MAJORITY REAL: "REALISM" IN GRAECO-ROMAN FABLE AS DEPICTED THROUGH THE CROW AND RAVEN

MAJORITY REAL: "REALISM" IN GRAECO-ROMAN FABLE AS DEPICTED THROUGH THE CROW AND RAVEN

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ABSTRACT

David Wallace-Hare: Majority Real: "Realism" in Graeco-Roman Fable As Depicted Through the Crow and Raven (Under the direction of Professor Paul Murgatroyd, Professor Sean Corner, and Professor Claude Eilers)

The role of realism in the depiction of animals in Greaco-Roman fable is investigated. The crow and the raven have been chosen as the prism through which the investigation is carried out. Fable will be shown to be a genre founded on a contextually realistic depiction of animals, and this may especially be seen in the corvid fables. Realism must, however, be understood contextually, as what constitutes a realistic depiction of crows and ravens in Graeco-Roman times is quite different than what one would encounter at present. As a result of which the crow and raven are marked by attributes ranging from cleverness, parenting ability, resistance to weather, vocal mimicry, longevity, and augural significance, amongst a host of other characteristics which sometimes coincide with modern views but often do not. Thus Graeco-Roman fables dealing with crows and ravens can be broadly divided into two categories: fables dealing in various ways with their intelligence, and fables dealing with their augural significance.

DEDICATION

MATRI MEAE

Nunc in caelo; laeta, alata, dolore soluta es.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Paul Murgatroyd and the other members of my thesis committee Professor Sean Corner and Professor Claude Eilers for their insight and advice.

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DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The author declares that the content of this research has been completed by David Alan Wallace-Hare, with gratitude for the contributions of his supervisory committee consisting of Professor Paul Murgatroyd, Professor Sean Corner, and Professor Claude Eilers.

The author hopes that he has furthered the study of ancient fable by the employment of a novel approach for its treatment, namely the use of modern ornithological and ethological works to the end of investigating the quality of realism in Graeco-Roman fable. Further, he hopes that his thesis has shown that realism was an important factor in the depiction of animals in Graeco-Roman fable contrary to popular belief and prevailing scholarship.

Chapter One: Introduction

Are stereotypes realistic? Accurate? Truthful? What about animal stereotypes, are they realistic? For example, are foxes clever; are eagles noble; are lions brave? Are these not stereotypes? Many, however, might have answered yes to those three questions. If most or even very many answer yes, is that not a reality, which constitutes the majority opinion, even if scientifically and factually untrue (by more objective standards)?[1] Thus typecasting, in some ways, is a, or rather, one window to perceived reality.[2] Whether such

[1] "And now for the eagle! I hate to shatter the fabulous illusions about this glorious bird, but I must adhere to the truth: all true birds of prey are, compared with passerines or parrots, extremely stupid creatures. This applies particularly to the golden eagle, "the eagle" of our mountains and our poets, which is one of the most stupid among them, much more indeed than any barnyard fowl. This, of course, does not preclude this proud bird from being beautiful and impressive.... but here we have to deal with mental qualities of the creature, its supposed love of freedom and its imaginary suffering in captivity." (Lorenz, *King Solomon's Ring: New Light On Animal Ways* (London, 1965), 51). Lorenz goes on to cite a memorable anecdote on his disillusionment about eagles. He also discusses animal stereotypes in the same section, 49 ff.

[2] Out of colossal scholarship on the subject of stereotypes and stereotyping, see especially, Leyens, Yzerbyt, and Schadron, *Stereotypes and Social Cognition* (London, 1994). Oakes, Haslam, and.Turner, *Stereotyping and Social Reality* (Oxford, 1994.). Both works include extensive bibliographies, offer excellent definitions of 'stereotype,' and analyze historical usages and applications of the term as well as the positive and negative associations of stereotyping. Although much has been written on stereotype, much of the literature is derivative of earlier works and replies to studies and thus a few citations are enough to give a good impression of what is representative of the scholarship in general. Too much ought not to be read into the idea of stereotype in fable, although it is a useful model for understanding the idea of "static" animal behaviour in antiquity. I have not included works on animal rights (which do cover stereotypes towards animals) for the reason that they often tend to be written from a biased perspective, that is, they consistently write in favour of animals and animal rights, a perspective almost wholly absent from the Graeco-Roman literature, as seen in fable and elsewhere, where the "stereotypes" are actually beliefs and not considered abnormal, deviant, or prejudicial in any way. Thus for an ass to be beaten during its lifetime and then have its worn-out hide on death turned into a tambourine and thus be beaten in the afterlife is treated with levity

stereotypes are verfiably true need not matter to those who employ them especially if they are not perceived as stereotypes. Stereotypes can basically be defined as (usually group-based) assumptions about a particular class of person (or animal) which categorize the individual of that group as interchangeable based on that category: i.e. foxes are clever, hence that fox over there coming out of the woods, is clever by default.[3] What about 'positive' stereotypes, such as some of the more laudatory ones mentioned above? If the majority believe that crows are funereal, a negative view, does that mean it is true? National stereotypes do not enter into the picture here, in Greek fable and Latin all that matters is the opinions of either the Greeks or Romans respectively. If most ancient Greeks believe ravens to be intelligent, and the opinions and beliefs of the Greeks are the only possible or significant opinions, most means a lot. What happens when even scientists (that is philosophers when dealing with Greek antiquity) concur that something is true in addition to it being widely believed but that truth later (millennia so) proves to be just a stereotype?[4] If even they believe it, how is that not reality, at the time at any

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in fable and meant to cause the audience to laugh. Of course, there were dissenting viewpoints, animal-rights-minded individuals, mostly rich and fully leisured and away from the farm and dirt of the fields, like Plutarch, and those who decried the brutality of the Colisseum, all minority opinions.

[3] Leyens, *et al.*, 11: "Let's agree on a very general defintion of stereotypes: they are *shared beliefs about person attributes, usually personality traits, but often also behaviours, of a group of people....the process of stereotyping is the process of applying a - stereotypical - judgement such as rendering these individuals interchangeable with other members of the category.*" See also 17-18. Although the definition Leyens, *et al* gives is dealing with people, it can easily be used for stereotyped behaviours of animals, especially fabular animals.

[4] Cf. Aristotle's comment on the character of sheep/ herd animals (Arist. *HA* VIII.III.): "Now, the characters of animals, as has been said earlier, differ both in respect to cowardice, mildness, courage, and gentleness and in respect to intelligence and stupidity.

rate? What happens when stereotypes are not recognized as such but rather are merely perceived as reality, as, after all, reality is merely the tacit or active agreement of the majority on the existence of things? A stereotype, then, becomes a belief, which is much harder to explain away.

In Graeco-Roman antiquity we are dealing dually with stereotypification *and* contextually accurate animal observation to such a degree that it becomes a problem of disentangling what is the stereotype and what the observation of nature. Sometimes the two coincide, sometimes singly occur, and sometimes they run parallel. These phenomena are especially apparent in fable, a genre which actively promotes the notion that the characters in it are true to life and act according to nature on the one hand, while at the same time it advocates the traditional 'characters' of animals as fulfilling this true-to-life requirement, as will be discussed shortly. If the static/fixed/stereotyped (however one wishes to describe it) characters of animals are said to be true to life, does that mean realistic? Hopefully the current work will serve to shed light on what realism in fable constitutes.

It must be noted that no animal in fable is ever depicted behaving in a wholly realistic fashion from modern standards of ethology. Fable is not attempting to be natural history, though it sometimes draws on natural history (which often does share with fable common beliefs about animals) but it *does* claim to realistically portray the true

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For the character of sheep, as it is said, is naïve and brainless. For of all the quadrupeds it is the poorest, and it walks into deserted areas toward nothing, and often during winter they go out from inside, and when they are caught by a snowstorm, unless they shepherd moves them, they refuse to depart, but perish, left behind, unless the shepherds bring rams, and then they follow (them)." All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

behaviour, environment and physiology of animals (correct, that is, from the standpoint of antiquity at the time the rhetoricians who discussed fable composition were writing). Fable, although containing natural historical elements which seem to coincide with modern standards of animal observation, does not focus on these to the detriment of its ostensibly main goal, namely, to extract a moral lesson from nature. In terms of "realistic" traits I would exclude such basic common knowledge as the leopard has spots (Perry 12), cows eat grass, roosters crow, etc. The leopard's spots are its most striking feature and all that is necessary to bring it to mind; further description becomes unnecessary with exotic animals like this in fable. Cf. the peacock, which is both an exotic and subsequently a domesticated, albeit expensive, bird; thus there is the standard exotic description of its tail feathers, but fable also describes its inability to fly high (described in Perry 294), which suggests a closer observation of the bird.

Realistic description of animals in fable involves two sorts of trait, one of lesser importance, the other, greater, both of which do not have to be present at the same time to create the *enargeia* necessary for the audience to visualize the animal, correctly: 1) The physical features of the animal (for example, the fox's tail, the leopard's spots, the peacock's tail, the rooster's spurs, the stag's antlers.), which tend to be its diagnostic and most striking feature(s) (though this is a matter of opinion, too, not a universally agreed upon set of traits), which can be made important when made a central part of the fable (such as the stag's horns or the peacock's beauty turned into fables about vanity, but which are usually relegated to ancillary, background information which helps to fill out the animal; and 2) its assumed and commonly perceived natural behaviour. The second is

much broader and more variable and can range from mental characteristics to usual actions and is far more often the basis for moral extraction and the 'true-to-life' quality sought after.

A realistic depiction for ancient Greeks and Romans, broadly speaking, may have even included the description of the appropriate behaviour of domesticated, enslaved animals such as dogs, weasels/cats, livestock, etc. That is, an ox slaving away at the plough, would be understood to be in its/a natural habitat. It depends on how realism was defined. To frame a definition of zoological realism in the ancient world in modern ethological terms would be a mistake if taken to the extreme, for if a crow or raven croaks and is noticed by someone as acting ominously by so doing, who is to say that that was not considered a realistic description of this singular bird? Whereas, if a lion were to be described as being stabled with a horse, that would not have been considered realistic and would, in all probability, have been relegated to the realm of poetic fancy or understood to be the fabulous part of fable on par with transpecies communication and multispecies hunting parties.

I am not arguing that more realistic animal descriptions in fable are necessarily evidence of a Graeco-Roman predilection for realistic depiction. Such attention to detail in a genre which advocated brevity, varied with different animals, and was most marked with birds, may have been more the result of inherited agricultural lore and/or an increased interest in the behaviour of animals in the Graeco-Roman world (among a host of impossible-to-know possibilities). As I am focused on fable specifically, it is difficult to pinpoint the motive behind more realistic description. Strictly terrestrial animals, wild

and domesticated, often bear generalized, rather flatly realistic descriptions in very broad strokes. That domestic and domesticated animals were described in broad terms, if at all, might be expected given their familiarity. Birds may be described more realistically because of their otherness, the fact that they have access to a realm to which man has, until very recently, been denied entry. Exception may be made for birds which were frequently sold at market such as the partridge, rooster and sparrow or those treated often as pets. Wild creatures which were destructive to commercial interests, such as the snake, wolf, and the fox would have been familiar too; all are treated negatively. The fox is at least described as cunning; the wolf does not even have that going for it in fable. Birds occupy an ambiguous place in this regard: some are seen to be destructive to crops (crows, ravens, jackdaws, cranes, starlings), but this is infrequently mentioned and only in agricultural contexts. The farmer may have viewed these birds negatively, but the city-dweller may not have. The *Augustana Collection* is ultimately derived from Hellenistic times; the other fabulists come after, in the early Imperial period onward. By these times people were increasingly living in cities and thus views of animals should not be assumed to be uniform across population of the Graeco-Roman world.

In order to understand realism in fable we must first examine how ancient theorists defined the genre, which will show that what we perceive as accurate depictions of the same animals found in fable is rather different than what the ancients believed. After that, some modern definitions of types of realism may be useful to us in this endeavour, but only a few will be applicable to Graeco-Roman literature.

The most widely cited definition for fable comes from the Greek rhetorician Theon, writing in the 1st / 2nd century A.D., whose definition, although somewhat enigmatic, is indicative of the type of realism we should expect was believed to be true and testifies to the fact that, contrary to popular belief, fable is a genre firmly rooted in naturalism. Theon defines fable as "a false account resembling truth."[5] He does not explain the "truth," nor does he attempt to explain this facet of his definition further than this. The "false" part refers to the fact that the fable is presumed to be impossible in a variety of ways, i.e. animals cannot speak either with each other or with people, nor can they have parties, form hunting expeditions, create or topple monarchies, etc. Theon briefly discusses 'truth' when referring to how a fabulist, although claiming that he is writing something fictitious and impossible, nevertheless asserts that what he writes is plausible and helpful.[6] Obviously Theon recognizes that people might have trouble understanding how a fable, generally thought to be the epitome of fictional literature, could in any way be plausible. He explains that one must demolish such assertions of plausibility and practicality by arguments from the contrary,[7] and one of the ways to demolish an opponent's fable is through an argument from peculiarity. This quality, he defines as "that which goes against believed/trusted knowledge, or what is spoken in contradiction to common notions/assumptions, for example if someone were to say that man had not been fashioned by Prometheus, but by some other god, or were to say that

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[5] Theon, *Progymnasmata* 1 and repeated in 3: Μῦθός ἐστι λόγος ψευδὴς εἰκονίζων ἀλήθειαν.
[6] Theon, *Prog.* 3: ἐπεὶ γὰρ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ μυθοποιὸς ὁμολογεῖ καὶ ψευδῆ καὶ ἀδύνατα συγγράφειν, πιθανὰ δὲ καὶ ὠφέλιμα,
[7] Theon, *Prog.* 3: ἀνασκευαστέον μὲν δεικνύντας, ὅτι ἀπίθανα καὶ ἀσύμφορα λέγει· κατασκευαστέον δὲ ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων·

the ass is sensible, or that the fox is brainless."[8] Theon only hints here at what fabular realism might be: the adherence to commonly held beliefs about divine and animal characters. Whether this means adherence to traditional beliefs about them and not actual, current beliefs is never stated in any definition and not at all clear, especially in regard to animal characters. What might the truth refer to, then, and do any other authors give a more definitive explanation of this peculiar aspect of fable?

Another Greek rhetorician, Hermogenes, writing in the second or third century A.D. expands on Theon's definition somewhat, but does not offer much more help in respect to how plausibility can be achieved through correct ethology:

> They give an outline of it [that is, of fable]: they claim, on the one hand, that it is false, but is altogether useful for anything in one's life; and yet they want it to be plausible, too. But how might it become plausible? If we make the actions appropriate to the characters. For example, someone is contending over beauty: let him be taken as a peacock. Something clever must be ascribed to someone: in this case (take him as) a fox. If individuals are aping men's affairs: in this case (suppose them) apes.[9]

Hermogenes' explanation of fable's method of achieving plausibility is somewhat different than the rest, in that the behaviours are first observed in men, then found to occur in animals, and only subsequently is a likeness drawn between the two. This suggests that the so-called realistic ethology of these animals advocated by the

[8] Theon, *Prog.* 3: τὸ δὲ ἀσύνηθές ἐστι τὸ παρὰ τὴν πεπιστευμένην ἱστορίαν, ἢ τὸ παρὰ τὰς κοινὰς ὑπολήψεις λεγόμενον, οἷον εἴ τις τοὺς ἀνθρώπους μὴ πεπλάσθαι εἴποι ὑπὸ τοῦ Προμηθέως, ἀλλ’ ὑπ’ ἄλλου τινὸς τῶν θεῶν, ἢ τὸν ὄνον φρόνιμον εἴποι, ἢ ἀνόητον τὴν ἀλώπεκα.

[9] Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* 1: Ὑπογραφὴν δέ τινα τοιαύτην ἀποδιδόασιν αὐτοῦ· ψευδῆ μὲν αὐτὸν ἀξιοῦσιν εἶναι, πάντως δὲ χρήσιμον πρός τι τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ· ἔτι δὲ καὶ πιθανὸν εἶναι βούλονται. πῶς δ’ ἂν γένοιτο πιθανός; ἂν τὰ προσήκοντα πράγματα τοῖς προσώποις ἀποδιδῶμεν. οἷον περὶ κάλλους τις ἀγωνίζεται· ταὼς οὗτος ὑποκείσθω. δεῖ τινι σοφόν τι περιτεθῆναι· ἀλώπηξ ἐνταῦθα. μιμούμενοι τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων πράγματα· ἐνταῦθα οἱ πίθηκοι.

rhetoricians is undoubtedly anthropocentric in origin and not perhaps entirely a fair assessment of one or more behavioural traits of these animals. One gets the impression of a miniaturized stage with the animals as actors (*prosôpa*) rather than actual representations of them in a state of nature. The choice of the word *prosôpois* instead of "appropriate to their natures" is perhaps important too in showing the animals to be stock character types along the lines of "the love-struck young man", "the greedy and/or clever slave", "the greedy pimp" of Middle and New Comedy. Of course our assessment of this is coloured by the assumption that anthropocentrism is somehow wrong and that Hermogenes and the fabulists are advocating a prejudiced system that pigeonholes (pardon the pun) these birds and beasts into stereotyped and static behaviours from which they cannot escape either in reality through popular perceptions of them or certainly in literature where they are forced to act this way. This is certainly a present-day view and not how Hermogenes or his contemporaries likely would have seen their work or methodology.

The next examination of fable comes not from a rhetorician but rather from a Neo-Pythagorean philosopher, Apollonius of Tyana, as depicted in Flavius Philostratus' (2nd-3rd century A.D.) biography of him. In a discussion about the merits of mythology and fable, Apollonius, an advocate of fable, observes that Aesop is a useful and eminently laudable author and beneficial because: "he makes animals both more agreeable and worthy of attention to men, for we, having become acquainted with these fables from childhood and having been reared by them, adopt opinions about each of the animals, *viz.* that some are kingly, while others foolish, and that some are subtle, while others

innocent..."[10] So perhaps the popular perceptions toward these animals' characters have been engendered by Aesop's fables as well, in a vicious circle. Calling this propaganda would be going too far; as would calling it brainwashing; since there is no reason why there should have been some campaign for or against animals, domestic and wild, in Philostratus' time. Whether this means that children outgrow these beliefs is not clear either; presumably, it does not, as the rhetoricians advocate that the character of animals in fable must match their appropriate (i.e. characteristic and stereotyped) behaviours. Nor can Apollonius' perspective, at least from a modern standpoint, be approved of either, as the depiction of certain animals like the donkey as stupid and lustful, the fox as malevolent and clever, the jackdaw as witless and foolishly adventurous, *inter alia*, cannot be taken as positive character portrayals. But one might ask, positive as opposed to what? Apollonius does not say what, but it is implied that the stereotyped lot faced by Aesop's animals is better than they have otherwise. Yet merely basing the social engineering idea of animal characters on one author is difficult, especially because Apollonius, an animal advocate himself by philosophy, is a biased source for determining popular belief. But he does present an interesting case and possible explanation of what "realism" might actually mean with respect to fable.

Now, the treatment of this aspect of fable offered by Themistius is still more enlightening, and deserves to be quoted at length:

> It's often helpful to recall the fabulist Aesop, and the excellent story

[10] Philostratus, *VA* 5.14: χαρίεν δ’ αὐτοῦ τὸ καὶ τὰ ἄλογα ἡδίω ἐργάζεσθαι καὶ σπουδῆς ἄξια τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, ἐκ παίδων γὰρ τοῖς λόγοις τούτοις ξυγγενόμενοι καὶ ὑπ’ αὐτῶν ἐκνηπιωθέντες δόξας ἀναλαμβάνομεν περὶ ἑκάστου τῶν ζῴων, τὰ μὲν ὡς βασιλικὰ εἴη, τὰ δὲ ὡς εὐήθη,...

> he left behind on the subject of slander. For on the one hand he always ascribes it to the fox, as a crafty and cowardly creature, but he makes the strongest of creatures be overcome by it. And I would tell you what sort of fable I have ready, if you will kindly suffer me to compare myself with the sophists.
>
> "Two bulls had dominion over one herd, since they were both grazed together and shared a very great friendship. Now, the lion was afraid of their concord, and could not make an attempt on either them or the herd. So, since he was in a bad state due to hunger he came to the sly-fox and they agreed to an alliance. And thus then she excelled in so much evil-doing and cleverness that, after applying her scheme, she set the two bulls at variance and made them angry at one another, and she delivered up to the lion, at variance, each of them, a prepared and compliant prey."
>
> This is the sly-fox of Aesop.[11]

The last two ancient definitions pertinent to the study are the most developed (whether because they build on previous definitions or are simply more expansive is not especially relevant to the present study nor likely provable in any case), and again, merit a lengthier quotation than customary, for comprehensiveness' sake. The first is the 4th century A.D. Greek rhetorician Sopater's; I have underlined the pertinent sections, slashes are included because some of the vocabulary is ambiguous, and one or both definitions may be intended:

[11] Themistius, *Orationes* 22 Περὶ φιλίας, 278c-279: Αἰσώπου δὲ τοῦ μυθοποιοῦ πολλαχῇ τε ἄλλῃ μνημονεύειν ἐπωφελὲς καὶ ὅσα εἰς διαβολὴν εὖ ἔχοντα ἀπολέλοιπεν. ἀεὶ μὲν γὰρ αὐτὴν τῇ ἀλώπεκι περιτίθησι, δολερῷ καὶ ἀνάνδρῳ θηρίῳ, ποιεῖ δὲ ὑπ’αὐτῆς ἁλισκόμενα τῶν ζῴων τὰ ἀλκιμώτατα. (d.)Καὶ ὅντινα ἔχω πρόχειρον μῦθον εἴποιμ’ ἂν ὑμῖν, εἴ μου πράως ἀνέξεσθε παραβαλλομένου τοῖς σοφισταῖς.

