphos of about the same date shows men dressed as warriors riding on dolphins and seems to reflect a similar kind of dance[21]. This indicates that in the not too distant background of our song there existed dances in which men took the part of fish and even of dolphins. Such a dance need not necessarily have been accompanied by a song, but it provided a precedent first for Archippus and then for our poem. There may well have been other dances of a like kind, and in that case the decision to make the chorus act the part of dolphins would not be so unusual as we might think. We cannot be sure how the dancers would be made to look like dolphins, but perhaps something may be deduced from a "Pontic" vase, which shows three elderly figures, each with the hind-quarters of a fish attached to his waist, advancing towards four Nereids[22]. This had been thought to be a mythological scene[23], but if that were so, surely the figures would have been modelled on the usual fashion of Tritons and not merely have fish-like quarters added to them. It looks more like a dance in which fish and Nereids take a part, and it is perhaps worth noting that our song mentions both Nereids (10) and Nereus (16), and even goes out of its way to make the Nereids daughters of Amphitrite, though Doris is usually regarded as their mother (Hes. Theog. 240; Apollodor. Bibl. 1, 2, 2 and 7; Ovid. Met. 2, 269; 13, 741). This may be because earlier forms of such dances sometimes contained Nereids. In any case fish were sufficiently represented in dances for our author to have no difficulty in making his chorus play the part of the dolphins who rescued Arion. We may also assume that the music was played by a flute-player, since not only was this the regular practice for *κύκλιοι χοροί*, but the flute was especially associated with dolphins, and, when they are here called *φιλόμουσοι* (8), it has the backing of Pindar (fr. 125, 69–70 Bo.; 140 b 12 Sn.) and Euripides (El. 435; cf. Aristoph. Ran. 1317–18), to say nothing of actual fact.

Our poem is unusual in not drawing its subject from the world of myth. It is true that special circumstances allowed this for outstanding events in recent

---

[18] A. von Mess, Rh. Mus. 66 (1911) 382ff.; H. Swoboda, RE I A 842.
[19] Schmid-Stählin, *Gesch. d. gr. Lit.* I 4, 156.
[20] M. Bieber, *History of the Greek and Roman Theatre*[2] fig. 123.
[21] Ibid. fig. 125.
[22] A. Lesky, *Thalatta* 111 fig. 29.
[23] E. Buschor, Sitz. Bay. Akad. 1941, 2, 11.

times, as when Phrynichus wrote his Phoenissae and Aeschylus his Persae, and it may have been with such examples in mind that Timotheus wrote his Persae. Anything to do with the Persian Wars was sufficiently heroic to deserve a place in serious song, and that no doubt is why poets treat of them. Arion, however, falls between two stools. On the one hand he does not belong to the heroic past; on the other, he is not connected with recent events of glorious memory. That he was honoured at Corinth is likely enough from Pindar's reference to the dithyramb as a Corinthian invention (O. 13, 18–19), but there is no sign that heroic rites were offered to him. If he was sufficiently important to receive a song about himself, it calls for explanation. At the start we need not doubt that the Corinthians believed the story, which they told to Herodotus, about Arion and the dolphin. Such a thing is by no means impossible, and we have no reason to disbelieve the story of the dolphin which carried a boy on its back in the bay of Hippo Zarytus, as it is told soberly by the elder Pliny (N.H. 9, 8, 26), more elaborately by his nephew (Ep. 9, 33) and more fancifully by Oppian (Hal. 5, 452–518). A similar story is told about a boy from Iasus in Caria (Plut. Soll. Anim. 35; Ael. N.A. 6, 15)[24]. Details may be added to make the tales more interesting, but that a basis of fact is possible follows from a very similar adventure reported on unimpeachable authority in recent years from New Zealand[25]. Yet for the story of Arion such stories are perhaps irrelevant, and we need not ask whether he actually rode on a dolphin or not. What is told of him is so similar to what is told of certain other characters that it must be related to them and assessed by comparison with them.