ταύρω δύο μιᾶς ἡγεῖσθον ἀγέλης, ξυννόμω τε ὄντε καὶ ὅτι μάλιστα φίλω. ὁ λέων δὲ αὐτοῖν τὴν ξύστασιν ἐδεδίει, καὶ οὔτε αὐτοὺς ἐθάρσει οὔτε δι’ αὐτοὺς τὴν ἀγέλην. κακῶς οὖν ὑπὸ λιμοῦ διακείμενος ἔρχεται ἐπὶ τὴν κερδὼ καὶ ξυμμαχίαν ὁμολογοῦσι. τῇ δὲ ἄρα τοσοῦτον κακουργίας καὶ δεινότητος περιῆν ὥστε προσενεγκοῦσα τὴν 279.(a.) μηχανὴν διέστησέ τε αὐτὼ καὶ ἐξέμηνε κατ’ ἀλλήλοιν, καὶ παραδέδωκε τῷ λέοντι δίχα ἑκάτερον εὐτρεπῆ καὶ εὔκολον θήραν.

τοῦτο μὲν ἡ τοῦ Αἰσώπου κερδώ.

> Now Sopater defined fable as follows: fable is a fabrication plausibly in reference to the agreed upon likeness of things which are in accordance with the truth, representing/offering a certain advice for people or a sketch of happenings. A fabrication, on the one hand, since by reference to its presentation to us as an actual deed it is also fashioned. On the other hand, it becomes plausible because we fashion either the words or the actions according to the nature or to the reputation of each individual animal; for, since the lion is kingly, we think of [i.e. it as having] a kingly pride/spirit, while since the fox is a rogue we imagine [i.e. that it has] a roguish thought/intelligence, and now since the stag is cowardly and stupid we represent it accordingly, with the result that if we should alter any of these things, the story will become implausible. And based on the things that are in agreement with the truth it has consistency, because while looking upon things which happen to men (as a model) thus do we compose the fable in accordance with likeness. For example:
>
> We, since we know that many men on account of (desire for) gain behave rather excessively/extraordinarily and have lost their surplus and for pleasure's sake otherwise have surrendered their personal security thus did we compose the fable of the dog carrying the meat by the river and that of the lion in love with the maiden.
>
> Now, it produces a representation or advice on affairs, according as we exhort to do or not to do, or let us describe such things as happen to men; for example:
>
> Based on mere rumour that many men are deceived, just as in the case of the bird-limer hunting the cicada, while based on those who act impressively and with an air of command, as in the case of the ass which clothed itself in the lion's skin.[12]

[12] Σώπατρος δὲ οὕτω τὸν μῦθον ὡρίσατο· μῦθός ἐστι πλάσμα πιθανῶς πρὸς εἰκόνα τῶν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ συμβαινόντων πραγμάτων συγκείμενον, συμβουλήν τινα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἢ ὑπογραφήν τῶν πραγμάτων ποιούμενον. πλάσμα μὲν, διότι πρὸς τὸ δοκοῦν ἡμῖν πρᾶγμα πλάττεται· γίνεται δὲ πιθανὸς, ὅτι κατὰ τὴν φύσιν, ἢ τὴν ἀξίαν ἑνὸς ἑκάστου ζώου τοὺς λόγους ἢ τὰ πράγματα πλάττομεν· τοῦ μὲν γὰρ λέοντος ὄντος βασιλικοῦ, βασιλικὸν ἐπινοοῦμεν τὸ φρόνημα, τῆς δὲ ἀλώπεκος οὔσης κακούργου κακοῦργον ἀναπλάττομεν τὴν διάνοιαν, δειλοῦ δὲ καὶ ἀναισθήτου ἐλάφου κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον· ὥστε εἴ τι τούτων παραλλάξαιμεν, ἀπίθανος ὁ λόγος γένησεται. ἐκ δὲ τῶν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ συμβαινόντων ἔχει τὴν σύνθεσιν, ὅτι πρὸς τὰ συμβαίνοντα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἀποβλέποντες οὕτω πρὸς εἰκόνα τὸν μῦθον συντίθεμεν· οἷον

ἰδόντες πολλοὺς διὰ κέρδος τι περιττὸν πράττοντας καὶ τὸ προσὸν ἀπολέσαντας, καὶ δι' ἡδονὴν ἄλλως τὴν οἰκείαν προδόντας ἀσφάλειαν οὕτω τὸν τοῦ κυνὸς <τοῦ τὸ κρέας φέροντος παρὰ τὸν ποταμόν> καὶ τοῦ λέοντος τοῦ τῆς κόρης ἐρῶντος μῦθον ἀνέπλάσαμεν.

παράστασιν δὲ ἢ συμβουλὴν ἀποτελεῖ πραγμάτων, καθὸ ἢ πράττειν ἢ μὴ πράττειν προτρέπομεν, ἢ παριστῶμεν, οἷα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἀποβαίνει τὰ πράγματα· οἷον

The impression one gets from Sopater is not like Hermogenes' histrionic theory of animals in fable. Here it is more of an attempt to portray the likeness of human affairs in the animal world based on semi-realistic behaviours of animals, which can have greater or lesser realism by modern standards depending on the animal (i.e. the lion falling in love with the maiden is patently ridiculous and likely not widely believed by people actually acquainted with lions in any small degree). It should be said however, that the degree of difference in all the definitions is extremely slight and the ultimate conclusion to be drawn, again from the standpoint of present day, is that the realism in fable, although in some particulars truthful, is largely based on stereotyped representations. But not all stereotypes are fallacious, crows and ravens are indeed intelligent, lions do look kingly and are carnivores, etc. so simply by saying that these are stereotypes I am in no way advocating the rejection of these impressions as widely held beliefs meant to comprehend the world. Sopater also expands on the plausibility of fable issue. He plainly demonstrates that fable is quite involved with a coherent representation of nature in the midst of somewhat fantastic elements (which are necessary for the genre to function, otherwise the animals could not communicate or even act like humans). Essentially the basis of plausibility lies in animal ethology; only afterward and on this base can fantastic or anthropomorphic situations be composed.

ἐκ μὲν φήμης ψιλῆς ὡς πολλοί τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἠπάτηνται, ὡς ἐπὶ τοῦ ἰξευτοῦ τοῦ θηρῶντος τέττιγα, ἐκ δὲ τῶν ὑποκρινομένων τὸ φοβερόν τε καὶ τὸ ἀρχικὸν, ὡς ἐπὶ τοῦ ὄνου τοῦ περιθέντος ἑαυτῷ τὴν λεοντῆν.

> But, since it has been said that the fable must be plausibly composed, we must consider from what source it would become plausible. Now this [i.e. plausibility] occurs from many sources: from places, where the subject animals are accustomed to live; < from the occasions, in which they are fond of appearing/being seen>; from the stories appropriate for the nature <of each> (animal); from incidents, which overstep the quality of each, in order that we may not say that the mouse was deliberating over kingship of the animals or that the lion was revived /taken captive by the aroma of cheese, and if it is necessary to ascribe certain arguments/words, [and] in order that the fox says subtle things, while the sheep (say) foolish things full of brainlessness; for such a kind is the nature of each of them; and in order that the eagle may be introduced as rapacious for fawns and lambs, while the jackdaw as not even reflecting on any such thing at all. But if, then, there ever comes about need for composing something also/even contrary to nature, it is necessary to arrange this before [i.e. to foreground this] and to provide/allow the purpose/intention from the fable to it (?); for example if sheep should talk with wolves like friends, it is necessary to arrange the friendship and such other things beforehand. [13]

Nicolaus, another Greek rhetorician, here writing in the 5th century A.D., largely echoes Sopater in outline but gives a more definitive explanation, a breakdown, of how exactly plausibility is achieved in fable. His answer: through appropriate ethology. Some of the examples he cites do not seem stereotypical or stock, but rather natural to the animals, such as the rapacity of the eagle or (at least from an ancient viewpoint) the

[13] Nicolaus, *Progymnasmata* 1:Ἐπειδὴ δὲ εἴρηται, ὅτι δεῖ πιθανῶς συγκεῖσθαι τὸν μῦθον, πόθεν ἂν γένοιτο πιθανὸς σκοπητέον. πολλαχόθεν δὲ τοῦτο· ἐκ τόπων, περὶ οὓς τὰ ὑποκείμενα <τῷ λόγῳ> ζῷα διατρίβειν εἴωθεν· <ἐκ καιρῶν, ἐν οἷς φαίνεσθαι φιλεῖ·> ἐκ λόγων τῶν τῇ φύσει <ἑκάστου> ἁρμοζόντων· ἐκ πραγμάτων, ἃ μὴ ὑπερβαίνει τὴν ἑκάστου ποιότητα, ἵνα μὴ λέγωμεν, ὅτι ὁ μῦς περὶ βασιλείας τῶν ζῴων ἐβουλεύετο (8.) ἢ ὅτι ὁ λέων ἐζωγρήθη ὑπὸ τυροῦ [καὶ] κνίσης, κἂν λόγους τινὰς δεήσῃ περιθεῖναι, [καὶ] ἵνα ἡ μὲν ἀλώπηξ ποικίλα φθέγγηται, τὰ δὲ πρόβατα εὐήθη καὶ μεστὰ ἀνοίας· τοιαύτη γάρ τις ἡ ἑκατέρων φύσις· καὶ ἵνα ὁ μὲν ἀετὸς ἁρπακτικὸς καὶ νεβρῶν καὶ ἀρνίων εἰσάγηται, ὁ δὲ κολοιὸς μηδὲν τοιοῦτον μηδὲ ἐννοῶν. εἰ δὲ ἄρα ποτὲ γένοιτο χρεία τοῦ καὶ παρὰ τὴν φύσιν τι συμπλάσαι, δεῖ τοῦτο προοικονομῆσαι καὶ παρασχεῖν αὐτῷ τὴν ἐκ τοῦ μύθου διάνοιαν· οἷον εἰ διαλέγοιτο τὰ πρόβατα πρὸς τοὺς λύκους φιλικῶς, προοικονομῆσαι δεῖ τὴν φιλίαν καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τοιαῦτα.

naïvety of sheep (even today we refer to those who go with the crowd as sheep and speak of a herd mentality, so in some ways we are still in the herd of those who ascribe inherited "appropriate" behaviours to animals). So important is this attention to correct (i.e. stereotyped, again, speaking from a modern perspective) ethological attributes that if it is necessary to have a fabular animal act contrary to its proper behaviour an explanation must first be built into the fable. One presumes that if one did not take such a precaution, the audience would point out the mistake. However, the way in which Nicolaus treats this aspect suggests that he is thinking of the back and forth of the rhetorical school, where mistakes were pointed out by opponents (cf. the other rhetoricians who have been mentioned; all treat how to demolish an opponent's fable.), and not of a hypothetical attack by the audience. This may also be applicable to the other rhetoricians, who focus to a perhaps undue degree on plausibility when creating fables.[14] It all seems a tad too technical and overwrought when one compares the fables the rhetoricians present to some of the more salacious and fantastic ones of Phaedrus and Babrius and even the *Augustana*. Thus, Nicolaus might just be providing his students with the best possible defence against accusations of implausibility. Or he might not. It is not something that can be proven with certainty, unfortunately.

[14] For a fascinating study of plausibility in Greek rhetoric, which, although not mentioning fable specifically, may shed some light on why the rhetoricians go to such lengths to attain it in fable composition, see: Schmitz, "Plausibility in the Greek Orators," *AJPh* 121, 1 (2000), 47-77.

Adrados counsels caution when dealing with the rhetoricians' definitions.[15] And perhaps we should, too. For to base the entire conception of realism in fable solely on a few late sources might be an exercise in recklessness. A measured approach is more in order. Realistic attributes do not solely have to be those connected with the assumed character of fabular animals but might take a form more akin to the type of realism we are most familiar with, *viz.* a faithful depiction of observable nature and the accurate rendering of its character and content. Things need not be black and white; there were almost certainly shades of grey in fabular composition in accordance with the tastes of each fabulist.

With the rhetoricians' treatments of plausibility and appropriate animal ethology in mind, it may help to see what recent scholarship has to say on the question of the "fixed", "static", "stereotyped" character of animals in fable and whether it has anything to do with the creation of realism. It turns out that the first aspect has been touched upon by several authors but for the most part only in passing and rarely with an aim to explain the reasoning behind it from a standpoint of belief. The second part, on the creation of

[15] "In Antiquity it was the rhetoricians who speculated on the fable and therefore attempted to define it. These definitions were influenced by their own intellectual interests and school and suffered from the tendency, both widespread and misguided, to seek simple and incomplete definitions of literary genres. Rather, these were *a priori* definitions, taken from a hurried generalization and later extended." Adrados, and van Dijk, *History of the Graeco-Latin Fable*, Volume I (Leiden, 1999), 22. Adrados' criticism seems a little harsh. These definitions do not seem incomplete or hurried but well thought out. His note of caution, however, is helpful. Adrados (128 ff.) also claims that it was in the rhetoricians' schools that fable became a genre for children, as an instruction in literary composition and proper behaviour. Yet the complexity of the definitions and the attention to plausibility contingent upon what was considered (by the majority) the appropriate, i.e. realistic, behaviour of these animals, bespeaks a higher order of student, not children.

realism, has not apparently been treated definitively. Most fable scholars tend to see the "fixed character" of animals as just another feature of fable, just another anthropomorphism to be noted, but not discussed in detail. For example, Adrados mentions the fixed character of fable animals several times in volume I of his *History of the Graeco-Latin Fable*.[16] The problem here, if it so be, is that he tends to see it from a purely literary perspective and attributes the fixity of character simultaneously to a requirement of genre as well as to the influence of earlier Greek literature, which also tended to typify animals, such as in Homeric similes. This is all done in a methodical and well-researched fashion and is to be commended. But Adrados does not go on to ask why

[16] Adrados (Vol. 1) 151 (and examples in the pages following 151): "In any case, the theme that animals have a fixed nature forever is one of the features that link the aetiological fables with the others." 158: "it is the nature of the different animals or plants that is compared in terms of superiority or inferiority of same [sic]...The nature of the animal does not change. The fable of the old lion and the simile of Helen and the lion in Aeschylus make this very clear. These animals generally have fixed characters (we will see some exceptions), and characters that are traditional; these are sometimes in proverbs, stock phrases and similes from the Classical Age." He then gives a list of animals with fixed characters: lion, eagle, hawk, fox, etc. What exactly he means by traditional he does not explain: how could a behavior engaged in by an animal be traditional? On 160 he mentions realism, but not in the manner we are discussing: "In fact, we find a certain moralism in our fables, mixed with an element that we might call realism. It is accepted that the reality of life is that the strong prevail." Apparently this realism (based on human standards) is realistic for all animal behaviours. But why would animals have fixed characters then, would they not all be the same if it were only a matter of the strong prevail? See also 190 ff. for Adrados' attempt to link the ethology of fable to previous literary genres. Only on 233-235 does Adrados discuss the observation of animals in nature "In addition to religious, literary and playful elements, the fable has evidently incorporated an abundance of materials from the observation of nature. Yet observation was obviously not enough by itself; to a large extent the observation of nature crystallized in the tradition that attributed precise and topical characters to the different animals. And in order to describe the confrontation between the wolf and shepherds and flocks, the fable could choose between the traditional literary heritage and direct observation..." Adrados relies far too much on literary criticism without backing up statements such as these.

the animals have fixed characters to begin with nor why this would be consistently passed down in literature. Further, although he discusses the observation of animals in antiquity (over three pages out of a multivolume work in a genre which deals with animals to a degree far exceeding any other ancient literary genre) he does not ask whether the fixed character was seen as fixed and thus as a stereotype or it was the general belief and thus not fixed but a realistic portrayal of ethology as understood in that specific temporal and geographic context.

Zafiropoulos briefly discusses the idea of fixed natures and cites other scholars who do as well.[17] Most think that the animals of fable represent fixed and traditional types and that these are generally static throughout the collections. Nøjgaard, however, opposes this view and believes that the fabulist selects the animal behaviour for each fable and that their characters are thus not constant at all but dependent on the whim of the fabulist.[18] His rationale for this view is based on the fables themselves, mainly the *Augustana Collection*. Nøjgaard, like Adrados (although Adrados would most likely disagree with this comparison), is another scholar who wears only literary critical glasses to the detriment of seeing realism based on observable nature, or investigating the reasons behind 'fixed' behaviour from a non-literary perspective, that is, employing ethological scholarship. His limited view on fabular ethology is unfortunate inasmuch as the rest of his work, although criticized by scholars such as Adrados, is excellent and should be ranked along with Adrados' work. Nøjgaard's rejection of the canonical 'fixed nature'

[17] Zafiropoulos, *Ethics in Aesop's Fables: the Augustana Collection* (Leiden, 2001), 28-30.

[18] Nøjgaard, *La fable antique*, I. (København, 1964-1967), 303-319. He does not discount that animals have a fixed nature outside of fable, however!

interpretation is unique and, for good reasons, not followed by many scholars. The question that all these scholars seem to avoid, it seems, is whether types can reflect actual perceptions of and beliefs about reality and not be 'stock' at all.

This being the case, a look at some modern definitions of realism in literature in general may help to classify the distinct type of realism we may be dealing with as regards fable. Out of the many definitions of realism posited by literary critics of the last several centuries a few are helpful here.[19] Grant's small treatise on realism, although largely superseded by later works, is still a supremely helpful resource, and has some elements, especially the following definition, not much treated in later works. In his introduction, Grant discusses what 'truth' actually means, and explains that it can be divided into two categories: scientific or poetic, and that these two categories have come to be called, respectively, the correspondence theory and the coherence theory.[20] What concerns us here is the first, which Grant defines as follows:

> The correspondence theory is empirical and epistemological. It involves a naïve or common-sense realist belief in the reality of the external world (as expressed in Dr. Johnson's kicking a stone to prove that matter exists) and supposes that we may come to know this world by observation and comparison. The truth it proposes is the truth that corresponds, approximates to the predicted reality, *renders* it with fidelity and accuracy; the truth of the

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[19] Various works have traced the origins of the term 'realism' and I do not intend to add to this voluminous list nor will I attempt to offer my own "new" definition of realism. It will serve to list a few recent works on realism, relevant in some ways, to the topic at hand: Grant, *Realism* (London, 1970); Stern, *On Realism* (London, 1973.); Mooij, *Fictional Realities: The Uses of Literary Imagination* (Amsterdam, 1993). All three works have excellent bibliographies and are superb resources in their own right; Mooij's work has an especially extensive bibliography. For a work dealing specifically with historical definitions of realism and giving the text of each author's definition (but which is not relevant here) see Becker (ed.), *Documents of Modern Literary Realism (*Princeton, N.J., 1963).

[20] Grant, 9.

> positivist, the determinist, whose aim is to document, delimit, and define. 'You defer to the fact,' says Becket to his persecutors in *Murder in the Cathedral*; the correspondence theory defers automatically to the fact, and requires that truth be verified with reference to it. It is democratic; it takes its confidence from the substantial agreement of the majority in its description of reality, which it therefore calls objective.[21]

The definition of animal ethology found in the rhetoricians sounds very similar, that is, plausibility is achieved *by reference to* the ethology believed to be appropriate by consensus opinion (of the time). This theory is especially useful because it allows for the possibility of change in the definition of facts and truth with time, which is exactly why we today may see these fixed characters as stereotypes as opposed to realities. When we come to J.P. Stern's definition of realism, much of the correspondence theory mentioned by Grant, although *not* mentioned by Stern, seems to have had an impact on his own formulation. Stern's definition is more all-encompassing, however, and makes more explicit the definition's chronological dependence. As with Grant's definition, to get the full effect, it is necessary to quote in full:

> Every age–at all events since 'the Greek revolution'–has had its own realism. It is the representative mode of that age in the sense that it re-presents–makes and matches in words–the reality, the system that works in that age..., but not in the sense that it is necessarily the dominant or 'typical;' or the most common mode of writing in that age....In every case the question of what was or what was not experienced as realistic literature is inseparable from a knowledge of how 'the system worked' at a given time; a question of history, not of philosophy.[22]

It may sound as if the present aim to explain fable's realism through such definitions is merely throwing one's hands up in exasperation and ultimately surrendering to the fact that it is impossible to define realism because reality changes with every

[21] Ibid, 9.
[22] Stern, 174.

passing second, and much more with every passing century, millennium, etc. Nihilism is not the intent here, what is sought is a workable definition of realism with which to explore the treatment of animal ethology in fable.

Finally it must be mentioned that fable's realism is not the sort of "mimesis" one finds defined in Aristotle, who refers specifically to people's actions not the actions, nor the settings, nor the appropriate character of animals. It may be the sort one finds in the historians, where an aim is to achieve appropriate character portrayal via speech and action,[23] but this is also in reference to persons, persons who are definitely seen as individuals, not with fixed (somewhat one-dimensional) characters.[24] The only solution to this problem of belief vs. stereotype and realism (ancient and modern) vs. stereotype (ancient) seems to be to compare the depiction, in this case for crows and ravens, that we find in fable to Graeco-Roman literature outside of fable and especially to modern zoological scholarship relevant to the crow or raven and the behaviour or attribute under investigation. It is hoped that when the sources work in concert like this some coherent and satisfying conclusion to the problem of realism may become apparent.

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[23] Gray, "Mimesis in Greek Historical Theory," *AJPh*, 108, 3 (1987): 467-486.

[24] On why the realism of fable is not that envisaged by Aristotle, see Simpson, "Aristotle on Poetry and Imitation," *Hermes*, 116. Bd., H. 3 (3rd Qtr., 1988): 279-291, especially 282. On the connection between realism and mimesis and how modern definitions of realism are related to and bound up in Aristotle's and Plato's definitions of mimesis, see chapter 1 "Genetic Realism" (esp. 5 ff.) of Villanueva, *Theories of Literary Realism* (Albany: State University of New York, 1997), 1-35. His work also includes a very thorough bibliography of works relevant to mimesis, realism, and much more besides. And, finally, the best resource on mimesis and literature specifically dealing with the ancient definitions of the term, is Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton, N.J, 2002).

To undertake such a process for all fabular animals is a task too large to treat within the scope of this work, so one animal, bird rather, or group of birds rather, has been selected as a prism through which to explore the 'fixity' and reality of ancient fabular (and perhaps general) animal ethology. Of course, the question might be raised: why the crow, why the raven? What qualities do they possess to be employed as a prism for understanding such a mindset? All fair questions. Some of the answers have already been touched upon at the beginning of the introduction, but it may help to add more here. Crows (that is the crow family, the corvids, specifically here ravens and crows [Carrion and Hooded Crows], but the family also includes jackdaws, jays, magpies, and nutcrackers) are useful for the present study for their ubiquity across the ancient world (and in many ways the modern world, with crows at any rate), in all manner of environments. They lived and live in both city and country. They do not migrate, but maintain a territory all-year-round. They are conspicuous visually as well as aurally. They are supremely intelligent. They can imitate not only other birds, but also inanimate objects, and, most importantly, the voice of man. These are just a few of the characteristics that make these birds notable. Possessing so many characteristics means that it is hard to define such birds categorically, and this might entail an ability to resist the attribution of a fixed nature, at least a more powerful resistance than other less charismatic birds. In fable, we find such a multiplicity of characteristics attributed to them, but to resist reduction to a few characteristics is often difficult. Difficult, but fortuitous for the present study, for out of a mass of seemingly disparate fables two broad categories can be discerned into which corvid fables (at all events, those dealing with

ravens and crows, and really also with jackdaws) can be placed: intelligence fables (or in the case of jackdaws, not to be treated here, lack of intelligence fables); and augural fables, under whose head come a number of other lesser characteristics such as portentousness, divination, carrion consumption, etc. The bipartite division is artificial, merely a useful model with which to proceed and a means of seeing a framework behind corvid fables.

Chapter Two: *Fabulae Intelligentiae*

Corvid fables fall into two broad categories: 1. fables dealing with intelligence and 2. augural fables. Only a few fall outside these categories (fables dealing with the contrast between the colours black and white, for instance). This division is not perfect and is adopted here only for the sake of organizing a seemingly, at first glance, amorphous group of fables. Ancient conceptions of what constitutes an intelligent act by an animal and modern ones are, perhaps surprisingly, not all that different. What is different is the mindset behind the conceptions. Where the Greeks or Romans were concerned with the superiority of human over animal intelligence, modern scholars are perhaps more interested in examining animal intelligence for its own sake.[25] But there must always be an element of comparison to human intelligence because no study could be inaugurated without such a foundation. Important as modern studies of intelligence in animals, and especially corvids, are, when looking at the ancient material it is perhaps

[25] For the most thorough examination of animal intelligence and the attribution of reason to animals in antiquity two phenomenal works of scholarship are Sorabji's magisterial work, *Animal Minds and Human Morals: The Origins of the Western Debate* (Ithaca, N.Y, 1993) and Newmeyer, *Animals, Rights, and Reason in Plutarch and Modern Ethics* (New York, 2006).

best to try to understand what constitutes intelligence based on ancient understandings. Although anthropomorphism was rampant in ancient literature (this applies equally to both prose and poetry, in all genres, even the technical genres) this should not entirely invalidate the discovery of what constitutes realistic aspects of animal intelligence, when one makes the definition of realism hinge upon the time, culture, and genre on each occasion and not a catch-all definition to be used like some skeleton key in the hope that it might unlock some as yet undiscovered ancient insight. J.P. Stern might call this perennial realism,[26] but perhaps a better term might be contextual realism or actual realism. Therefore, in this case, that is, of fables which more readily deal with corvid intelligence, modern studies will not be so useful inasmuch as it would likely result in either: "See, the ancients were the first ones to think of this and they were right!" (a dead and antiquarian end) or "oh, those silly ancients, how backward!" This would be doing disservice to both parties.

2.1 Perry 202 Περιστερὰ καὶ κορώνη (Hausrath 218, Chambry 303/302)

H. 218

(I) ΠΕΡΙΣΤΕΡΑ ΚΑΙ ΚΟΡΩΝΗ
(1.) περιστερὰ ἔν τινι περιστερεῶνι τρεφομένη ἐπὶ πολυτεκνίᾳ ἐφρυάττετο. κορώνη δὲ ἀκούσασα αὐτῆς τῶν λόγων ἔφη· „ἀλλ’, ὦ αὕτη, πέπαυσο ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἀλαζονεύουσα. ὅσῳ γὰρ ἂν πλείονα τέκνα ἔχῃς, τοσούτῳ περισσοτέρᾳ δουλείᾳ στενάξεις.“
οὕτω καὶ τῶν οἰκετῶν δυστυχέστεροί εἰσιν, ὅσοι ἐν τῇ δουλείᾳ τεκνοποιοῦσιν.

A dove kept in a certain dovecote was boasting of her abundance of children. But a crow on hearing her words said," Now, you there, stop bragging about this! For the more children you have, the more will you groan at the greater slavery." Thus also the most unfortunate of house slaves are all those who bear children in slavery.

The crow does not, at first glance, really seem all that integral to the plot in this

[26] See the introduction.

fable; any bird could ostensibly replace it, as indeed in a later variant (Odo of Ceriton XII (LIX). - *de Aquila et Columba* (Hervieux, 711)) the eagle takes its place. Nor does the crow here exhibit any particularly crow-like traits. Nonetheless, although seemingly replaceable, this substitution of a different bird for the crow happens only one other time with this particular fable. Perhaps the crow was chosen in this case for the antithetical attraction of envisaging a brilliant white dove next to a glossy black crow, but this is unlikely, as the crow is the winner of the argument, or at least, makes the final comment, and the colour of the dove is not mentioned. Were it a matter of an opposition of black versus white, so common in many fables, there would be more overt reference to it, as is always made clear in such antithetical fables.[27] Yet none of those signposts is in evidence here, there is no inner beauty versus outer beauty debate, no attempt to wash oneself white, no remark on the immutability of one's nature, no undertaking to insinuate oneself into another group, etc. So it is fairly safe to rule out the possibility of this being a "black and white" fable. Of course, there may be some underlying desire to stress the disparity between the position of the actors here, which would be nicely accentuated by the black-white contrast, but this would only be for emphasis and would not represent the underlying core of the argument.

The reasoning behind the choice may even be more obscure. The crow was widely regarded in the ancient world as a dutiful parent (this went for both father and mother),

[27] Perry's numbers are cited henceforward for ease of reference, some of these have variants by different fabulists. Black and white fables are Perry 29: The Charcoal Burner and the Fuller; Perry 101: The Jackdaw and the Birds; Perry 123: The Jackdaw and the Ravens; Perry 129: The Jackdaw and the Doves; Perry 229: The Swallow and the Crow Disputing Over Beauty; Perry 393: The Ethiopian; Perry 398: The Raven and the Swan; Perry 435: The Black Weasel; Perry 472: The Vainglorious Jackdaw and the Peacock.

who looked after her young even after they were fledged.[28] There is a small range of birds that occur in Graeco-Roman fable; some fables make reference to the parental behaviour of a few of these birds such as the eagle, swallow, raven, lark, terraneola, kite, nightingale, hen, dove, pelican, swan, etc., all of whom display parental affection to varying degrees and in different ways. But, to continue with ancient interest in the affection shown by crows to their young and spouses, it was often cited that at weddings a Crow song was even sung because of the famous monogamy and spousal bond of the bird.[29] The crow *is* in fact quite a devoted parent. Marzluff and many modern authorities on crows bear witness to this. In his discussion of parental care Marzluff comments, "Young corvids develop quickly... Parents forage incessantly to feed their growing nestlings, which greet the world naked and helpless, a condition called altricial. ... parental care...lasts several weeks to months in most crow species."[30] Further, he relates

[28] Crows: Arist. *HA* VI.VI, 563b (how the crow is exceptional for looking after her young and feeding them even after they are fledged); ibid. *HA* VI.VII, 564a "And only the females of crows, too, sit on the eggs, and they continue on them for the whole time; and the males maintain them by bringing them food and feeding them." Arist. *Fragmenta varia* VII.ZOICA.XXXIX. Fr.347 Rose (referring to the ring-dove) "Neither the males the females nor the females the males abandon each other until death, but even when (a spouse) has died the one remains in a state of widowhood. And ravens, crows, and jackdaws do the same thing." The following are cited from the *T.L.L.* IV.962.9-12: AMBRO. Hex. 5, 18, 58 *discant homines amare filios ex usu pietate cornicum, quae etiam volantes filios comitatu sedulo prosequuntur*. EUSTATH. Bas. Hex. 8, 6 p. 952[B] *laudatur …. circa natos cornicis affectio.*
Ravens, strangely were not so often viewed as devoted parents: Arist. *HA* VI.VI 563b where the Raven, specifically, is accused of ejecting her chicks twenty days after they are born. Arist. *HA* VII (IX), 618b 11. Pliny the Elder says the same *NH* 10, 31. But see above for good parenting and spousal affection of raven.
[29] For the most complete discussion of this, see Thompson, *A Glossary of Greek Birds* (London, 1936), 170-1.
[30] Marzluff and Angell, *In the Company of Crows and Ravens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 52.

that even after their young have gotten their flight feathers and are thus fledged, the crow parents continue to take care of their young for several more months.[31] Even more remarkable is the fact that some of the young keep up their relationship with their parents and assist in the rearing of later broods to gain experience in parenting.[32] Goodwin, writing before Marzluff, explains the rationale behind this helping somewhat differently with specific reference to the Carrion Crow, positing that the reason why the young continue their association with their parents is to "gain from the parents' knowledge of local food sources and dangers. They sometimes snatch or steal food from them."[33] Furthermore, Goodwin helps to illuminate the many ancient sources that discuss the parental affection of crows to the degree that it seems a commonplace by extension when he relates the following anecdote:

> Wittenberg saw what seems to be remarkable parental behaviour: when a young Crow fell from its roosting perch on a high tension mast both parents at once flew down to it and spent the night on the ground with it. It is astonishing that the parents' concern should impel them to do this as it is difficult to believe they could have achieved anything except endanger their own lives had a fox or other predator discovered them during the night. It is, however, well known that Carrion Crows will often come close to man and enable themselves to be shot, if their fledged young are roughly handled and cry out in fear.[34]

Some ancient sources give rather detailed, that is numerical, data on ravens concerning number of young born, characteristics of the young and parental care. Less mention such information for the crow, namely that the crow does not lay many eggs per

[31] *Ibid*, 53.
[32] *Ibid*, 54. For more on these helpers see 160-164.
[33] Goodwin, *Crows of the World* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1976), 124.
[34] *Ibid*, 124. The nesting and breeding information for the other Crow more familiar to the Greeks and Romans, the Hooded Crow, is the nearly the same as that of the Carrion, see Goodwin 127-8.

year, but the eggs it *does* lay both parents care for faithfully.[35] The dove, by contrast, was especially known for its almost stereotypical superabundant fecundity.[36] And indeed, modern authorities corroborate this.[37] This quality was probably paramount in the fabulist's mind, as well as the business of dovecotes. This is not to say that the dove was not parentally dutiful as well, in fact this quality is mentioned frequently.[38] If its parental affection were also in the mind of the fabulist, it would make the crow's observant remark all the more effective, as the dove, widely regarded, just as the crow, for the affection it bore for its young, would be struck by the sad truth behind the crow's rebuke. Perhaps a similar situation may be seen in the fable of the Wild Wolf and the Kept Dog, which turns out to be a commentary on the preciousness of freedom.[39] If this is so, then the crow would make an admirable emissary of freedom due to the fact that it was not a widely kept bird; there were better mimics than it, including the raven and, at least the ancients thought, the jay, among others, nor does it seem to have been farmed for its young.[40]

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[35] Arist. *HA* VI.VI, 563b; ibid. *HA* VI.VII, 564a.

[36] For the Greek see especially Thompson 240, although Arnott's list is more extensive: Arnott, *Birds in the Ancient World from A to Z* (London, 2007), 177-8.

[37] For an extensive list of which see Arnott, 179.

[38] Thompson under the category of "Care and Nurture of the Young" gives the quotations along with the citations on 240-1.

[39] Perry 346: The Wolf and the Dog, a fable with many variants.

[40] Ar. *Av.* 17-18 merely relates that crows and jackdaws were sold in Athens and gives their respective prices; it does not mention the use to which they would be put. Parts of crows were used for their medicinal or magical properties, the best source for which is Plin. *NH* 29.40 the brain of the crow is used in a remedy for headache; 29.41 mentions crow's brain, again, but here they are used to make the eyelashes grow; 30.26 crow's flesh is prescribed as a treatment for a lasting disease. It would not be surprising to find out that crows and ravens were also sold for the purposes of divination, i.e. to be released in order to perform an augural reading. Macrobius, *Saturn.* 2.4.26-30 relates, *inter alia*, the high price paid for a Hooded Crow that was a good mimic. Presumably they were often bought and sold for this reason (perhaps primarily); they would have been cheaper than parrots.

Perhaps these reasons lay behind the choice of these two birds, which would suggest quite close observation of their breeding habits. A thing which is all the more remarkable as crows were not bred like doves for profit, and information on their breeding habits would have been gleaned from observation or long familiarity with them, whether personal or passed down as traditional agricultural or ecological lore. Aristotle *HA* I. I. 488b says that the tribe (*genos*) of corvine birds is prone to chastity (*hagneutiká* sc. *genê*) and in *GA* III.6 he discusses the foolishness of the belief that ravens copulate and give birth via the mouth and attributes this error to the fact that these birds are infrequently seen copulating but frequently seen touching beaks. In addition he accurately adds to this explanation that, "the corvid tribe is not salacious (*aphrodistiakon*) (for they are possessed of few offspring)."[41] Elsewhere, Aristotle gives reasonably correct information as to the breeding cycles of crows and ravens and the number of offspring each produces respectively.[42] Modern corvine scholars and ornithologists largely support his data.[43] Thus the fact that crows and ravens do only breed generally once a year and have smallish clutch sizes, and the fact that their copulation is secretive and, consequently, shrouded in mystery and seldom witnessed and infrequent, means that the crow would make an excellent candidate to set next to the prolific, promiscuous dove. According to Arnott, Aristotle's

[41]*Loc. cit.*
[42] Crows: Arist. *HA* VI.VI, 563b; ibid. *HA* VI.VII, 564a; Ravens: Arist., *HA* VI.VI 563b ; *HA* VII (IX), 618b 11.
[43] Goodwin, 38-39 concerning the pair bond between a mated pair; 46 "Clutch size varies but is seldom less than 2 or more than 7. Eggs are laid at daily intervals or at intervals of a little over 24 hours." 47 "In most species...the female alone incubates and is fed on or near the nest by the male."

observations of the breeding habits of the dove are also accurate.[44] He says that the dove lays two to three eggs at a time, mates from eight to ten times a year, and that the bird's eggs hatch in twenty days.[45] This would amount to roughly twenty-four to thirty eggs *per annum per avem*. Our knowledge of ancient dovecotes comes primarily from three Latin authors, Cato, Varro, and Columella, the latter two providing the most extensive information, and all paying particular attention to the economic value of these fecund fowl.[46]A dovecote in Graeco-Roman times, then, maintaining a sizeable stock of doves would be very lucrative indeed. Far from a random choice, the fabulist has, in fact, put a great deal of thought into the pairing, making it quite appropriate in terms of these birds' generally acknowledged ethology and therefore plausible and contextually realistic.

The dovecote itself is another realistic touch. They were a somewhat common feature of the wealthy farmstead in the Classical and Hellenistic Greek world, but far more so in the Republican and Imperial Roman world, and are frequently mentioned in Latin literature, especially in agricultural texts.[47] The birds of this fable are not in a fantastical, Golden age vacuum, discussing the dove's vaunted fecundity without

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[44] Arnott, 177, who gives the sources on which he draws in a knot at the end of the *Peristera* entry.

[45]Arist. *HA* VI. 558b 22-23, 26-27; *HA* VI.IV.562b15-27, *GA* 750a15-20; *GA* 774b26-31.

[46] Cato, *De Agri Cultura* 90; Varro, *De Re Rustica* 3.7; Columella, *De Re Rustica* 8.8.6.

[47] The earliest mention of dovecotes is by Plato, *Thaetetus* 197c "Now see whether it is possible thus for one who in fact possesses knowledge not to have it, but just as if someone after catching wild birds, doves or some other kind, were to set up a dovecote and there maintain them, for we might in some way say that he always has them, because he indeed possesses them. Or is it not so?" In this same dialogue the dovecote is mentioned again at 197d, 198b, and 200b. Arnott gives an extensive list of references at 178.

reference to anything *extra fabulum*, but rather the discussion is set in an entirely appropriate location.

This fable may loosely be classified under fables dealing with intelligence, as the crow is arguing from the standpoint of an informed observer and possibly that of the free man, who knows the real truth and how to live it, whereas the dove is mired in ignorance and slavery. Good parenting skills are often included in works dealing with animal intelligence such as Plutarch's *De Sollertia Animalium* and Aelian's *De Natura Animalium*, with the understanding that this shows a positive connection between humans and animals in that animals are acting human, and thus intelligently.[48] Appropriateness need not be realism in the modern scientific sense of fidelity to the ethological characteristics of these birds but could take the form of an accurate depiction of how domesticated animals act in their man-made or human-controlled environment. Ancient ethology need not be modern ethology after all. Of course, the crow's knowledge of how the dovecote works is imaginary; fable is meant to resemble truth but not actually be it in all its particulars. That said, this fable is more complex than one would assume at first glance and suggests that the author put some thought into the bird pairing here.

2.2 Perry 229: χελιδὼν καὶ κορώνη (H. 258, Ch. 348; Syntipas 3) (Version I)

ΧΕΛΙΔΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΚΟΡΩΝΗ

(1.) χελιδὼν καὶ κορώνη περὶ κάλλους ἐφιλονείκουν. ὑποτυχοῦσα δὲ ἡ κορώνη πρὸς αὐτὴν εἶπεν· „ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν σὸν άλλος τὴν ἐαρινὴν ὥραν ἀνθεῖ, τὸ δὲ ἐμὸν σῶμα καὶ χειμῶνι ἀντιτάσσεται.“
ὁ λόγος δηλοῖ, ὅτι ἡ τοῦ σώματος παράτασις εὐπρεπείας καλλίων.

[48] See especially Newmeyer, *Animals, Rights, and Reason in Plutarch and Modern Ethics* (New York, 2006), 35-36.

'Swallow and Crow Quarrelling Over Beauty'
A swallow and crow were quarrelling over their beauty. Now the crow interrupted and said to her: "But your beauty flourishes for the season of spring, whereas my body resists even winter."
The fable shows that continuance of the body is finer/more beautiful than comeliness.
Syntipas 3[49]:

(3.) ΧΕΛΙΔΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΚΟΡΑΞ

χελιδὼν καὶ κόραξ περὶ κάλλους ἀλλήλοις ἐμάχοντο. φησὶν οὖν ὁ κόραξ τῇ χελιδόνι· „τὸ σὸν κάλλος ἐν μόνῳ τῷ ἔαρι καταφαίνεται, ἐν δὲ τῷ τοῦ χειμῶνος καιρῷ οὐ δύναται πρὸς τὸ ψῦχος ἀντισχεῖν, τὸ δὲ ἐμὸν σῶμα καὶ τῷ κρύει τοῦ χειμῶνος καὶ τῷ καύσωνι τοῦ θέρους γενναίως ἀνθίσταται.“
ὁ μῦθος δηλοῖ, ὡς ὑγίεια καὶ ῥώμη σώματος κρείττων κάλλους καὶ ὡραιότητος πέφυκεν.

'Swallow and Raven'
A swallow and raven were fighting over their beauty. And the raven said to the swallow: "Your beauty is visible in the spring alone, and in the season of winter it is not able to hold out against the cold; while my body withstands both the frost of winter and the burning heat of summer."
This fable demonstrates that health and fortitude of body are better than beauty and the bloom of youth/transient comeliness.