What concern us are not folk-tales but myths, that is stories told to explain religious monuments or rites or names, and we may look at some possible examples: 1. Telemachus. The people of Zacynthus said that as a boy he fell into the sea and was rescued by dolphins, and that is why Odysseus had a dolphin emblazoned on his shield (Plut. Soll. Anim. 36). This detail looks like an aetiological explanation of Odysseus' blazon, which had been described by Stesichorus (fr. 225/48 P) and was known in later ages to Euphorion (fr. 67 Powell) and Lycophron (Al. 142). The blazon called for an explanation, and this was found in the popular belief in the benevolent services of dolphins. That the connection with Telemachus is late follows from the difficulty of fitting any such episode into the career of Odysseus as Homer tells it; for this leaves almost no time when Odysseus could have been with his son in his childhood[26].

2. Koiranos of Paros. He was shipwrecked between Paros and Naxos, or off Mykonos, and brought by dolphins to the island of Sikinos, south of Paros (Plut. Soll. Anim. 35) or to Miletus (Phylarchus 81 F 26 Jacoby). When after a long life he died, dolphins attended his funeral (Ael. N.A. 8, 3). His special interest is

[24] See A. W. Mair, *Oppian, Colluthus, Tryphiodorus* 487ff.
[25] T. F. Higham, Greece and Rome, n. s. 7 (1960) 82–86.
[26] J. Schmidt in Roscher, *Lex. Myth.* V 205.

that his shipwreck, in which all his companions perished, is mentioned by Archilochus (fr. 117 D), but we do not know whether Archilochus regarded him as a mythical figure or a more recent historical character, but at least he says that he was saved by Poseidon.

3. Enalos of Lesbos[27]. He was a Penthilid, one of the first colonists of the island. He leapt into the sea after his beloved, and both were brought to land by dolphins and landed in a place where a temple of Poseidon was later built by them with the help of the dolphins, and the god himself was worshipped as Enalos (Plut. Sept. Sap. Conv. 20; Soll. Anim. 36; Athen. 11, 466 c–d).

4. Melicertes of Corinth[28]. After being thrown into the sea, he was brought to land, either alive or dead, by a dolphin (Lucian. Dial. Mar. 8, 1; Paus. 1, 44, 11; Philostrat. Im. 2, 16) and was connected with the foundation of the Isthmian Games, over which Poseidon presided (Pind. Hypoth. Isthm. p. 192, 7 Dr.).

5. Palaemon of Corinth[29]. On the road from Corinth to Lechaion were statues of Poseidon and Leucothea and between them Palaemon on a dolphin (Paus. 2, 3, 4). On Corinthian coins he is depicted as standing on a dolphin[30], and he naturally has been identified with Melicertes.

6. Taras and Phalanthus of Tarentum[30]. At Tarentum coins, which show a figure riding on a dolphin have the inscription *ΤΑΡΑΣ*, and this has been thought to be the figure of the eponymous hero, especially as Aristotle *ἐν τῇ Ταραντίνων πολιτείᾳ καλεῖσθαί φησι νόμισμα παρ' αὐτοῖς νοῦμμον, ἐφ' οὗ ἐντετυπῶσθαι Τάραντα τὸν Ποσειδῶνος δελφῖνι ἐποχούμενον* (fr. 590 R). But he seems to have been misled by the inscription which refers not to the figure but to the place, and it is more likely that the figure is of Phalanthus than of Taras[31]. Phalanthus was said to have been wrecked on his way to the West and to have been saved by a dolphin, and that is why near his image at Delphi there was an image of it (Paus. 10, 13, 10). The distinction between Taras and Phalanthus does not perhaps matter very much for the present discussion, since both were closely connected with Tarentum, and Taras was the son of Poseidon (Paus. 10, 10, 8). All these cases are familiar and have often been discussed[32], but their relevance for our enquiry is that they provide a background for the story of Arion.