The fabulist of Perry 229 and, following him, Syntipas, did not likely know, or perhaps were not deeply interested in the fact, that crows and ravens *do* moult completely, replacing their worn or damaged feathers yearly as any other bird does.[50] However, the colour of the crow's feathers does not change, that is, it does not have a seasonal plumage but sports the same coloured plumage year round. This is where the belief that the crow's plumage is perennial arose and was adopted by both Greeks and Romans wholly and

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[49] Hausrath and Hunger (Eds.), *Corpus fabularum Aesopicarum*, vol. 1.2, 2nd edn. (Leipzig, 1959), 155-183.
[50] Goodwin, 17 (general description of corvid moulting); Cramp *et al*, *Handbook of the Birds of Europe and the Middle East and North Africa: The Birds of the Western Palearctic:* Volume VIII - Crows to Finches (hereafter *BWP*) (Oxford, 1994), 6 (a general description of corvine moulting), 192-193 (*Corvus corone*, Carrion Crow); Coombs, *The Crows: A Study of the Corvids of Europe* (London, 1978), 47 (moult of Carrion and Hooded Crows described).

without much thought. The ancients did, in fact notice that something was going on with the crow and raven around the time that they actually moult, but they misinterpreted this as some sickness which yearly befell them and after a spell went away.[51] This belief must have been relatively widespread as it is not until Pliny the Elder that this sickness (really moulting) is mentioned. If anyone had noted that moulting took place, it can be said with confidence that Aristotle would have been the one to say it, inasmuch as concerning ancients' knowledge of the life history of corvids one constantly cites his work as the most reliable above any other author.[52] All that Aristotle says about the crow and raven, which may be taken as tacitly in keeping with the belief that their plumage did not undergo moulting, may be found in a comment he makes in *HA* 617b when discussing the seasonal movements of birds: "All these (birds) are not continually apparent. And moreover, those most accustomed to live throughout cities [*viz.* the raven and crow among others, such as the corvids in general, and other birds like the swallow, the skops owl, blackbird, certain vultures and kites, the crane, the common gull, the pelican, buzzards, blackcaps among a few others, though Aristotle mentions city-dwelling

[51]See Capponi, *Ornithologia Latina* (Genova, 1979) 200. Pliny, *NH* 10.15.32 *diversa in hac et supradicta alite quaedam. corvi ante solstitium generant; iidem aegrescunt sexagenis diebus, siti maxime, antequam fici coquantur autumno.* ***cornix ab eo tempore corripitur morbo.***"There are certain differences in the case of this bird and the above mentioned one: ravens breed before the summer solstice; they also become sick for sixty days, because of thirst especially, before the figs ripen in autumn. The crow, by contrast, from that time is seized with sickness."

[52] Of course, extant literature has the downside of being incomplete, and so thus any claim made in regard to it can only be speculative.

specifically for the raven and crow],[53] these in fact are ever present, and do not change their places nor hibernate by hiding." Taken in connection with his other comments about the unchanging black nature of the crow and raven's plumage, it seems safe to say that Aristotle was in accord with the rest of Graeco-Roman antiquity in this matter. The reason why Pliny may have taken note of it can only be guessed at. In all likelihood, Pliny, as a Roman author, was merely attempting to outshine his Greek sources (far in the majority over Roman sources) by adding something new and thus making it his own, and by extension all Romans'.[54] Perhaps the strong element of augural observation in Roman religion had a hand in this near detection of the moulting of birds like the crow and raven.[55] The premise of this fable is the belief that the crow's plumage stays the same throughout the year whereas the swallow moults and adopts a winter plumage (apparently understood to be a defect) and/or has to migrate to a warmer climate because its plumage cannot withstand all seasons equally. The fable does not make clear whether the swallow moults, moults and migrates, or just migrates. The swallow does both, of course, and is cited in ancient literature as moulting, and migrating, but not in the same source, and the

[53] See the entries in Arnott for the other birds mentioned and their year-round residence, though not necessarily in cities, a claim which seems rarely to have been mentioned. See also Arist. *HA* VIII.XII ff. outlines animal migration (esp. that of birds).
[54] French, *Ancient Natural History: Histories of Nature* (London, 1994) 218-225.
[55] Cf. The number of augurs whom Pliny makes reference to for ornithological data in his book on birds: 10.7 (which discusses the vulture's egg laying): *Umbricius haruspicum in nostro aevo peritissimus parere tradit ova tredecim, uno ex his reliqua ova nidumque lustrare, mox abicere; triduo autem ante advolare eos ubi cadavera futura sunt.* 10.8: Augurs discuss the origin and status of the sanqualis and immusulus; two augurs are mentioned specifically Masurius and Mucius. In 10.17 an augur named Labeo is mentioned in discussion of ornithology surrounding an augural bird. 10.19 Nigidius, a famous augur and author is cited for information concerning the 'hibernation' of the night-owl and the number of their cries.

swallow's migration is far more frequently mentioned than its moulting.[56] In fact, discussion of moulting in general and examples of it in other birds are not common in Greek or Latin literature.[57] The fabulist, as noted, was likely working under the assumption that as the crow's feathers remained black, or the same colour for Hooded Crows (which are partially greyish over the middle of the body with a black hood and black in lower parts), year round, they were, in sum, the same, unchanged, feathers always. It is a short jump to the next conclusion that since the plumage is unchanging regardless of the time of year that the crow's plumage is consequently better than that of birds which moult, i.e. those which visibly change colour through moulting. Although, as I mentioned above, the belief that the crow does not moult is a mistaken one, the assumption that the crow's feathers were somehow better, that is, more useful than those of other birds, is actually correct and implies the degree to which this bird, and corvids in

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[56] Arnott, 29 relates, for example, that "Most writers (e.g. Aristophanes *Birds* 1681, Aristotle *HA* 597b3-4, Pliny *NH* 10.70-1) knew that the vast majority of Greece's Hirundines migrate abroad in autumn...However Aristotle (*HA* 600a15-27) noted that many birds had been seen bare of feathers in receptacles, and wrongly inferred that some Greek Hirundines remained behind in hiding during the winter;..."

[57]In Greek literature, this colour change in birds is discussed in the greatest detail by Arist. *GA* 785b16-786b7, *HA* 519a1-9. The main verb for moulting is *pterrueô* (lit. "have feathers flow (off)") in Ar.*Av.*106; Plato, *Phaedrus* 246c; Com. Adesp. 172; Arist. *HA* 564a32, 600a23. The Latin equivalent. *deplumis,-e* "unfeathered. without feathers, featherless" is the adj. (Plin. *NH* 10.24.34.70 *nudae atque deplumes (hirundines*); moulting could be referred to through other words one imagines as well, such as "the feathers fell off, fled, fell away, came off, disappeared, etc." This is only a sampling of Classical authors, more study is needed on moulting in antiquity, Technical vocabulary may have been used more among the Greeks perhaps due to role hunting played within Greek culture. However fowling was, among the various types of hunting, held in the lowest esteem. See Anderson, *Hunting in the Ancient World* (Berkeley, 1985), xi, 18-22.At all events, such an assertion can in no way be made with certainty due to the paucity of extant Latin literature.

general, were thought about. Goodwin makes the most enlightening comment in this regard:

> There are perhaps physiological advantages in having entirely black plumage. Those parts of feathers that have heavy deposition of dark melanin pigment are less susceptible to wear and tear than unpigmented or less heavily pigmented parts of the same feathers. It has also been proved (Heppner, 1970) that black plumage is more efficient at absorbing solar energy. It is therefore likely that black-plumaged birds are able to maintain body heat more efficiently at lower temperatures, if sunlight is available.[58]

Yet, perhaps we are giving the fabulist (here from the *Augustana*, so likely Hellenistic or a little later) and by extension contemporary common knowledge of ornithology too little credit here. The reference to the crow's body (one is probably to understand this synonymously for plumage or perhaps as 'constitution') as being resistant to winter may suggest, broadly speaking, an awareness that the crow's plumage is better at absorbing heat. This observation need not, however, be based specifically on observation of crows but could easily have been gleaned from everyday life, for example, that darker clothes are warmer during the winter or feel hotter in the sun, and/or that brighter coloured clothes feel cooler in the summer or in the sun, such a difference may have been evident

[58]Goodwin, 14. Cf. also Marzluff, 47: "Members of the genus *Corvus* are usually wholly or mostly glossy black with some gray or white. This black plumage serves them well. Black feathers are stronger than less pigmented ones, and dark coloration both makes it easier for them to blend inconspicuously into the shadows to increase stealth or reduce predation and permits them to advertise themselves conspicuously against contrasting backdrops when they wish to emphasize social signals. Black birds absorb more solar radiation on sunny days than do light colored birds, which allows them to conserve precious body heat in cold environments. This certainly helps on sunny but frigid arctic days and cold desert mornings. In the desert they also have the sense to forage in the open mostly early or late in the day when temperatures are tolerable and overheating is less likely. This has allowed the Hooded Crow of Europe to invade Cairo, Egypt, and explains how the Common raven can live comfortably in the forests, grasslands, tundra, and deserts of both the Old and New World–fully half of Earth's landed surface."

in very warm countries like Greece and Italy and in regions where there was a sharp divide between winter and summer.[59] Conversely, and probably more likely, the ancient Greeks may have simply observed that crows and ravens stay around all winter, as, in fact, they do not generally migrate outside their territory nor do they winter in a warmer climate.[60] Furthermore, ravens and many corvids in general are especially comfortable in colder climates and so could easily reside anywhere in the Mediterranean be it in the hottest parts of Italy or Greece to the coldest climbs of Northern Greece or the Alps.[61] When many other birds would be observed leaving around the onset of winter, the vocally and visually conspicuous black birds that remained would have especially attracted attention, in all likelihood more than at any other time of the year. What is more, crows and ravens breed earlier than most birds and sometimes lay eggs before the end of winter. At the time of brooding and intensive parental care of chicks, crows and ravens are at their most aggressive and visible for defence of their brood and their territory's food

[59] Cf. Columella's discussion of temperature differences in Mediterranean countries in *R.R.* 1.4.9-10.

[60]Goodwin, 31 who says that corvids are not migratory. *BWP* (Vol. VIII) 175 on the Carrion Crow (including the Hooded Crow) says that it "Varies from migratory in north of range to sedentary in south and west; many populations partially migratory. Winters almost entirely within breeding range. ... Nominate *corone* (breeding western Europe) essentially sedentary." It would seem, then, that at least in terms of the crows the fabulist would be thinking of, the sedentary type is to be understood.

[61]*BWP* (Vol. VIII), 5, 172 (the entry includes thorough list of geographic range of Carrion Crow), 173 on the habitat of the Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*) and Hooded Crow (*Corvus corone cornix*), 174 (including a map of Carrion Crow's distribution across Europe), 207 on the raven. See also Goodwin, 63, 121 (Distribution and habitat of the Carrion Crow), 127 (Distribution and habitat of the Hooded Crow), 139 (Distribution and habitat of the Raven).

source, again reinforcing their winter presence.[62] All these factors may have influenced the belief in the perennity of the crow's plumage. Also, judging by Pliny's observation, it was at least noted that crows and ravens did not just moult all at once. The attribution of some 'sickness' seems to imply a slower process. If a crow or raven suddenly lost all its feathers it would have been noted, for underneath the feathers they are a different colour, dark grey to black,[63] and they could not fly without wing feathers and so would be defenceless as well as cold and conspicuous. But the moult is a slow process; the new feathers may appear slightly different, unhealthier, more unkempt, which could easily be taken for some sickness.[64] But in general they are blackish or at least dark. The fabulist was not intent on representing this process with such exactitude in any case; the ancients generally seem not to have felt the need to investigate the process further. The moulting colour was similar enough to the standard black of the raven and crow in general to have been taken merely for a mild bout of illness, nothing more. In fact a saying for something impossible was "a white raven."[65] The crow and raven were black, the epitome of black, synonymous with blackness.

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[62]For a detailed breakdown of the breeding season, see esp. *BWP* (Vol. VIII), 190-1 (Carrion Crow), 218-9 (Raven). And in the same work see 180-1 for the Carrion Crow's behaviour with respect to territory and food source, for the raven 212-3. See also Goodwin's comment on the territoriality of the Carrion Crow at this time 122.

[63] See *BWP* (Vol. VIII) 192 (*Corvus corone*) in the section on bare parts.

[64]*BWP* (Vol. VIII) offers the most thorough timeline of the moult (192-3 Carrion Crow and Hooded Crow). Coombs 46-7 offers a more descriptive treatment of the Carrion and Hooded Crows' moult. However, for a very useful and thorough treatment of moulting in birds in general, see Hanson, *Feathers: The Evolution of a Natural Miracle* (New York, 2011), 70-75. Arnott discusses this with reference to the raven (110).

[65] For ancient references to this proverb and the origins, possible origins, thereof, see Thompson, 163.

Apart from the fabulist here, only Aristotle and Pliny discuss corvine plumage in any sort of similar 'scientific' detail. Pliny however, only does this once, in the quotation cited above concerning the 'sickness' that the raven, then the crow experiences in autumn. Out of all extant ancient authors, Greek or Latin, Aristotle's zoological works contain the most comprehensive and insightful investigations of corvid behaviour and biology. Pliny and Aelian are close seconds. Aside from them, however, fable provides the third richest source of information of corvids. Although I seem to be laying emphasis on the present day realistic, or zoologically appropriate, details of this fable, this was likely not the fabulist's primary concern, as mentioned in the introduction, though it was not absent either. Sometimes perennial realisms coincide, as here, since both ancient and modern ornithologists agree that birds moult and have noted the phenomenon, albeit with varying degrees of accuracy. However, we must not wholly assume that because there is correlation in many places in terms of what modern ornithologists would regard as true that the ancients were writing with that in view at all times. This sort of adherence to proper ethology and biology is of a blander sort and one hopes not along the lines of all foxes are clever. Ultimately, distinguishing between ancient stereotypical realism and ancient realism that resembles what we might consider factual is guesswork at best. What took precedence, undoubtedly, was the moral application that this scene from nature provided. Adrados asserts that in the *Augustana* versions and in Syntipas' the theme of utility's superiority to superficial and impractical beauty is present and categorizes such a theme as distinctly Cynic.[66] Many fables feature this same theme; for example, Perry 12,

[66] Adrados and van Dijk, *History of the Graeco-Latin Fable*, Volume III (Leiden, 2003),

the fable of the Fox and the Leopard. In this fable the fox asserts the utility of its intelligence and sees it as its beauty and as superior to the 'superficially' beautiful spots of the leopard. Likewise in Perry 175, the fable of the Wayfarer and the Plane Tree, the plane tree defends the practicality of its shade production, and declares this far more advantageous than just having edible fruit; its fruit *is* its shade. In Perry 219 the jackdaw, a corvid, refutes the election of the peacock as the bird king on the grounds that its beauty is only for display and has no military application–what chance would it stand in a fight against an eagle? Perry 352 indirectly treats this theme, for the fable of the Country Mouse and the City Mouse stresses the practicality of country life over the dangerous glamour of urban living. One fable which bears a remarkable resemblance to Perry 229, both the *Augustana* versions and Syntipas', is Perry 369, the fable of the Rose and the Amaranth, in which the rose admits that although it is beautiful, nonetheless its beauty is fleeting whereas the amaranth's beauty is perennial, and thus better. The roles are reversed here and there is no debate or antagonism, but perhaps even an element of humility or honesty. However, the fact that this is really the only extant fable that 229 resembles suggests that the scenario of transitory beauty over durability was not an entirely stock situation, for there is a difference between bird plumage and flower petals. Further there are only a handful of fables featuring plants (almost all about trees, not flowers) as speaking characters, and still less featuring plants only.[67] Moreover, bird

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324.

[67] Perry 19 The Fox and the Bramble Bush; Perry 70 The Oak Tree and the Reed; Perry 171 The Bat, the Stormy-Petrel, and the Bramble Bush; Perry 175 The Travellers and the Plane Tree; Perry 213 The Pomegranate Tree, Apple Tree, Olive Tree, and the Bramble Bush; Perry 230 The Nut Tree; Perry 262 The Trees and the Olive Tree; Perry 302 The

plumage does not seem to have been discussed often in fable or in general outside of natural history texts or works dealing specifically with subjects related to nature, such as bucolic poetry. Whatever the case may be with this theme, it seems certain that the acute observation of the crow's plumage in Perry 229 serves to make the derived moral application all the stronger for the realism it provides. Crows could be observed anywhere and the veracity of the fabulist's claim fact-checked by practically anyone; it is one of the benefits of fabular animals as they are largely of an easily observable variety, at least in Italy and Greece. It should be remembered that the realism of appropriate natural behaviour, although important, was always in service of the moral application. Such ethological appropriateness, then, was a necessary quality of fable, and not mere antiquarian or erudite zoological ornament.

It is interesting to note that Adrados attempts to link Perry 377, a prose paraphrase of a lost Babrian original, with Perry 229 (Syntipas 3). This association, however, is strange and erroneous. Apart from the fact that the protagonists of Perry 377 and 229 are the same, the crow and the swallow, the content of the conversations between the two birds in each group is entirely different. In Perry 377 the swallow is boasting of her Athenian ancestry, which follows the standard mythology associated with the swallow. The crow there censures her by referring to the loss of her tongue, another part of her mythology. The theme of utility's superiority to beauty is absent; no mention is made of the crow's plumage, or the swallow's. In sum, Perry 377 is completely different from 229.

Oak Trees and Zeus; Perry 303 The Woodcutters and the Pine; 304 The Fir Tree and the Bramble Bush; Perry 374 The Goat and the Vine; Perry 413 The Olive Tree and the Fig Tree (very similar to 229 and 339 except here the Olive Tree boasts of its year round foliage and resistance to weather and is struck by lightning for its arrogance.).

Based on Adrados' logic here, any fable that features the same animals would be grouped together as the same. He does not follow this line with other fables, thankfully, and this specific grouping is perhaps a minor error on his part. One hesitates to even treat the Babrian prose paraphrase as a fable, for it is more in line with tales one might find in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* than in the fable collections. The interlocutors are entirely anthropomorphized; the crow has no attributes other than being called a crow to so distinguish him. The swallow's garrulity, ostensibly, might be taken as a comment on the real bird's chattiness, but the attribute is so general and typical of references to the swallow that it barely adds a distinguishing feature, for a lot of birds would fit this epithet.[68] In other fables the swallow is given far more convincing natural attributes to so distinguish her than here.[69] Conversely, if simple indication that the character is a swallow were the fabulist's aim, then a reference to the bird's mythology, if it were sufficiently well known, would serve the purpose, but this is unusual for fable. The normal course is to define the animal using attributes derived from its physical

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[68]The swallow's garrulity, however was frequently cited, see esp. many of the references in Greek poetry to the swallow, a good sampling of which may be found in esp. in Thompson, 320-1, and Arnott, 29. The most frequent epithets, see esp. Thompson above, attached to the swallow remark upon its sound and esp. its twittering. Whether simply adducing this along with its name was enough to create a mental image of the bird of sufficient detail is difficult to say with any certainty. But the ubiquity of the swallow in Europe, both the *Hirundo rustica* or Barn Swallow and the *Delichon urbicum* or the House Martin, and elsewhere and its more regularized behaviour, at least in comparison to the greater intelligence and unpredictability of corvine behaviour, may have made chattiness *the* diagnostic feature, along with migration.

[69]Perry 39: The Wise Swallow (Ch. 349), Perry 169: The Prodigal Young Man and the Swallow (Ch. 248, Babrius 131), Perry 227: The Swallow Nesting on the Courthouse (Ch. 347, Babrius 118), Perry 277: The Nightingale and the Swallow (Ch. 9, Babrius 12). It should be said, however, that the swallow does not appear with great frequency in the *Collectio Augustana*, Babrius, or the other fabulists. The swallow does not appear in Phaedrus or Avianus, strangely.

appearance and/or its natural behaviour rather than to give its mythological pedigree. Allusion to an animal's mythology may be used additionally to supplement and so further the identification of the animal, but this is also uncommon for fable. Perry 377 has much in common with another unusual fable, the fable of the crow sacrificing to Athena, to be treated subsequently, inasmuch as both only very loosely define the animal actors in terms of their natural behaviour and rely extensively on mythological allusion to define the protagonists.

2.3 Perry 230: χελώνη καὶ ἀετός (H. 259, 352 Ch.; Babrius 115; Avianus 2) and Perry 490 (=Phaedrus 2.6: *Aquila et Cornix*)

(H. 259 version I)

ΧΕΛΩΝΗ ΚΑΙ ΑΕΤΟΣ
(1.) χελώνη θεασαμένη ἀετὸν πετόμενον ἐπεθύμησε καὶ αὐτὴ πέτεσθαι. προσελθοῦσα δὲ τοῦτον παρεκάλει ἐφ' ᾧ βούλεται μισθῷ διδάξαι αὐτήν. τοῦ δὲ λέγοντος ἀδύνατον εἶναι καὶ ἔτι αὐτῆς ἐπικειμένης καὶ ἀξιούσης, ἄρας αὐτὴν καὶ μετέωρος ἀρθεὶς ἀφῆκεν ἐπί τινος πέτρας, ὅθεν κατενεχθεῖσα διερράγη [καὶ ἀπέθανεν].
ὅτι πολλοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐν φιλονεικίαις τῶν φρονιμωτέρων παρακούσαντες ἑαυτοὺς καταβλάπτουσιν.

A tortoise, upon seeing an eagle flying actually desired to fly itself. And after approaching the eagle demanded how much it wanted to teach it. But although the eagle kept saying it was impossible and when the tortoise was still pressing and resolved, the eagle bore the tortoise aloft and when it had risen high in the air let it drop upon some rock, and having been borne down thence it broke and perished.
(The fable teaches) that many men in quarrels since they take no heed of those more sensible then them really harm themselves.

Babrius 115. The Tortoise and the Eagle.

Νωθὴς χελώνη λιμνάσιν ποτ' αἰθυίαις
λάροις τε καὶ κήυξιν εἶπεν ἀγρώσταις·
"κἀμὲ πτερωτὴν εἴθε τις πεποιήκει."
τῇ δ' ἐντυχὼν ἔλεξεν αἰετὸς σκώπτων· 5
"πόσον, χέλυμνα, μισθὸν αἰετῷ δώσεις,
ὅστις ς' ἐλαφρὴν καὶ μετάρσιον θήσω;"

"τὰ τῆς Ἐρυθρῆς πάντα δῶρά σοι δώσω."
"τοιγὰρ διδάξω" φησίν. ὑπτίην δ' ἄρας
ἔκρυψε νέφεσιν, ἔνωεν εἰς ὄρος ῥίψας 10
ἤραξεν αὐτῆς οὖλον ὄστρακον νώτων.
ἡ δ' εἶπεν ἐκψύχουσα "σὺν δίκῃ θνήσκω·
τί γὰρ νεφῶν μοι, καὶ τίς ἦν πτερῶν χρείη,
τῇ καὶ χαμᾶζε δυσκόλως προβαινούσῃ;"

Once a sluggish tortoise said to the shearwaters in the marshes,
To the gulls and to the wild sea-swallows:
"Would that someone had made me winged too!"
And lighting upon it an eagle said as a joke:
"How much, tortoise, will you give me, an eagle, 5
If I make you light and airborne?"
"I shall give thee all the gifts of the Red Sea."
"Therefore I shall instruct you," said he. And having carried the tortoise upside-down
He hid them in the clouds, whence he hurled the tortoise onto a mountain
and smashed to pieces the tough shell of its back. 10
And the tortoise, giving up the ghost, said: "Justly do I die;
For what business had I with clouds, and what need had I of wings,
I who, even on the ground, make my way with difficulty?"

Phaedrus 2.6

Contra potentes nemo est munitus satis;
si vero accessit consiliator maleficus,
vis et nequitia quicquid oppugnant, ruit.

Aquila in sublime sustulit testudinem:
quae cum abdidisset cornea corpus domo, 5
nec ullo pacto laedi posset condita,
venit per auras cornix, et propter volans
'Opimam sane praedam rapuisti unguibus;
sed, nisi monstraro quid sit faciendum tibi,
gravi nequiquam te lassabit pondere.' 10
promissa parte suadet ut scopulum super
altis ab astris duram inlidat corticem,
qua comminuta facile vescatur cibo.
inducta vafris aquila monitis paruit,
simul et magistrae large divisit dapem. 15
sic tuta quae Naturae fuerat munere,
impar duabus, occidit tristi nece.

Against the powerful no one is sufficiently fortified;

But if a nefarious adviser has been added,
Whatever force and wickedness besiege, goes to ruin.

An eagle carried up a tortoise high into the air,
Who, when it had hidden its body in its home of horn 5
And thus ensconced could in nowise be harmed,
A crow came through the air and, flying close (to the eagle) (said):
"Rich indeed the spoils you've snatched in thy talons;
But unless I show you what you have to do,
It will fruitlessly fatigue you by its oppressive weight." 10
When a portion had been promised (the crow) recommended that upon a rock
It dash the hard shell from high up in the stars,
So that thus smashed to bits it might easily dine on the fare.
Persuaded by the artful counsels the eagle obeyed,
And it generously divided the feast with its teacher. 15
Thus the one who had been protected by the endowment of Nature,
Being no match for two, died a miserable death.

Prior to Phaedrus (2.6), the Greek versions of this fable only featured the tortoise and the eagle. In those versions, that is, the versions of the *Augustana Collection*, and Babrius,[70] the tortoise asks the eagle to take her up into the air so that she might experience flight. After so doing, the eagle then, for one reason or another, drops the tortoise. No mention is made of the fate of the tortoise's corpse (although presumably some may have then understood or added that the eagle consumed the tortoise, given the course the story took in later fabular tradition starting with Phaedrus) but this is unclear. The eagle seems to entertain the tortoise's request as a prank, a gruesome prank, and murders it precipitously. No element of rapacity or hunger on the part of the eagle is present in Babrius or the *Augustana* version. This fable may seem simply comic, for why would the tortoise ask the archetypal king of the birds and king of the birds of prey for anything at all, much less surrender itself for the sake of flight? That part is indeed meant

[70] Perry 230: The Tortoise and the Eagle: Chambry 351, Babrius 115, and one later Latin version adopts this storyline, Avianus 2. The Eagle and the Crow.

to be ridiculous. The Greek versions of this fable are, in this case, less evidently naturalistic than the later Latin versions and at first glance the story seems devoid of naturalism.[71] However, there is a firm basis in the natural world and appropriate ethological behaviour which would have provided the layer of credibility on which to add comic elements. One should always ask when approaching the animals in fable what features characterize this animal *qua* animal apart from the mere mention of its name. Sometimes it is only necessary to give the animal's name to elicit identification and activate the web of associations that that particular animal may have had for listener or reader. This is especially true with domesticated animals, which may seem to be unrealistic and flat, but this is only due to their familiarity. It is a different story with birds, only certain species of which could be used like domesticated cattle. Most birds would have always been possessed of some element of mystique which needed to be addressed in any description of them. Consequently fabular descriptions of birds tend towards greater realism, or at least increased detail, than those of domesticated animals or even terrestrial wild animals. At any rate, the realistic detail in Perry 490, as I shall show, serves to reinforce or perhaps facilitate the moral of the fable by providing a basis in reality, that is, a scene which could be observed in nature, one which had occurred in the

[71] If they are not a separate fabular strand altogether and have merely been grouped together by Adrados arbitrarily (Vol. III, 325). They are in all likelihood related to each other, if only loosely, despite the dissimilar themes and addition of the character of the crow in Latin versions. The Latin versions may not be derived from the Greek versions, but may be semi-original and have used the Greek characters and situation as a template, for Avianus chose to adopt the Greek fabular strand of the two character fable featuring an active tortoise protagonist and eagle, unlike the other Latin versions which follow Phaedrus' plot in most points, with some additions and subtractions, but no major differences.

past and many times. This meant that the scene from nature, although narrated as a once-upon-a-time event could actually be seen as a living proverb repeated over and over in nature, thus validating the moral application.

Birds of prey like eagles, and the Lammergeier (*Gypaetus barbatus* "Bearded Vulture-Eagle") have been observed engaging in this dropping behaviour occasionally, some species more than others. Prey subject to this treatment include mussels, molluscs, whelks, bones (of larger animals that have died recently), and *inter alia*, tortoises (though to a much lesser degree, due to their size, but one supposes this would also be variable depending on the age of the tortoise and its type). The birds that do this do not do it with just any prey. An eagle would not simply carry off a live lamb and drop it from on high, but rather would have first killed it by its talons first of all while on the ground or in mid-flight and then would have found a safe spot to strip and dismember the carcase.[72] The point is, an eagle or another bird of prey would not have difficulty opening up the hide of its victim in such a case. But it is a different matter with shelled creatures whose natural protection means that if the eagle or another bird of prey wants to get at the inner meat it must first find a way to break in.

Dropping behaviour, one solution, was likely an accidental development and subsequently improved by trial and error with greater and lesser degrees of complexity depending on the bird. This phenomenon is well-established in modern sources as a feeding behaviour among predatory birds such as some species of eagle and vulture. And, as I shall discuss subsequently, has been found to be an activity among certain smaller

[72] For the methods of hunting and killing used by hawks and eagles and related species see Brown and Amadon, Vol. 1, 69-75.

birds, namely various corvids. Thankfully, this is not the only time in Graeco-Roman literature that the dropping behaviour is documented. In fact citations outside fable help clarify that the action seen in Perry 490 (Phaedrus and the other Latin versions) and to a lesser extent as seen in Perry 230 (the Greek versions in the *Augustana Collection*, Babrius, Avianus) amount to a realistic attribute which would be understood to characterize the eagle, and in the fables in which the crow is a character, would serve to characterize the crow. The first extant mention of this dropping behaviour *qua* dropping behaviour with a view to feeding is found in Pliny the Elder *NH* 10.3. Here Pliny, during his discussion of the different types of eagle, relates that the third type (variously called the morphnos, percnus, plangos and anataria, although in reality likely to be the Lammergeier[73]) frequents lakes. He also says that it possesses a talent for breaking tortoise shells, that is, by dropping them from on high to obtain the inner meat. As an example of this, he cites the death of the tragedian Aeschylus, although this is not generally how he is said to have died, and is likely sensational.[74] In Pliny's account,

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[73] For the most extensive examination of the ancient sources concerning this bird and its relation to Aeschylus' death, see Pollard, "The Lammergeyer: Comparative Descriptions in Aristotle and Pliny," *G & R* 16, 46 (1947): 23-28.

[74] Plin. *NH* 10.3: *Ex his quas novimus aquilae maximus honos, maxima et vis. sex earum genera. melanaëtos a Graecis dicta, eadem le<por>aria, minima magnitudine, viribus praecipua, colore nigricans, sola aquilarum fetus suos alit – ceterae, ut dicemus, fugant – , sola sine clangore, sine murmuratione. [7] conversatur autem in montibus, secundi generis pygargus in oppidis et in campis, albicante cauda. tertii morphnos, quam Homerus et percnum vocat, aliqui et <p>langum et anatariam, secunda magnitudine et vi; huic vita circa lacus. Phemonoe, Apollinis dicta filia, dentes esse ei prodidit, mutae alias carentique lingua, eandem aquilarum nigerrimam, prominentiore cauda; consensit et Boe<us>. huius ingenium est et testudines raptas frangere e sublimi iaciendo, quae fors interemit poetam Aeschylum, praedictam fatis, ut ferunt, ei<us> diei ruinam secura caeli fide caventem*. For the sensationalisation and poeticizing of Aeschylus' death see

Aeschylus, thinking that he could avoid his death by frequenting open places free from the risk of falling objects, presumably roof tiles, rocks, etc., met his death when a Lammergeier, mistaking his bald head for a suitable surface on which to smash a tortoise, dropped said tortoise and in so doing brought about Aeschylus' death. This death is cited in only later sources, the earliest being Pliny and Aelian *NH* vii. 16, despite the fact that the death they refer to occurred nearly half a millennium before them. Pliny's account is more detailed than that of Aelian, which does not feature an oracle and merely has Aeschylus, bald here as well, perish in the same way while sitting still in thought upon a rock. Both accounts agree on the testudinal mode of death at the talons of the Lammergeier. In all likelihood Pliny and Aelian derived their accounts from a lost Hellenistic source, a source which may also have influenced the present fable, both its Greek and Latin versions, to some degree.

At any rate, although the source is late, it is evidence that this behaviour had already been observed by Pliny's time outside of fabular literature was not taken as merely fantastical. An influence from the Aeschylus anecdote seems unlikely, however, as there are only a few points of similarity between the anecdote and the fable. It is more likely that the dropping behaviour was either readily familiar to the Greeks and perhaps also to the Romans, or some natural history work, now lost, was sufficiently well-known by Hellenistic times to have inspired the fable. In Pliny's citation of the death of Aeschylus, the description of the eagle-type comes first, then its dropping behaviour and

Lefkowitz, "The Poet as Hero: Fifth-Century Autobiography and Subsequent Biographical Fiction," *CQ* 28, 2 (1978): 459-469.

only then the anecdote of Aeschylus' death; the death is not cited in isolation totally divorced from context like the fable. Whatever the case may be, Lammergeiers may be found in both Greece, and in some parts of Italy, as well as in other parts of the Mediterranean and Middle East.[75]

Yet the most significant and detailed version, at least for our purposes, is that by Phaedrus due to the elements of realism injected into the rather fantastical Greek version by the addition of the crow and the explanation for the dropping behaviour. Two possibilities could account for the greater degree of detail and plausibility seen in Phaedrus' version: 1) there was always felt some tacit understanding that the eagle subsequently devoured the tortoise after dropping it and, Phaedrus, hoping to outshine his fabular predecessors filled the gap by depicting the outcome; 2) Phaedrus or one of his sources had witnessed the event described in the fable and had recorded it in greater detail, an example of which may be seen in a video segment which features both the Lammergeier and corvids, and takes place in Ethiopia, by Phaedrus' time well-known to Romans.[76] The segment also helps elucidate where Phaedrus may have gotten the idea of importing a crow into the Greek version of the fable. The possibilities need not be exclusive of one another and both could have factored in to Phaedrus' retelling, if it indeed is a retelling of the Greek version, for the two stories differ enough that it may be the case that they are not related.

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[75] *BWP* (Vol. II), 58-9; Brown and Amadon, *Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World,* Volume I (Feltham, 1968), 209-310; Handrinos and Akriotis, *The Birds of Greece* (London, 1997), 130-131; Gariboldi *et al*., *La conservazione degli uccelli in Italia: Strategie e azioni* (Bologna, 2004), 163.

[76] *Life* (original UK version) [2010], episode 5: "Birds", narrated by David Attenborough.

Strangely, this dropping of live prey (although, the fable does not state whether the tortoise is alive or dead to begin with and it really is irrelevant to the discussion, at least with regard to Phaedrus' version), seemingly well-known in Graeco-Roman sources in the case of aquiline birds, is not mentioned for corvids specifically, although it is well-documented in modern scholarship.[77] Pliny does mention that crows will drop hard-to-

[77]Dropping behaviour relevant to the discussion has been found among the following birds: the Lammergeier (*BWP* Vol. II), 61; Brown and Amadon, 312-3; Meinertzhagen, *Pirates and Predators; the Piratical and Predatory Habits of Birds* (Edinburgh, 1959), 132-134; the Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) which "[w]ill shatter eggs of pelican *Pelecanus* by throwing them on ground or against stones (Brown and Urban 1969) and possibly bones in the same way as Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* (Chapman and Buck 1893)." (*BWP* Vol. II, 67); and the Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) which breaks open tortoise shells by dropping them from a height. (*BWP* Vol. II, 237). Although not in Europe the Black-breasted Buzzard Kite (*Hamirostra melanosternon*), of Australia, also engages in this activity and has "the most remarkable habit attributed to it...that of dropping stones on Emus' and Bustards' eggs to break them and so obtain the contents....The reputed habit may seem unlikely...but has been rendered more credible by the proven behaviour of the Egyptian Vulture *Neophron*, which breaks Ostrich eggs by hurling stones at them." Brown and Amadon, Vol.1, 261. The scholarship for dropping behaviour among corvids is much more extensive. Most relevant here are the following. Although Goodwin, 21 states that the "breaking open of food by dropping it on hard surfaces is known, within the Corvidae, only from some species of *Corvus*, which deal with shellfish in this way." He nevertheless mentions (118) with regard to the New Caledonian Crow (*Corvus moneduloides*) that "Candle-nuts are said to be dropped on stones, hard roots and similar surfaces to break them and, from the accumulations of shells at suitable places, it is certain that the crows either drop them or break them by beating on such anvils." Cf. also 88 concerning the American Crow's shellfish dropping and 91 for the North-western Crow's performing of the same action. For the dropping behaviour of the Carrion Crow specifically see 122. Interestingly the White-necked Raven (*Corvus albicollis*) was apparently "seen to drop a tortoise onto rocky ground...and there is circumstantial evidence that this is regularly done." (147) Admittedly, however, the White-necked Raven would not have been known to the fabulists of Graeco-Roman antiquity, as its range is eastern and southern Africa, but it is instructive of the behaviours that corvids can engage in. Marzluff, 22 , 240-44; *BWP* (Vol. VIII) 5, 157 (Rook); 177 and 183, which has an interesting comment that "Commonest form of 'play' in *C. corone* is dropping inanimate objects in flight, either to be recovered from ground each time (e.g. Hayman 1953) or more usually caught in bill before reachiung ground (e.g. Persson 1942, Denny 1950, Stevenson 1950, McKendry 1973), and once seen also transferring objects

crack nuts from certain heights in order to gain access to the nutmeat within.[78] Again this nut dropping behaviour is well-documented in modern sources and has become even more complex and sophisticated since Pliny's time.[79] Now, crows will lay nuts on highways in specially selected locations which they have observed are frequented by cars. Through observation and trial and error they know cars will drive over specific parts of the road more than others and lay nuts that they cannot open themselves there for cars to drive over. This is an extension of dropping behaviour, which in turn is a continuation of what Pliny and the Phaedrus' fable describe. Pliny's is the only extant mention of the dropping behaviour among corvids. This does not necessarily mean that this activity was not familiar to Greeks or Romans for corvids in antiquity, however, for some lost source may have mentioned it. Pliny does not often record information about animals that would be deemed uninteresting or overly scientific; he was not Aristotle, nor did he have the same aims in mind with his work on natural history. Pliny tended toward the anecdotal

from bill to foot and back again in flight (King 1969). This behaviour is clearly related to habit of dropping mussels *Mytilus*..., although droping golf balls (Duckworth 1983) is probably an attempt to break hard 'eggs'"(Carrion Crow); and also Ratcliffe, *The Raven: A Natural History in Britain and Ireland* (London, 1997), 90 and Coombs 70. There are numerous articles discussing dropping behaviour among birds and especially corvids, most pertinent here are Zach, "Selection and Dropping of Whelks by Northwestern Crows" in *Behaviour*, Vol. 67, No. 1/2 (1978): 134-148 and by the same "Shell Dropping: Decision-Making and Optimal Foraging in Northwestern Crows" in *Behaviour*, Vol. 68, No. 1/2 (1979): 106-117. Relevant as well is the article by Norris *et al.,* "The Economics of Getting High: Decisions Made by Common Gulls Dropping Cockles to Open Them," *Behaviour*, Vol. 137, No. 6 (Jun., 2000): pp. 783-807. Each of these articles gives references to earlier scholarship on dropping behaviour.

[78]Plin. *NH* 10.14.30: *cornices et alio pabulo, ut quae duritiam nucis rostro repugnantem volantes in altum in saxa tegulasve iaciant iterum ac saepius, donec quassatam perfringere queant.*

[79]See esp. Marzluff, 240-244.

rather than the analytical.[80] At all events, the dropping behaviour could easily have been recorded for corvids, with smaller prey. The inclusion of the crow in Phaedrus' version, then, need not be taken as merely ornamental and disconnected from any natural corvine behaviour. Although the crow does not take part in the dropping behaviour herself, the fact that she knows how to do it is noteworthy. Phaedrus did not simply select random birds and write a scenario for them entirely out of keeping with their familiar natural character. Of course, liberties are taken (it is fable after all), but again, as mentioned above, the animals involved have to be sufficiently natural in their behaviour to create an underlying level of reality on which to found the credibility of the moral. If the animals are too unreal and only animals in name, the moral application loses its potency. This is why fable is an excellent source for understanding what the ancients thought about what specifically made each animal what it was and defined it in their eyes.

Indeed, other than the eagle and the crow, only the seagull is mentioned as specifically engaging in dropping behaviour in ancient sources.[81] Pliny explicitly mentions this habit of the eagle as an *ingenium*, a natural talent, bordering on an intelligent method. The eagle, in Phaedrus' version and the subsequent Latin versions of the Middle Ages (excepting Avianus), however, is depicted as being at a loss as to how to get at the meat of the prey he has found and would be forced to give it up were it not for the crow's intervention. Apart from Babrius and Avianus, the succeeding Latin versions

[80]See Fögen, "Pliny the Elder's Animals: Some Remarks on the Narrative Structure of Nat. Hist. 8–11," *Hermes*, 135. Jahrg., H. 2 (2007): 184-198.

[81] Ael. *NA* 3.20 on the seagull: καὶ μέντοι καὶ οἱ λάροι, ὡς Εὔδημός φησι, τοὺς κοχλίας μετεωρίζοντες καὶ ὑψοῦ αἴροντες ταῖς πέτραις βιαιότατα προσαράττουσιν. "And in fact seagulls also, as Eudemus asserts, lift up snails, carry them on high and then dash them most forcefully against the rocks."

of the Middle Ages include the crow and the deal he strikes with the eagle in keeping with Phaedrus' version. However, in some versions (Romulus Anglicus cunctis 13; Romuli Nilantis Fabulae Metricae 11) the crow does not share the dropped tortoise with the eagle but effectively tricks him, having seen to it that the eagle would, after flying up a great distance, take a good deal of time to get back to earth, during which the crow would make off with the now accessible meat. Of course neither Phaedrus nor the subsequent versions assume that the crow could pick up a tortoise and this is nowhere supposed in ancient natural history texts. It is far more likely that the crow is assumed to be working from experience of dropping lighter prey and applying that to the eagle's case. A crow, after all, does not carry prey as do eagles, vulture, or other birds of prey who hold prey with their talons, but rather almost always uses its beak to carry things and almost never its feet.[82] Thus, carrying a tortoise in an unbroken state would be nearly impossible. Moreover, the tortoise in the fable must be rather large, or at least, too large for the crow to carry, as not even the eagle can break it by its conventional methods. And so, much as ravens, and less often crows, in the wild will wait for a stronger animal or bird to open up a carcase too tough for its beak to penetrate,[83] so too this must be the case here from which, in one way or another, Phaedrus is drawing the zoological basis for his fable.

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[82] See Goodwin, 20; *BWP* (Vol. VIII) 5. Although the following articles are perhaps a little dated, they still have relevance to the topic: Wade, "Intelligence of the Crow," *Science*, Vol. 1, No. 16 (May 25, 1883): 458. Abbott, "Intelligence of the Crow," *Science*, Vol. 1, No. 20 (Jun. 22, 1883): 576. Kneeland, "Prehensile Feet of the Crows," *Science*, Vol. 2, No. 30 (Aug. 31, 1883): 265-266.

[83] Heinrich (1999), 143, 231-5 (on ravens' dependence on wolves to open up carcasses), 238-244, 356; Ratcliffe, 94 (raven).