In every case, except that of Telemachus, whose story looks like a late, literary invention not very dissimilar from that which Euphorion tells about a girl called Apriate who leaps into the sea from an unwanted lover and is saved by a dolphin (Page, Gk. Lit. Pap. I 495), the man saved is connected with Poseidon, and there is good reason to think that these heroes are in some sense substitutes for him[33]. Aristophanes addresses him as *δελφίνων μεδέων* (Equ. 560), and in the market-

[27] A. Tümpel, RE V 2545–2547.
[28] A. Lesky, ibid. XV 514–519.
[29] P. Weizsäcker in Roscher, *Lex. Myth.* III 1, 1255–1262.
[30] Imhoof-Blumer, Arch. Jahrb. 1888, 288 fig. 9. 14.
[31] F. Studniczka, *Kyrene* 175ff.; V. Ehrenberg, RE XIX 1623ff.
[32] Notably by H. Usener, *Sintflutsagen* 154ff.; K. Klement, *Arion* passim.
[33] J. Ilberg in Roscher, *Lex. Myth.* III 2239.

place at Corinth he had a dolphin under his feet (Paus. 2, 2, 7). Moreover, it is clear that at times he was thought to ride on a dolphin. It may be he who is so depicted on a gold strip in Leningrad[34], and Lucian makes him say to Triton *σὺ δὲ ἀλλὰ δελφῖνά τινα τῶν ὠκέων παράστησον· ἐφιππάσομαι γὰρ ἐπ' αὐτοῦ τάχιστα* (Dial. Mar. 6, 2). The cult of a male figure on a dolphin is essentially the cult of a sea-god, who may not yet be fully differentiated as Poseidon, or be called by a different name, or have taken over some of his attributes, such as the dolphin. The curious thing is that Arion should have been added to this company. He was a historical figure, known already to Solon (ap. Ioh. Diakonos, Rh. Mus. 63 [1908] 150) and to Hellanicus (4 F 66 Jacoby). His fame was that of a singer and an organiser and producer of dithyrambs, and neither of these suggests any connection with Poseidon or any reason why he should be treated as a hero. On the other hand at two points he touches the legends of these other dolphin-riders. First, Herodotus says that he got his information about Arion from Corinthians and Lesbians (1, 23, 1), and Arion was closely connected with both, being born at Methymna in Lesbos and spending much of his life at Corinth under Periander. It happens also that among the riders Enalos belongs to Lesbos, and Melicertes and Palaemon to Corinth. Secondly, though Herodotus does not mention any connection between Arion and Poseidon, our poem emphatically does, and there must be a reason for it. It looks as if the story of the dolphin had been attached to the historical Arion because he was connected with rites in which a god and his dolphin took a central place.

How this happened we can only guess, but even a guess may help to clarify the nature of the question. Dolphin-dances, held in honour of a sea-god, who need not necessarily have had a name, or, if he had, could be variously Poseidon or Melicertes or Palaemon, would be held from an early date in Corinth among the *κύκλιοι χοροί* which Arion found in existence and put in order and organised. Such a dance would be performed by a chorus imitating dolphins in its movements to a flute-accompaniment. Since Poseidon was held in high honour at Corinth, which Pindar calls *Ἰσθμίου πρόθυρον Ποτειδᾶνος* (O. 13, 3–4), a dance of this kind would be prominent in local celebrations and come to be connected with the name of Arion who had turned it into a formal ceremony. In the course of time, as often happens with rites, the original meaning or purpose of the dance would be forgotten, and its remembered connection with Arion would lead to his being credited with riding on a dolphin in such a way as the dance imitated. Though the original sea-god was displaced from the chief part, he would still, as Poseidon, keep some vague association with the dance just because he was the god of the sea and through his dolphins responsible for such a deliverance. The nameless statue at Taenarum, erected originally to a sea-god, would inspire some poet to write an epigram on it saying, as he may well have believed, that it represented Arion on a dolphin. The story, thus started and set on its course, gained enough credence

[34] J. Overbeck, *Kunstmaterialien* III 319.

to spread to Arion's original home in Lesbos, from whose people, as well as from the Corinthians, Herodotus heard it, and where it accorded sufficiently with local traditions to gain acceptance. Then, in the musical and poetical revolution of the late fifth century, an unknown poet, who knew something about the dance and the legend of Arion associated with it and was acquainted with the work of Euripides and Philoxenus, took advantage of the new conditions to compose a song which would be sung by a single actor in the part of Arion, while the chorus, dressed as dolphins, ran and leapt around him. Much of this is mere supposition and must not be accepted as anything more. The song may not be very distinguished, but it has some small merits, and it shows not only what a minor poet might do in a time of literary changes but how the Greeks were able to keep some relics of an ancient ritual even when they thought that they had reformed it out of existence.