Whether this is a recognition of the crow's intelligence (or perhaps cleverness might be more apt a word) as a defining characteristic of the bird and/or part of Phaedrus' satirical plan is difficult to determine. In a few other fables the crow is depicted as clever, if not intelligent, such as Perry 390 the fable of the Crow and the Hydria, to be treated below, Perry 202: the Dove and the Crow, and Perry 553: the Crow and the Sheep. But in the other fables in which the crow figures, it is not represented as especially intelligent and sometimes is specifically represented as unintelligent, but this is only in fable. In general, corvids were deemed among the most cunning birds in antiquity, a characteristic that will be discussed in the treatment of Perry 390, the fable of the Crow and the Hydria. Such logical reasoning could be applied to this fable as well: if you drop X from Y height it will break, but Phaedrus is not interested in lauding the intellectual *mirabilia* of the crow here. The crow in the role of advisor fits well with the augural function corvids fulfilled in Roman religion. However, the crow's intelligence, here in Perry 490, as I have said, is not being praised by Phaedrus, but vilified for the evil use to which it is being put. Unlike the praise accorded to the ingenuity of the crow in 390, both protagonists in Perry 490 are classified as evil by Phaedrus, which suggests that the intelligence of the crow is not what is of foremost interest. Instead, the natural cunning of the crow, as an ethological feature that defines the crow *qua* crow, is merely utilized by Phaedrus here for his satirical/moralizing end. In all likelihood the depiction of the crow and eagle as two villains who cooperate to overwhelm a defenceless innocent and succeed handily in their dastardly partnership is meant to be allegorical, with the crow playing the part of Sejanus, and the eagle Tiberius, with Phaedrus himself in the role of the outnumbered, mute

tortoise. This ascription seems possible since Phaedrus himself mentions his persecution by Sejanus in the prologue to Book III of his fables (III p*rol.*41ff.). The chronology of Phaedrus' fabular output also favours this allegorical interpretation, as the second book of Phaedrus' fables, in which this fable occurs, had written by A.D. 31, as Perry established that his third book was written between the years of A.D. 31 and 37.[84] As Sejanus was put to death in A.D. 31, the allegorical interpretation of this fable would not be out of the question. That aside, the birds chosen and the specific behavioural traits that are assigned to them seem well formulated. The fabulist has put thought into his satirical attack and has not just beaten Tiberius and Sejanus with just any stick; this is a strategic assault on many levels. Phaedrus' satirical programme is not what interests us here, but it does show how the choice of animals and the realism of their behaviour can make the intended message, be it moral or satirical, all the more effective.

<u>2.4.The Crow/Raven(s) and the Urn/Jar/Vessel</u>

It should be mentioned here that most versions of this anecdote mention that A. the bird(s) in question was/is/were/are raven(s), and B. it is implied that the setting is hot and arid; sometimes the locality is given (Libya). The only versions which do not say that the bird is a raven are the verse versions (with the exception of Bianor who does not mention either but by a poetic circumlocution suggests with near certainty that the bird in question, Apollo's bird, is a raven), which make the bird a crow (*korônê/cornix*). This is not to say that such a feat as that described in the fable would be outside the mental capacity of the Hooded Crow (here is where modern animal intelligence studies *can* be

[84] Perry (Ed. and Trans.), *Babrius and Phaedrus*. (Harvard University Press, 1965), lxxx.

used effectively as corroboration;[85] in fact, this very pebble dropping anecdote has been replicated with a rook, successfully.[86] Furthermore, crows do occur in North Africa, and a multitude of other places–so climatologically speaking, the Libyan location would not rule out the crow. But the non-metrical variants clearly mention the raven (with the exception of Pseudo-Dositheus, and his prose-version is likely a prosification of lost versions in verse[87]). One possible explanation for the discrepancy is metre: *korax* and *corvus* could not be substituted in the poetic compositions without having to rearrange quite a lot (Bianor avoids the issue by circumlocution, but Avianus cannot substitute *corvus* [a trochee] for *cornix* [a useful spondee] without hassle).

This fable, or perhaps it would be better to call it an anecdote, is the *locus classicus* of corvine intelligence, or rather corvine 'practical wisdom'. I say anecdote instead of fable (though the distinction is at times quite porous when dealing with fables of natural history[88]) because of its resemblance to stories found in natural history texts and the fact that it does not occur in fable form until it has occurred numerous times in

[85] Most recently Marzluff and Angell, *Gifts of the Crow: How Perception, Emotion, and Thought Allow Smart Birds to Behave Like Humans*. (New York, 2012) *passim* with a good bibliography of pertinent corvid cognition articles. Among many articles on avian cognitive ornithology are to be noted: Hunt, "Human-Like, Population-Level Specialization in the Manufacture of Pandanus Tools by New Caledonian Crows Corvus moneduloides," *Proceedings: Biological Sciences*, Vol. 267, No. 1441 (Feb. 22, 2000): 403-413; Emery and Clayton, "The Mentality of Crows: Convergent Evolution of Intelligence in Corvids and Apes," *Science*, New Series, Vol. 306, No. 5703 (Dec. 10, 2004): 1903-1907. The bibliographies for any recent work on avian cognition are helpful as well.
[86] Bird and Emery, "Rooks Use Stones to Raise the Water Level to Reach a Floating Worm," *Current Biology,* Vol. 19, No. 16 (Aug. 25, 2009): 1410-1414.
[87]See Adrados, Vol. 1, 117-119.
[88] cf. Perry 118: Chambry 153 (Greek), Phaedrus Ap. 30, Ael. *NA* 6.34 and Plin. *NH* 8.109 of the beaver's castrating itself to avoid capture because it knows what the pursuers are after and bites off its testicles.

anecdotal form. Natural history anecdotes in full unaltered form do not readily translate into fable due to the tendencies of animals depicted in the genre: speaking, conflict with other animals, human situations transferred into the animal kingdom (calling it a 'kingdom' is yet another anthropomorphism in itself).[89] Moreover, such natural history anecdotes, unless they are altered and fabulized, are not usually comedic. The raven and crow are acting quite naturally, their actions are not to be taken as laughable or even amusing. In fact, one sometimes notes an element of admiration for ingenuity in natural history fables. Fables were usually used to impart levity and create a closer connection between a speaker and his audience. In this regard they can almost be viewed, at least in oratorical or sympotic contexts (where most discussions on fable theory are centred), as a form of *captatio benevolentiae*.[90] Mirth is *not* something that this fable and the beaver's self-castration would induce. Anecdotal fables of natural history could really only be used in specific contexts, for example, of praise for some clever action or an incredible display or resourcefulness or cunning. In any case the brevity and content of this scene from

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[89] For the use of animals in fable and how they operate within fable, along with the conventions of fable see chapters I and II of the second part of Vol. I of Adrados, pgs. 142-239.

[90] Definitions of fable in antiquity which mention fable's ability to incite laughter and impart levity to a situation: Ar. *Vespae* 566, 1256-1261; Auctor ad Herennium 1.6.10; Cic. *De Inventione* 1.17.25; Cic. *De Oratore* 2.66.264; Demetrius, *De Elocutione* 157-158; Phaedrus, *Fabulae* 1 *Prol.*; Phaedr. 3 *Prol.;* Phaedr. 4.2.1-7; Quintillian, *Institutio Oratoria* 6.3.44; Dio Chrysostom 72.13; Lucian, *Vera Historia* 2.18; Eustathius of Antioch, *De Engastrimytho contra Origenem* 29; Marius Victorinus, *Rhetorica* 1.17; Flavius Claudius Julianus Imperator, *Πρὸς Ἡράκλειον κυνικὸν περὶ τοῦ πῶς κυνιστέον καὶ εἰ πρέπει τῷ κυνὶ μύθους πλάττειν* Oration 7.3, 207a-d; Ausonius, *Epistulae* 9; Avianus, *Fabulae, Praefatio*; Macrobius, *Commentatio Somnii Scipionis* 1.2.7-11; Nicolaus, *Progymnasma* 1; Romulus, *Praefatio* 1. For a detailed treatment of these definitions see van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi: Fables in Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic Greek Literature: with a Study of the Theory and Terminology of the Genre* (Leiden, 1997), 38 ff. and *passim*.

nature were suited to fabulation. The behaviour of the crow and raven here is indeed resourceful, which could easily be identified with intelligence, but as I shall describe subsequently, although it is in keeping with the observed intelligence noted of the bird in antiquity and modern times (and so realistic in both settings), in the ancient sources this realistic intelligence had a very specific meaning (and would fit realistically with other cases of animal 'intelligence' noted by the ancient Greeks and Romans).

2.4.1 Bianor (*Anthologia Palatina (AP)* 9.272) (1st. C. A.D.)

Καρφαλέος δίψει Φοίβου λάτρις εὖτε γυναικὸς*(1)*
  εἶδεν ὑπὲρ τύμβου κρωσσίον ὀμβροδόκον,
κλάγξεν ὑπὲρ χείλους, ἀλλ' οὐ γένυς ἥπτετο βυσσοῦ.
  Φοῖβε, σὺ δ' εἰς τέχνην ὄρνιν ἐκαιρομάνεις·
χερμάδα δὲ ψάμμων σφαιρῶν ποτὸν ἅρπαγι χείλει[91]*(5)*
  ἔφθανε μαιμάσσων λαοτίνακτον ὕδωρ.

When the attendant of Phoebus, parched with thirst
  Saw upon a woman's tomb a pluvitenent pitcher,
It croaked over the rim, but its mouth did not reach the bottom.
  Phoebus, now you opportunely inspired[92] *it to skill/cunning;*
And raising the precarious drink by means of pebble, with greedy lip
  It eagerly overtook the stone-stirred water.[93]

In the epigram's first line Bianor in a roundabout fashion indicates that the raven is the subject of the poem, for the raven was generally considered to be the bird of

[91] Gow and Page. *The Greek Anthology: The Garland of Philip and Some Contemporary Epigrams* (In two volumes) Vol. I (Cambridge, 1968), 190-1 gives a much better rendering of the Greek at line 5 and the best English translation of lines 5-6.
χερμάδι δ' ὑψηλῶν σφαλερὸν ποτόν, ἅρπαγι χείλει *(5)*.
[92] *Idem*. This translation of *ekairomaneis* is taken from Vol. II, p. 203.
[93] *Ibid*, 203.

Apollo, whereas the crow was considered (in some accounts) to be Athena's bird.[94] In all events, the mention of Phoebus is not a mere poetic flourish in this case but serves a point. That point being that Bianor depicts the raven here when confronted with an obstacle to its thirst, not as solving the problem by acting from some inborn intelligence common to all ravens (as the other anecdotes do) but as acting through the inspiration of his divine patron Apollo. This may merely be a variation on the commonplace of the poet knowing nothing by himself but receiving everything via inspiration from a god or gods (Cf. Plato's *Ion* and poetic invocations of the Muses or Zeus). It might also relate to the widespread belief that crows, ravens, and other augural birds like them, did not understand the omens that they conveyed but were merely conduits,[95] flying paper to be

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[94] Thompson, 161 gives and extensive list of relevant references. Thompson, 170 "At Corone was a bronze statue of Athene holding a crow in her hand, Paus. iv. 34. 6. At Titane the image of Coronis was brought into the sanctuary of Athena whenever the sacrifice of bull, lamb, and pig was being offered to Aesculapius, Paus. ib." In Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* iii.102ff the crow is controlled by Hera and made to exhort Cadmus, positively.

[95] Plutarch, *De Pythiae Oraculis* 405 D, §22 ἀλλ’ ἡμεῖς ἐρωδιοῖς οἰόμεθα καὶ τροχίλοις καὶ κόραξι χρῆσθαι φθεγγομένοις σημαίνοντα τὸν θεὸν καὶ οὐκ ἀξιοῦμεν, ᾗ θεῶν ἄγγελοι καὶ κήρυκές εἰσι, λογικῶς ἕκαστα καὶ σαφῶς φράζειν, τὴν δὲ τῆς Πυθίας φωνὴν καὶ διάλεκτον ὥσπερ <τραγικὴν> ἐκ θυμέλης, οὐκ ἀνήδυντον οὐδὲ λιτὴν ἀλλ’ ἐν μέτρῳ καὶ ὄγκῳ καὶ πλάσματι καὶ μεταφοραῖς ὀνομάτων καὶ μετ’ αὐλοῦ φθεγγομένην παρέχειν ἀξιοῦμεν.’ "But we fancy that the god when he gives signs makes use of calling herons, wrens, ravens and we do not require that, inasmuch as they are messengers and heralds of the gods, they communicate each and every detail rationally and clearly, whereas we do require that the Pythia's voice and language be expressed like the language of tragedy from the stage, neither unpleasant nor simple but in metre and with loftiness and style and verbal metaphors and uttered along with the flute." Epictetus, *Dissertationes ab Arriano Digestae* 1.17.19 οὐδὲ τὸν κόρακα θαυμάζομεν ἢ τὴν κορώνην, ἀλλὰ τὸν θεὸν σημαίνοντα διὰ τούτων. "nor do we marvel at the raven or the crow, but at the god signalling through them." 3.1.37 οὔ· ἀλλ’ ἂν μὲν κόραξ κραυγάζων σημαίνῃ σοί τι, οὐχ ὁ κόραξ ἐστὶν ὁ σημαίνων, ἀλλ’ ὁ θεὸς δι’ αὐτοῦ·"No; but if on the one hand a raven by croaking signals something to you, it is not the raven who does the signalling, but the god by means of it."

written on by the gods and read by those who had the knowledge to interpret them. The divine inspiration idea is probably not repeated in the other versions because it would amount to praise of Apollo only, which, although admirable, would only amount to praise of Apollo and not of resourcefulness. Whereas, upon transferring the ownership of the 'intelligence' to the animal or excluding the role of divine involvement, 'intelligence' itself and/or the animals' use of it is now possible. Both views, that of divine inspiration and that of inherent ingenuity, may be taken as contextually realistic explanations of the described animal behaviour. The latter however, was more suited to exemplification, as the former basically places humans and animals on the same level, as both can be inspired with intelligence or with whatever quality a deity wished to inspire them. Barring the divine inspiration factor, Bianor's version is much like the others and essentially describes the type of intelligence as the canny recognition and exploitation of a given opportunity and the turning of an obstacle into something advantageous (εἰς τέχνην ὄρνιν ἐκαιρομάνεις). The raven is also depicted realistically in terms of its setting: in a funereal context, a tomb (and in fact many ravens can be seen on Greek vases in just such settings, and ironically or intentionally the vase types on which they appear are used at funerals[96]), and crowing with a verb used especially of corvids and certain birds (κλάγξεν).

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[96]London, British Museum 6, III.H.E.7, PLS.(343,344) 84.4, 85.1 a black-figure hydria of the Leagros Group featuring Troilus about to be ambushed by Achilles. A raven sits (in prophetic anticipation of Troilus' death perhaps?) on a fountain with a lion-headed waterspout which separates the protagonists. As well, see the black-figure lekythos (a funeral vase type) of the Athena Painter featuring the same scene, Toledo (OH), Museum of Art: 47.62. Both of these and many more vases featuring ravens and this very scene, too, may be seen online, with fantastic plates at http://www.cvaonline.org/cva/default.htm the computerized and up-to-date version of the often difficult to access fascicles of the *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum* (*CVA*).

2.4.2 Pliny the Elder, *NH* 10.60:

Tradendum putavere memoriae quidam, visum [sc. corvum] per sitim lapides congerentem in situlam monumenti in qua pluvia aqua durabat sed quae attingi non posset; ita descendere paventem expressisse tali congerie quantum poturo sufficeret.

Certain (authors/individuals) have thought it ought to be handed down to posterity that [a raven] was seen, on account of its thirst, heaping stones into a tomb's urn, in which rain water remained but which could not be reached. So, fearing to go down [i.e. into the urn] (the raven) had made it [i.e. the rain water] rise by such a heaping that it was enough for it about to drink.

Pliny is reluctant to believe wholeheartedly in this anecdote, a fact that he makes clear in his attribution of it to "certain individuals" and the distancing passive "have thought it ought to be handed down", as well as the lack of geographic specificity and the placement of the anecdote at one unspecified point in the past (suggesting a marvellous and singular episode, instead of a repeatedly observable and replicable occurrence as in Plutarch and Aelian). He does not specifically describe the raven's action as one connoting intelligence; nowhere is a word indicating such evident in the vocabulary. However, inasmuch as this book (10) is filled with examples of animal ingenuity and Pliny in his other references to the raven and crow generally assesses their intellectual capabilities positively, it would seem to be the case here, despite his reticence in clearly stating so. Furthermore the anecdote in question occurs in a section dealing with the linguistic capacity of ravens, which for the most part is depicted positively. Moreover, although in his preface he is reluctant to give his full assent to the anecdote, he does not represent the *quidam* as foolish or to be discounted, which, if he had felt the need to do

so, he would have made overtly clear, as he does in regard to sources elsewhere.[97] The disclaimer also suggests that Pliny has not actually seen this behaviour himself (something he shares with Plutarch and likely Aelian) and is merely recording what he has read.[98] But this should not diminish the fact that he does, essentially, vouch for the anecdote's veracity and believes in its plausibility. In any case, since the anecdote occurs in a section dealing with corvine intelligence, and there is no section on corvine stupidity,

[97]A good example from his book on animals: Plin. *NH* 8.34 *homines in lupos verti rursusque restitui sibi falsum esse confidenter existimare debemus aut credere omnia quae fabulosa tot saeculis conperimus. unde tamen ista vulgo infixa sit fama in tantum, ut in maledictis versipelles habeat, indicabitur. Euanthes, inter auctores Graeciae non spretus, scribit arcadas tradere ex gente anthi cuiusdam sorte familiae lectum ad stagnum quoddam regionis eius duci vestituque in quercu suspenso tranare atque abire in deserta transfigurarique in lupum et cum ceteris eiusdem generis congregari per annos viiii. quo in tempore si homine se abstinuerit, reverti ad idem stagnum et, cum tranaverit, effigiem recipere, ad pristinum habitum addito novem annorum senio. addit quoque fabulosius eandem reciperare vestem! mirum est quo procedat graeca credulitas! nullum tam inpudens mendacium est, ut teste careat.*
"That men have turned into wolves and have been restored back to themselves again we must confidently reckon to be false or must believe all the things that we have learned over so many centuries to be fabulous. Yet the source will be indicated from which that wretched tradition has been embedded among the common people to such a degree that it reckons werewolves among those cursed. Evanthes, no mean author among the Greeks, writes that the Arcadians hand down that one of the family of Anthus after being chosen by lot is conducted to a certain lake of the region and after he hangs his clothing from an oak tree he swims across it and goes off into wilderness and is transformed into a wolf and associates with others of the same species for nine years. During this time if he has kept himself aloof from man, he returns to the same lake and, after swimming across, resumes his shape, and with an age of nine years added to his original appearance. He also added something more fabulous: that he regains the same clothing (that he had had on)! It is astonishing how far Greek credulity will go! There is no lie so shameless as to lack a backer!" See also 9.6 where he disagrees with Aristotle over the gills of fish, 10.32 where he refutes the popular assumption that swans sing a mournful song at their death, citing personal experience of the contrary. Other examples could easily be adduced.
[98]Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae* 3.5.10: *Post cibum saepe - quem interdiu levem et facilem veterum more sumebat - aestate si quid otii iacebat in sole, liber legebatur, adnotabat excerpebatque. Nihil enim legit quod non excerperet; dicere etiam solebat nullum esse librum tam malum ut non aliqua parte prodesset.*

the burden of proof weighs on the side of realism for the anecdote in Pliny's case who is on many occasions sceptical, more so than Aelian, less so than Plutarch, and far less than Aristotle. The type of intelligence, however, is not the philosophical, non-practical intelligence of thinkers and men of leisure, but resourcefulness, practical, survival-directed intelligence, which, although praiseworthy and a shared trait with humans, falls short in the eyes of many Graeco-Roman writers of the pinnacle that human intelligence represents.

2.4.3 Plutarch, *Moralia* 967 A (*De Sollertia Animalium*)

τῇ καθ᾽ ἡμέραν ὄψει καὶ θέᾳ τοῦ γιγνομένου πιστὸν ἔσχε τὸν λόγον. ἄλλως δ᾽ ἂν ἐδόκει μῦθος, ὥσπερ ἡμῖν ἐδόκει τὸ τῶν ἐν Λιβύῃ κοράκων, οἳ ποτοῦ δεόμενοι λίθους ἐμβάλλουσιν ἀναπληροῦντες καὶ ἀνάγοντες τὸ ὕδωρ, μέχρι ἂν ἐν ἐφικτῷ γένηται [p. 33] εἶτα μέντοι κύνα θεασάμενος ἐν πλοίῳ, τῶν ναυτῶν μὴ παρόντων, εἰς ἔλαιον ἀμφορέως ἀποδεοῦς ἐμβάλλοντα τῶν χαλίκων, ἐθαύμασα πῶς νοεῖ καὶ συνίησι τὴν γιγνομένην ἔκθλιψιν ὑπὸ τῶν βαρυτέρων τοῖς κουφοτέροις ὑφισταμένων.

Since this [i.e. the just related account of the cleverness of spiders in constructing webs] happens in our day-to-day sight and view, the account has credibility. But otherwise it would seem a tall tale, just as seemed to me the story of the ravens in Libya, who, when they want a drink, throw stones (sc. into a vessel of water) filling it up and raising the water until it is within reach. Then, however, when I beheld a dog on a ship, when the sailors were not around, throwing some pebbles into an empty amphora of olive oil, I was amazed at how it knows and understands that a squeezing out occurs for lighter things by heavier things sinking [i.e that lighter things are displaced through the addition of heavier ones].

Plutarch's account is much more detailed than Pliny's and is given a different timeframe, the present. Plutarch is not speaking in his own voice but rather in the persona of Aristotimus, one of the speakers in his dialogue *De Sollertia Animalium*, which explores whether land animals are cleverer than sea animals. The raven, then, is not unique among the animals listed in the discussion, but is just one of many examples

meant to prove the case for land (i.e. terrestrial non-aquatic) animals' cleverness. Of course, Plutarch's speaker does not list every bird but only a select few which demonstrate their practical wisdom in a degree which exceeds other animals. In this sense, then, the raven *is* in fact marked out as being cleverer than other birds. This corresponds with other ancient authors' views, especially those of Aristotle, Pliny, and Aelian. Plutarch's speaker, like Pliny, was somewhat hesitant to believe the tale of the Libyan ravens when he first heard it, and thought it a mere μῦθος, but changed his mind because such behaviour can be observed daily, i.e. by anyone, and verified. The account is further given authority: through geographic specificity–it is localized in Libya, a present setting which stresses repeated day to day occurrence, and by its ascription to ravens in the plural and not a single bird; thus it is implied that it is a perennial behaviour shared by ravens in general. Modern science does not give credit to anecdotal evidence anymore, but requires one documenting a certain animal behaviour to show that said behaviour is replicable or has been observed more than once by reliable authorities. Unfortunately Plutarch's speaker bases the credibility of the ravens' pebble dropping not on the internal content of the account but on the cleverness of land animals in general and specifically on the action of a dog that the speaker says he observed performing a similar action (dropping stones into a vessel of olive oil). Yet, the words he uses to describe the dog's resourcefulness in obtaining the olive oil may by extension be taken as being equally applicable to the ravens. The speaker does present the anecdote as an exotic marvel but substantiates it with evidence that readers who did not live in Libya, could, should they be so minded, observe for themselves. It does not seem to matter that ravens and dogs are entirely

different creatures: the effectiveness of the series of examples which come swiftly one after the other and include entirely different creatures prohibits deep reflection that in fact the argument may not be as effective as it seems. A similar thing obtains with fable, where all animals are understood to speak the same language. Essentially, then, corvine intelligence is no more or less special than the intricacy of a spider's web or a dog's strange method of obtaining, of all things, olive oil. Yet the fact that the raven occurs prominently among the birds Plutarch *does* list as examples of cleverness or resourcefulness, as in many other accounts of ancient animal 'intelligence', suggests that cleverness was a diagnostic feature of the raven in antiquity, just as it was of the fox, though to a far more prominent degree. This cleverness is reflected in fable as well, and thus may be taken as a realistic trait which defines the raven *qua* raven in the Graeco-Roman mind.

2.4.4 Ael. *NA* II.46

Λίβυες δὲ κόρακες, ὅταν οἱ ἄνθρωποι φόβῳ δίψους ὑδρευσάμενοι πληρώσωσι τὰ ἀγγεῖα ὕδατος, καὶ κατὰ τῶν τεγῶν θέντες ἐάσωσι τῷ ἀέρι τὸ ὕδωρ φυλάττειν ἄσηπτον, ἐνταῦθα ἐς ὅσον μὲν αὐτοῖς τὰ ῥάμφη κάτεισιν ἐγκύπτοντες, χρῶνται τῷ ποτῷ: ὅταν δὲ ὑπολήξῃ, ψήφους κομίζουσι καὶ τῷ στόματι καὶ τοῖς ὄνυξι, καὶ ἐμβάλλουσιν ἐς τὸν κέραμον: καὶ αἳ μὲν ἐκ τοῦ βάρους ὠθοῦνται καὶ ὑφιζάνουσι, τό γε μὴν ὕδωρ θλιβόμενον ἀναπλεῖ. καὶ πίνουσιν εὖ μάλα εὐμηχάνως οἱ κόρακες, εἰδότες φύσει τινὶ ἀπορρήτῳ δύο σώματα μίαν χώραν μὴ δέχεσθαι.

Now Libyan ravens, whenever men (there) through fear of thirst/drought draw themselves water and fill their vessels with it, and place them upon their roofs and allow the air to keep the water in an uncorrupted state, then they, as far as (it is) possible for them, send their beaks down by stooping down and peeping in, enjoy a drink: but when it gradually desists [i.e. gets lower], they bring pebbles in both their mouth and claws, and throw them into the earthen vessel; and they [i.e. the pebbles], on the one hand, due to their weight, are pushed (down) and sink, whereas the water for its part, since it is squeezed, floats up. And the ravens drink very ingeniously, since they know by some inexplicable instinct that one spot does not admit two bodies.

Aelian's version is given at greater length (he has the time to do so as his work deals specifically with animals and is rife with *exempla sollertiae*), and like Plutarch's, is also set in the present tense and features multiple ravens as opposed to one unique specimen. It is unclear whether Aelian is elaborating the details of the basic story as told by Plutarch (or Plutarch's source) with his own additions–namely, the explanation of the vessels' presence in the first place, the desire of the Libyans to prevent their water from putrefying which in turn provides an opportunity for the ravens to enjoy a drink, and the use of beak and claws to transport pebbles)–or whether these have been omitted by Plutarch. In any case, both authors provide the fullest treatment of the anecdote and probably drew on a single source. Unlike Plutarch, however, Aelian specifically categorizes the ravens' behaviour as clever, in fact, exceedingly so (καὶ πίνουσιν εὖ μάλα εὐμηχάνως οἱ κόρακες). He even suggests a reason why they are able to meet this particular challenge: they are able to do this because by some inexplicable and mysterious instinct they know that one space will not admit two bodies. Essentially, they engage in causal reasoning, if X then Y. Thus Aelian hypothesizes a reason for their behaviour unlike any of the other accounts, save Bianor's divine inspiration theory. Aelian does not attribute their cleverness to outside, divine influence, but stresses the inherent nature of the raven's intelligence. This is a powerful statement on the part of Aelian, but Aelian is rarely treated as trying to think outside the box by modern scholarship, but more often as a mere purveyor of zoological *mirabilia* offered for entertainment's sake alone. Yet, Aelian's reading of causal reasoning into the ravens' act here squares well, in fact, with modern studies of corvine intelligence.

2.4.5 Hausrath 311 (number 8 of his Dositheus section),[99] Perry 390

(8.) ΚΟΡΩΝΗ ΔΙΨΩΣΑ
κορώνη διψῶσα προσῆλθεν ἐπὶ ὑδρίαν καὶ ταύτην ἐβιάζετο ἀνατρέψαι. ἀλλ' ὅτι ἰσχυρῶς εἱστήκει, οὐκ ἠδύνατο αὐτὴν καταβάλλειν, ἀλλὰ μεθόδῳ ἐπέτυχεν, ὃ ἠθέλησεν. ἔπεμπε γὰρ ψήφους εἰς τὴν ὑδρίαν καὶ τούτων τὸ πλῆθος ἀπὸ κάτωθεν τὸ ὕδωρ ἄνω ὑπερέχεεν· καὶ οὕτως ἡ κορώνη τὴν ἰδίαν δίψαν κατέπαυσεν.
οὕτως οὖν φρόνησις ἀνδρότητα πλανᾷ.

A thirsty crow came to a pitcher and made an effort to topple it. But since it had been firmly set up, she was not able to knock it over, but she happened upon a method, the thing that she wished. For she dropped pebbles into the pitcher and the great number of these caused the water to overflow up from below; and so the crow put an end to her (particular/exceptional) thirst.
Thus practical wisdom thwarts brute force.

4.6 Avianus, Perry 390[100]

Ingentem sitiens cornix adspexerat urnam,
Quae minimam fundo continuisset aquam.
Hanc enisa diu planis effundere campis,
Scilicet ut nimiam pelleret inde sitim,
Postquam nulla viam virtus[101] dedit, ammovet omnes (5)
Indignata nova calliditate dolos.
Nam brevis immersis accrescens sponte lapillis
Potandi facilem praebuit unda viam.
Viribus haec docuit quam sit prudentia maior,
Qua coeptum volucri explicuisset opus. (10)

A thirsty crow had espied an immense urn,
Which held a very small amount of water at its bottom.
For a long time did it endeavour to pour this forth on the plain,
Naturally to dispel its excessive thirst thereby.
Now when no vigorous action provided a way, infuriated it applied
All its schemes with novel adroitness.
For the low level of water growing automatically when pebbles were sunk in it
Provided an easy way of drinking.

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[99]Hausrath and Hunger, *Corpus fabularum Aesopicarum*, vol. 1.2, 2nd edn. (Leipzig, 1959), 124-125.
[100]Latin text from J.W. and A.M.Duff (Eds. and trans.), *Minor Latin Poets.* (*LCL*) (London, 1934), 722.
[101]In all likelihood a translation of the Greek *andria/andreia* as this is not a usual meaning of *virtus*.

This fable has taught how practical wisdom/prudence is greater than strength,
For by it the crow carried out the undertaken task.

The fabular versions of the anecdote do not offer anything new to the general plot. There are changes, however and, of course, abbreviations. The geographic location is omitted, the circumstances of the vessel are also gone, the exact method of pebble transport is abbreviated to mere dropping, and significantly (perhaps), the raven has become a crow, likely for reasons of metre. The fabulists either made use of the above sources or the source(s) that the above themselves employed. The fables, though, are more akin to Plutarch's and Aelian's versions inasmuch as they attribute resourcefulness to the crow herself as opposed to the divine inspiration route of Bianor. Pseudo-Dositheus' highlights the crow's practical wisdom in a couple of ways: firstly, when she encounters the pitcher and cannot upset it by mere force (a new addition surely included to point the moral of brains over brawn but equally realistic as well as an example of trial and error and/or inventive intelligence[102]), the crow "hits upon a way", suggesting a rational thought process and a weighing of alternatives, especially when followed by ὃ ἠθέλησεν. The bird then executes this plan, a plan which requires foresight and organisation, which are again features of corvid cognition modern studies corroborate. The epimythium makes clear that this behaviour is to be taken as intelligent (οὕτως οὖν φρόνησις ἀνδρότητα πλανᾷ), although this is not philosophical, non-survival based intelligence, but 'practical wisdom' (φρόνησις). This is sometimes translated 'intelligence', but when applied to animals it becomes evident that it is not 'intelligence' of the

[102]See Hunt 2000 and Emery and Clayton 2004.

philosophical sort. Avianus' fable echoes this sentiment in Latin (*Viribus haec docuit quam sit prudentia maior*). As has been said, natural history fables like this are rare probably because they offer so little scope for levity and are generally fitting only to highlight something admirable or to be avoided and can only be given comedic scope when altered dramatically. At all events, the crow's intelligence is treated in a completely serious fashion and thus not as something to be deemed fabulous, laugable, or transgressive, but as a diagnostic feature of the crow which identifies it as a crow.

The attribution of this positive intelligence (positive as opposed to negative cunning) to animals is extremely rare in fable, for obvious reasons, and much more comfortable in the realm of natural history. This does not mean that animals in fable are seen only as unintelligent or overly anthropomorphic in intelligence but rather that they have a different sort of intelligence – cunning (often with a negative shade) or cleverness. The cunning animal par excellence is the fox, and if a bird were to be chosen as a representative of this trait, it would likely be a tie between the swallow, owl, raven, and crow. However, due to the loss of ancient literature it cannot be said with certainty that positive, admirable examples of animal intelligence such as the pebble-dropping crow, did not exist in Graeco-Roman fable, but the depiction of intelligence in fable otherwise militates against this. Cunning and cleverness, which take the form of ruses or tricks employed by one animal against another to achieve its own ends, often allow for greater comedic scope and levity than do dry examples of positive intelligence. Pebble-dropping is not funny; admirable and interesting, yes, but not funny. Fable is not the realm of unaltered natural history, which can be made entertaining, but not within the constraints

of the fabular genre when adopted wholesale.

The raven, although a prime contender for the title of cleverest fabular bird, is not always depicted in fable as intelligent, and on one exceptional occasion, in fact, is depicted as the opposite thereof. Perry 124 (the fable of the Fox and Raven) sees the raven being made quite the fool after falling for the fox's cleverly constructed flattery. This is not, however, common in portrayal of the raven, even in fable, much less among ancient sources in general.[103] It is best seen as an example of the fabular commonplace of the clever fox tricking or attempting to trick some animal, a motif which is far more common than the depiction of the crow or raven as unintelligent.[104] Even the words of the fox in its parting taunt to the raven are replicated with minor alteration in other fables where it tricks some animal.[105]

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[103]Smart raven fables: Perry 190 (Chambry 274): The Ass, Raven, and Wolf; Perry 133 (Syntipas 28): The Dog Carrying the Meat [A dog taken in by the reflection of himself in water believes it another dog and drops the meat he is carrying which is then picked by a passing raven]; Perry 219 (Syntipas 53) The Peacock and the Raven [the raven successfully argues the inadequacy of a peacock king]; Perry 577 (Romulus Anglicus 106): The Raven's Birthday Party; *De Corvo et Pullis Suis* (Romulus Anglicus 70); Perry 599 (Odo of Cheriton 29): *De Aquila et Corvo Medico*.
Smart crow fables: Perry 202 (Chambry 302): The Dove and the Crow; Perry 490 (Phaedrus 2.6): The Eagle and the Crow; Perry 553 (Phaedrus App. 26): The Crow and the Sheep.

[104]Foolish raven fables: Perry 323 (Chambry 166): The Raven and Hermes, where the raven defaults on his first vow to Apollo when saved and when in trouble again prays to Hermes who brings up his past failure to fulfil his vow; 398 (Aphthonius 40) The Raven and the Swan. Here the raven starves to death because it tries to live a swan to render itself white out of envy of the swan's whiteness, but the swan's habitat does not meet its dietary requirements. Fables that portray the prophetic raven fraudulent such as Perry 236: The Travellers and the Raven, should not be taken as examples of the raven's stupidity since the raven here merely serves as a proxy for an attack against charlatan seers (such as Perry 161 *Mantis*) or superstition in general, and thus will be treated in the section on augural fables.

[105]Compare the Fox's taunt to the Raven in the versions of Perry 124:

There are many foolish jackdaw fables, however. But although the jackdaw is a member of the crow family and looks rather like a crow in many respects, the ancients seem to have had no difficulty in distinguishing between ravens and crows on the one hand and jackdaws on the other. Now, the jackdaw's intellectual capabilities do not match the crow's, nor the crow's the raven's. Fable seems to highlight this hierarchy as well. I say "seems" because it would be unwise to take fable's presentation of animal ethology with one hundred percent credence. But science surprisingly corroborates this hierarchy, at least in terms of brain size.[106] All three birds were easily observable in city or country, in Greece or Italy and practically throughout Europe and the East. All three are long-lived as well, generally non-migratory, conspicuous aurally as well as visually, and augurally important–all aspects that would enable a greater degree of observation than would normally occur for other birds. Aristotle makes an interesting comment in this regard, when speaking of the fact that length of life is an important factor governing the degree to which animals may be observed:

> The characters of animals that are more obscure and shorter-lived

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Chambry 165 " Ὦ κόραξ, καὶ φρένας εἰ εἶχες, οὐδὲν ἂν ἐδέησας εἰς τὸ πάντων σε βασιλεῦσαι."; Babrius 77: τὸν ἡ σοφὴ λαβοῦσα κερτόμῳ γλώσσῃ "οὐκ ἦσθ' ἄφωνος" εἶπεν "ἀλλὰ φωνήεις· ἔχεις, κόραξ, ἅπαντα, νοῦς δέ σοι λείπει."; Aphthonius 29: ἡ δὲ λαβοῦσα: "φωνὴ μέν, ὦ κόραξ, - εἶπε - προσῆν, ὁ δὲ νοῦς ἐπιλέλοιπεν." with Perry 81 (Chambry 38) The Fox and the Ape Elected King:"Ὦ πίθηκε, σὺ δὲ τοιαύτην μωρίαν ἔχων τῶν ἀλόγων ζώων βασιλεύεις;" and Perry 336: The Lion, the Fox, and the Stag (Chambry 199): Ἀλώπηξ δὲ μηκόθεν σταθεῖσα ἔφη· "Αὕτη ἀληθῶς καρδίαν οὐκ εἶχεν· μὴ ἔτι ζήτει· ποίαν γὰρ καρδίαν αὕτη εἶχεν, ἥτις δὶς εἰς οἶκον καὶ χεῖρας λέοντος εἰσῆλθεν." and (Babrius 95) :κερδὼ δ' ἀπαιολῶσα τῆς ἀληθείης, "οὐκ εἶχε πάντως" φησί "μὴ μάτην ζήτει. ποίην δ' ἔμελλε καρδίην ἔχειν, ἥτις ἐκ δευτέρου λέοντος ἦλθεν εἰς οἴκους; As well see Perry 562 where the fox initially succeeds by the tact of flattery but is duped in the same way by its very captive (Ademar 30): Perdix et Vulpes.

[106] See Heinrich 325ff. in a chapter specifically devoted to corvid intelligence and brain volume.

> are less obvious to us in relation to (our) perception, whereas those of longer-lived ones are more obvious. For they appear to have a certain natural capacity in respect to each of the soul's affections, namely in respect to intelligence and foolishness, bravery and cowardice, and in respect to gentleness and savageness and other such dispositions.[107]

As shall be discussed subsequently, corvids were the archetypal long-lived animals, not just among birds but generally, and became proverbial for longevity. Crows, ravens, and jackdaws, by Aristotle's criteria, then, are conspicuous beings. In fact, Aristotle frequently uses ravens in his *Prior Analytics* to demonstrate syllogisms.[108] It might be argued that Aristotle felt that ravens were unintelligent beings, along the lines, perhaps, of the fable of the Fox and the Raven, for at *Pr.An.* 34b he says in assigning identities for the sake of example to stand as the terms of one kind of syllogism: "Let 'A' be/stand for raven, while 'B' for intelligence, and 'C' for man. In nowise indeed does A belong to B; for a raven is nothing intelligent." Of course, the fabulist was not thinking of Aristotle when writing the fable of the Fox and the Raven, nor does Aristotle actually think the raven is unintelligent for the following reason. He uses the raven as an easily imaginable example for the sake of successfully illustrating his syllogisms. He often contrasts it with the swan and uses the colours black and white in conjunction with these birds. So the reasoning behind his choice seems to have to do more with the visual appeal and mental effect of black and white and the choice of familiar and easily visualisable animals. Aristotle nowhere else makes the assertion that ravens in particular are unintelligent, only here, which leads one

[107]Τὰ δ’ ἤθη τῶν ζῴων ἐστὶ τῶν μὲν ἀμαυροτέρων καὶ βραχυβιωτέρων ἧττον ἡμῖν ἔνδηλα κατὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν, τῶνδὲ μακροβιωτέρων ἐνδηλότερα. Φαίνονται γὰρ ἔχοντά τινα δύναμιν περὶ ἕκαστον τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς παθημάτων φυσικήν,περί τε φρόνησιν καὶ εὐήθειαν καὶ ἀνδρείαν καὶ δειλίαν, περί τε πραότητα καὶ χαλεπότητα καὶ τὰς ἄλλας τὰς τοιαύτας ἕξεις.

[108]Pr. An. 26a, 27b, 29a, 34b, 36b.

to believe that he is merely using an already familiar example from the work in question as a stand-in animal, that is, any other easily imaginable animal could be substituted in this syllogism, there is no corvine bias present.[109] The general opinion of Greeks and Romans, Aristotle included, was that ravens and crows *were* intelligent, highly so. In fact Aristotle goes so far as to assert ravens communicate with each other at a higher level, an almost human level. He says (*HA* 618b): "Around the time when the mercenaries of Medius perished at Pharsalus, the ravens vacated their haunts round Athens and the Peloponnese, as if having some sense of notification from each other." Of course, Aristotle does not say that they do have the ability to communicate like humans with one another, but something like that ("as if" is the operative phrase). When the ancient Greeks or Romans mentioned corvine intelligence otherwise it was in reference to a couple of traits: their ability to imitate sounds and their ability to cure themselves from some sickness or as a preventive measure against magic users.[110] The focus on corvids' unusual facility for vocal mimicry, along with a few other birds, probably drew so much attention for a few reasons: 1) the Greek word for 'reason' was *logos* which simultaneously, among its many many meanings, meant both 'reason' and 'word/speech'. 2) Speech was taken to be the factor which most distinguished man from animal and was a criterion for the possession of reason as well. And so, when it was variously objected that animals did not possess reason, it was variously countered that indeed some animals do possess the ability

[109] ἔστω γὰρ τὸ μὲν Α κόραξ, τὸ δ’ ἐφ’ ᾧ Β διανοούμενον, ἐφ’ᾧ δὲ Γ ἄνθρωπος. οὐδενὶ δὴ τῷ Β τὸ Α ὑπάρχει· οὐδὲν γὰρ διανοούμενον κόραξ.
[110] This aspect, self-remedy, was shared by many other animals in antiquity and should perhaps be taken as an example of animals' resourcefulness in general as opposed to a specifically corvine attribute.

to utter human sounds, or rather imitate them, and so should be accorded a share in 'reason'. But it is not the place here to undertake an examination of this ancient and modern debate.[111] It will suffice to say merely that crows and ravens often came up in this debate for the sole reason that they had this exceptional ability to imitate human speech.

The examples pertaining to the augural function of crows and ravens have been excluded from discussion here for a very important reason: by and large the consensus of opinion among ancient Greek and Roman authors (whether this was the popular opinion or a purely scholarly one and hence not widely shared outside philosophical circles is uncertain) was that augural birds were basically divine conduits, messengers, conveyors of meaning but not originators or deliberators of that meaning. They indicate some message of the future or the gods' will *by* some natural or unnatural action of their own, but they have no perception of that message[112] or that their action (which conveys the message) is actually conveying something. Apparently, the fact that they portend storms or drought or battle had no relation to themselves. Sadly, this would mean that if they forecasted some of the above calamities they themselves could not take advantage of their own forecast, because they had no perception of the message conveyed! This is perhaps going a little too far, as a few ancient thinkers did ascribe some understanding of their messages to them, such as Aristotle mentioned above, and those authors who followed him, like Pliny. Furthermore, there is more talk of their prediction of weather by their actions than there is of their lack of understanding about the messages that they convey. Thus, another way of understanding their augural signification would be that the

[111] Which has been treated most satisfactorily by Sorabji and Newmeyer.
[112] *pace Aristoteli et Plini.*

messages were merely based on their natural behaviour and accordingly if they portended a storm and were observed as doing so it was because they had long been perceived as performing this action before a storm struck and consequently it can be assumed would take shelter from said storm. This sort of explanation is seen in Quintus' defence of divination in book one of Cicero's *De Divinatione.*

Interestingly, the ancients' praise of animal intelligence is, as I mentioned at the start of this section, specific. Animal intelligence is that which is used practically and what might be better called resourcefulness or 'coping skills'. This is not the intelligence of the philosophical schools, which engaged in transcendent thought and high concepts that did not specifically or necessarily deal with day-to-day survival. The *telos* of animal intelligence was purely practical and solely geared toward the animals' survival. The fact that the universe consisted of various elements or that there existed a theory of the forms or that there were forms was not the concern of animal intelligence, but one of the concern of the man of leisure's intelligence. Where there was common ground to be sought it was in admiration for the resourcefulness that animals exhibited in surviving, a resourcefulness shared also by man. In man this resourcefulness had a long pedigree as *metis*[113] and could also be set against the non-practical/philosophical intelligence. Therefore, when the ancient Greeks and Romans praised 'intelligence' in crows or ravens or in any animal they generally fell into the pattern of praise of resourcefulness. In any

[113] For the fullest and best account of this *metis* in Greek thought see Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (Chicago, 1991).

case the intelligence we find in fable is of the practical sort, *metis* and not *logos*.[114]

2.5 Perry 190, Ch. 274

2.5.1 Ὄνος καὶ κόραξ καὶ λύκος.

Ὄνος ἡλκωμένος τὸν νῶτον ἔν τινι λειμῶνι ἐνέμετο. Κόρακος δὲ ἐπικαθίσαντος αὐτῷ καὶ τὸ ἕλκος κρούοντος, ὁ ὄνος ἀλγῶν ὠγκᾶτό τε καὶ ἐσκίρτα. Τοῦ δὲ ὀνηλάτου πόρρωθεν ἑστῶτος καὶ γελῶντος, λύκος παριὼν ἐθεάσατο καὶ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἔφη· Ἄθλιοι ἡμεῖς, οἵ, κἂν αὐτὸ μόνον ὀφθῶμεν, διωκόμεθα, τούτους δὲ καὶ προσιόντας προσγελῶσιν.
Ὁ λόγος δηλοῖ ὅτι οἱ κακοῦργοι τῶν ἀνθρώπων [καὶ ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν προσώπων] καὶ ἐξ ἀπροόπτου δῆλοί εἰσιν.

[114] Interestingly there may very likely be another reference to this anecdote given by Zenobius (2nd C. A.D.) in *Epitome collectionum Lucilli Tarrhaei et Didymi* 4.56 (Schneidewin and von Leutsch, *Corpus paroemiographorum Graecorum*, vol. 1 (Göttingen, 1839) (repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1965): 1-175.): (56.) Κόραξ ὑδρεύει: παροιμία ἐπὶ τῶν δυσχερῶς τινὸς τυγχανόντων. "The raven draws water: The proverb refers to those who obtain something with difficulty." Although one article claims a different meaning to this proverb (see, Foufopoulos and Litinas, "Crows and Ravens in the Mediterranean (the Nile Valley, Greece and Italy) as Presented in the Ancient and Modern Proverbial Literature," *BASP* 42, 1-4 (2005): 7-40. Their explanation of this proverb, pg. 19, is overly detailed and based on the raven's provisioning behaviour on hot days. Another possible source could be the proverbial thirst of the raven as a result of Apollo's disfavour.) the more probable origin for the proverb would be the anecdote of the raven/crow and the pitcher as it fits almost perfectly and has already undegone various abbreviations and has almost become proverbial by Plutarch's time. Other fables to become so popular as to become proverbial (i.e. the Jackdaw in borrowed feathers). The fable of the Crow/Raven and the urn may in fact have an even older origin, Sumerian. Alster translates the Sumerian proverb (Collection 8 Sec. C 2, c. 1900-1800 B.C.) which could be a possible precursor to the Aesopic/anecdotal version:
A raven [had] a porous jar.
A fox asked it, "Where do you
sprinkle (the water)?"
"In the Tigris and the
Euphrates. Why do you ask?"
B. Alster, *Proverbs of Ancient Sumer: The World's Earliest Proverb Collections,* Vol.1 (Bethesda, Md, 1997), 308. This proverb perhaps suggest the idea of 'throwing water into the sea' (as in the Spanish proverb *echar agua en la mar*), that is, a foolish, superfluous (no pun intended) act. And in fact, commenting on this proverb in Vol. II, p. 417, Alster says that "Ravens were, apparently, considered extremely foolish." He seems surprised as well ("apparently") as this attribution of foolishness runs contrary to perceptions of the raven in almost every culture worldwide, ancient and modern alike.

The Donkey, Raven and Wolf

A donkey, suffering from a wound on its back, was grazing in a certain meadow. Now, when a raven settled upon it and began pecking the wound, in pain the donkey began to bray and bound, while the donkey-driver stood at a distance and laughed. A wolf passing by saw the sight and said to himself: "We [i.e. we wolves] are wretched who, if ever even merely seen, are pursued, whereas they smile at these ones attacking."

The fable shows that malefactors among men are conspicuous both from their very countenances and out of the blue.

2.5.2 Perry 553, Phaedrus App. 26: *Ovis et Cornix*

Multos lacessere debiles et cedere fortibus

Odiosa cornix super ouem consederat;
quam dorso cum tulisset inuita et diu,
"Hoc" inquit "si dentato fecisses cani,
poenas dedisses." Illa contra pessima:
"Despicio inermes, eadem cedo fortibus; (5)
scio quem lacessam, cui dolosa blandiar.
ideo senectam mille in annos prorogo."

That many provoke the weak and make way for the strong.

An abominable crow had seated itself atop a sheep;
When the sheep had carried the crow on its back against its will for a long time indeed,
It said: "If you had done this to a sharp-toothed dog,
You would have paid the penalty." In reply the villain said:
"I look down upon the unarmed/harmless, however I yield to the strong; (5)
I know whom to challenge, and upon whom to fawn.
And so I prolong my old age to a thousand years."

The same idea of resourcefulness on the part of the crow may be seen operating in both fables, though to different degrees and from different perspectives. A very realistic behaviour of ravens and crows underlies both and in both instances this behaviour is used to furnish a moralizing application to human life. Both fables suggest that one needs to be resourceful and cautious to survive and not merely survive but to live as long as possible:

on the one hand to know how to discern enemies and on the other to know how to exploit a given situation without loss through retaliation. In fact, when seen together both fables are the mirror image of one another: in one the raven is looked upon from the outside by one who is also detrimental to the donkey-driver's stock, albeit to a much greater and far more obvious degree, as being detrimental to that stock but somehow managing to avoid a negative reaction. In the other the crow explains how she is able to do so effectively, namely by choosing her battles wisely and knowing her limitations–a perspective from the inside. But each fable is crafted from a distinctly different perspective: one Greek, one Roman(izing).

As stated above, the fables are indeed similar, both featuring a corvid alighting upon some farm animal and proceeding to assail it successfully and without consequence. The differences are just as intriguing and perhaps just as telling. In the Greek version from the *Augustana Collection*, the attack is viewed from without, and depicted as a humorous vignette drily commented upon by a comically unfortunate wolf. The moral is that evil men cannot hide being evil, in other words an evil nature is always evident in some way. There are perhaps implications as well that one's outward appearance matches one's inward appearance, in keeping with contemporary (Hellenistic) physiognomic theory.[115] The raven's actions are apparently not taken to be harmful by the donkey-driver, or at least not fatal. Of course, were the wolf to perform the same manoeuvre, it would indeed cause great harm to, or more likely the death of, the donkey. The comedy

[115] For which see Pseudo-Aristotle's *Physiognomonica.*

stems from the incongruity of this, but is also based on documented corvid behaviour.[116] Many corvids, and some other birds as well, can be observed seated on livestock pecking away. In some instances, they are merely searching for ectoparasites (superficial skin and hair parasites and bugs), which commonly infest such animals. Sometimes this can be pleasurable for the animal so treated since it is being freed of annoying pests and groomed simultaneously. At the same time the crow, raven, or jackdaw obtains a free meal with little expenditure of energy in a relatively safe environment.[117] However, this behaviour has its drawbacks. The corvid could peck too hard and cause an injury and then proceed to aggravate and eat at the exposed flesh. If it finds (or from its pecking engenders) maggots in an already exposed sore, then it could additionally aggravate that sore and, when this behaviour is taken to the extreme, this act could lead to an animal's death through infection caused by the sore's exposure to bacteria, especially if left untreated.[118] It must also be taken into account that donkeys were not held in high regard

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[116] *BWP* (Volume VIII) has numerous examples as well as scholarly reference work on this phenomenon:
109 on the *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* (the Chough, part of the crow family and much resembles the crow but with a red/orange beak), 126 on the jackdaw, 145 on the *Corvus splendens* (the House Crow), 178 on the *Corvus corone* (the Crow), 199 on the *Corvus ruficollis* (the Brown-necked Raven of North Africa and Near and Middle East) and 200, and 225 on the *Corvus rhipidurus* (the Fan-tailed Raven). Starlings have also been documented engaging in this action: *BWP* (Volume VIII) 235, 243, 262, 273.

[117] Ratcliffe, 83. See also Marzluff, *In the Company of Crows and Ravens,* 238-9. For an extremely detailed and comprehensive treatment of this topic with numerous examples of both crows and ravens and other species that perform this action see Meinertzhagen, *Pirates and Predators*, 200-206.

[118] Kalmbach, *The Crow in Its Relation to Agriculture: Is It a Farm Pest?* (Washington, D.C: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, 1920), 11: "As a carrion feeder the crow ably supplements the good work of the turkey buzzard, especially along river banks and tidal flats, where dead fish furnish a supply of animal matter much needed during winter. But, from its carrion-feeding habits, the crow has been accused of being a potent agency in the

in antiquity and frequently suffered at the hands of their very owners, who, one would expect, would want to take better care of their property, especially since they were living.[119] Oxen received much better treatment, since they were more expensive and had greater prestige and use. Horses, although less useful than donkeys, were seen as prestigious because of the high cost of their upkeep. Unlike their mistreatment, the maltreatment of the donkey was often viewed with levity and rarely with seriousness.[120] The inferior level of care they received in all likelihood engendered more parasites to breed on them and more food for the crows and in turn some resultant deaths. Farmers quite possibly did not connect the pecking with the infected site, as bacteria would have been transferred from the corvid's beak to the wound. But death from such a cause was presumably rare. At some level the pecking must have had a negative connotation, had it not, the wolf's voice in the Greek fable would never have been heard. Even the moral acquits the raven; it focuses on the wolf, a much more dangerous, and easily identifiable, threat to the business of animal husbandry. There even seems to have been a nuance of admiration in the Greek fable for the raven's resourcefulness since it gains its end without retaliation or the causing of ill will. This admiration, sometimes subdued as here, sometimes quite prominent and overt, is common in Greek literature, as will be discussed

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transmission of livestock diseases, especially hog cholera. No doubt the transmission of this disease by the crow is within the range of possibilities, either by the carrying of virus attached to its feet, bill, or other parts of its body or possibly by the depositing of infected excreta after the bird had fed on the body of an animal that had died from the disease."

[119] See Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, *passim* and in fable some relevant examples are Babrius 125 (Perry 359) where a donkey is beaten for trying to amuse its master by the same trick performed by a monkey; Babrius 129 (Perry 91) similar to 125; Perry 164: a donkey is beaten throughout its life only to be made into a tambourine and beaten in death, too. All this is treated with levity.

[120]Apuleius shows both perspectives, as does fable on several occasions.

shortly, but not in Latin literature, where what would be termed more often resourcefulness or inventiveness in Greek literature turns into cleverness, cunning, scheming, craftiness etc. The Romans, to a greater degree than the 'clever' Greeks, viewed with distrust and distaste such actions as the raven's, as seen in Phaedrus' fable with the crow. [121] This is apparent in the choice and placement of the crow's epithets by Phaedrus: *odiosa,* the first word, in emphatic position in line 1; *pessima* again in emphatic position at line end in 4; in 5 *dolosa* here negative in connotation, not clever but rather 'crafty, scheming'. This may also be seen with other words such as *inermes* (4, so the crow is attacking defenceless creatures; this word also means 'harmless' as well) and *blandiar* (5). This crow, then, is at once a violent opportunist on the one hand and a *kolax*, a flatterer on the other, a dangerous one. As with the crow in Phaedrus 2.6, Phaedrus here may again wish the figure of Sejanus to be read into the crow, which would make Tiberius the helpless sheep. Furthermore, there is not even an indication that the crow is attacking the sheep to obtain food; a reason is not given, it would seem to act just for fun, on a whim because it knows it can, a mere exercise of power, to provoke the victim (*lacessam*). Phaedrus also makes use of the longevity myth of the crow in a new way. He explains *how* the crow manages to live so very long. The answer is surprising: it is not because of some supernatural quality inherent in it, as might be surmised from Hesiod's famous

[121] Although Greek by birth, or rather Thracian, Phaedrus was at the time of his fable writing essentially a naturalized Roman, or one who would in any case want to seem so and to distance himself from Greekness in his rather xenophobic environment. He does not deny his origin and praises its good points, but with ideas that might offend the Roman mindset, like the dislike of Greek *metis,* he maintains a Roman attitude. For his background see Perry's introduction to the *LCL* translation.

proclamation of the crow's immensely long lifespan, but rather because it is extremely adept at surviving in any way it has to, by means fair *and* foul. This may entail caution at some points, toadying at others, and exploitation of any opportunity given. This is not to say, however, that Phaedrus' fable is devoid of realistic corvine behaviour; quite the contrary. Phaedrus has in fact based his fable on rather accurate ethological details, but has presented this accurate ethological basis in a much less conspicuous form than had the Greek fable.

Crows and ravens do *sometimes* "prey" on sheep and "defenceless" creatures, not only as an ectoparasitic food supply but sometimes, in fact, to kill the creature when it is weak enough or small enough for this to be done.[122] The crow's beak is a powerful tool and weapon: with enough blows hammered into an animal's vulnerable point(s), death is a very real possibility.[123] The crow indeed does know when to make use of the right moment. In Greek literature this employment of *kairos* would more often be lauded than

[122] For a thorough examination of this see Ratcliffe, 75-90. He gives numerous examples of the interaction between ravens and sheep and differing views as to whether they constitute a serious threat as a predator or not. The sum of his argument weighs in favour of viewing the raven as a helpful scavenger that puts already dying and abandoned animals out of their misery or clears up carrion, but sometimes and in some cases is forced to attack 'defenceless' animals when no other non-live food source is readily available.

[123] Although it be a little dated, the description of the raven's beak by Smith, *Bird Life and Bird Lore* (London, 1905), 101 is excellent, if somewhat exaggerated: "The bill of the raven is a formidable weapon, strong, stout, sharp at the edges, curved towards the tip. It is his one weapon of offence, but it answers the purpose of two or three. Like the dirk of the Highlanders, among whom he is still so often found, it is equally available as a dagger or as a carving-knife. It can also be used as a pair of pincers. It can kill a rat at one blow, crush its head into pulp with one squeeze, and then, with its powerful pull, can tear the muscles asunder, or strip off the flesh in small morsels from the bones." Of course, modern ornithological works would be equally pertinent to cite here, but none are so enthusiastic as Smith, who in addition to having first-hand knowledge of the birds in this work deals with the poetry and lore surrounding the crow and raven.

not, whereas in Roman literature it might be taken as opportunistic and underhand.[124] This contrast may have something to do with the writers of Latin literature and their intended audience, however.

Regarding the novel interpretation of the crow's longevity, this is, it seems, a Phaedran innovation, but one based, at least broadly, on a realistic core, one which Hesiod, too, and many Greeks and Romans likely observed in these ubiquitous birds. Crows and ravens are (comparatively) long-lived birds in the wild but especially in captivity.[125] Many modern scholars have remarked upon the caution of the crow and

[124] For the Romans' perception of the Greeks, see especially Wardman, *Rome's Debt to Greece* (London, 1976). For an exaggerated, but not entirely untrue, portrait of Roman xenophobia felt towards the Greeks see Juvenal's third satire.

[125] Although discussing the raven, Ratcliffe's comments on the that bird's perceived longevity (214) are valid here: "The Raven has the reputation of being one of the longest-lived of all birds. Finding acceptable evidence to support this belief is quite difficult. Some of the old tales about the extreme age of Ravens are clearly absurd and belong to the bird's mythology. Smith (1905) suggested that some of them may have arisen through observations of the bird's strong fidelity to its nesting haunts, carried back through several generations of recollection and with the assumption that the same individuals had maintained this tradition. Smith said that the eminent ornithologist J. H. Gurney told him of a Raven that was given away at the age of 60 years and lived for another 20 years; this bird was said to begin laying eggs near the end of its life! A bird shot near Stockholm in 1839 had in its beak a plate with the date 1770 engraved on it, suggesting that it was at least 69 years old (Gordon, 1915). E. C. Phillips claimed to know a captive bird that was 50 years old and still living...In the wild, expectation of life is considerably less and the oldest ringing recoveries so far are of four birds aged 12+ years...In Lakeland, a bird at the nest in 1995 was wearing a clip 4 ring last used in 1974 (G. Horne). In North America, Kennedy and Walker (1988) state that the oldest recorded captive Raven lived for 29 years, and that banding records give 13+ years as the longest life-span for a wild bird. Until there is more reliable evidence to the contrary, I prefer to regard these more modest figures as an indication of the Raven's potential maximum age, i.e. 25-30 years. This rather academic figure is, in any case, hardly relevant to natural mortality in the wild." *BWP* Volume VIII (p. 175) on the *Corvus corone* (the Carrion and Hooded Crow) says: "Oldest ringed bird 19 years (Staav 1983)."

raven when they encounter fresh kills or things new to them.[126] This heightened caution when approaching new things which might be food sources has likely had a positive impact on its survival. Furthermore, whether Phaedrus is merely alluding to Hesiod's famous lines on the crow's longevity[127] is not as important as his attempt to explain and (possibly) understand it.[128] Whether this is just gap-filling on Phaedrus' part and thus not

[126]See esp. Heinrich, 221ff. on the neophobia, fear of new things with a mixture of curiosity as well, of ravens and the chapter it occurs in is specifically devoted to ravens' fears.
[127] Hesiod, Fragment 183 (ed. Rzach) ap. Plutarch's *De Defectu Oraculorum* 11:
'ὁ δ᾽ Ἡσίοδος οἴεται καὶ περιόδοις τισὶ χρόνων γίγνεσθαι τοῖς δαίμοσι τὰς τελευτάς: λέγει γὰρ ἐν τῷ τῆς Ναΐδος προσώπῳ καὶ τὸν χρόνον αἰνιττόμενος

ἐννέα τοι ζώει γενεὰς λακέρυζα κορώνη,
ἀνδρῶν ἡβώντων ἔλαφος δέ τε τετρακόρωνος
τρεῖς δ᾽ ἐλάφους ὁ κόραξ γηράσκεται αὐτὰρ ὁ φοίνιξ
ἐννέα τοὺς κόρακας: δέκα δ᾽ ἡμεῖς τοὺς φοίνικας
νύμφαι ἐυπλόκαμοι, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο.

τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον εἰς πολὺ πλῆθος ἀριθμοῦ συνάγουσιν οἱ μὴ καλῶς δεχόμενοι τὴν γενεάν. ἔστι γὰρ ἐνιαυτός ὥστε γίγνεσθαι τὸ σύμπαν ἐννακισχίλια ἔτη καὶ ἑπτακόσια καὶ εἴκοσι τῆς τῶν δαιμόνων ζωῆς. ἔλαττον μὲν οὖν νομίζουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν μαθηματικῶν, πλέον δὲ οὖν Πίνδαρος εἴρηκεν εἰπὼν τὰς νύμφας ζῆν

ἰσοδένδρου τέκμωρ αἰῶνος λαχοίσας,

διὸ καὶ καλεῖν αὐτὰς ἁμαδρυάδας.'
[128] Phaedrus was of course working with a long-lived commonplace, as many authors before and after him alluded to Hesiod's lines and each time recast them in new poetic garb. This mostly amounts to a slew of poetic and erudite epithets describing longevity. Other authors, like Aristophanes in his *Birds* 607ff., put a twist on the idea, but do not attempt to delve deeply into the issue. Cf. Aratus, *Phaenomena* 1022: ἐννεάγηρα κορώνη "the ninetimes-as-old crow," which is likely just a flashy epithet alluding to Hesiod; Cyranides, 1.2. Βρύσις κοινὸν ζῷόν ἐστιν, ἡ κορώνη, ζῶν ἕως ἐτῶν φʹ. "The Brusis is a common creature, the crow, living as long as 500 years." Julius Pollux (2nd century A.D.) gives a list of adjectives and words used by comic poets to make fun of the aged or aging: Julius Pollux, Onomasticon 2.16 ἕπεται δὲ τούτοις καὶ τὰ κωμικὰ σκώμματα (III 558 frg 860 et 895 Ko), Κρόνος, κρονικός, κρονόληρος, πρεσβύτερος Κρόνου, νωδογέρων, τυμβογέρων, μακκοῶν, παρανοῶν, παραγεγηρακώς, παραφρονῶν, παραλλάττων,

an attempt to understand and explore Hesiod's pronouncement and later references to the longevity of the crow, is impossible to know. Elsewhere Phaedrus takes a negative attitude toward the crow's intelligence (2.6). But although his portrayal of its intelligence is negative; he is not creating a characer trait from nothing, but working with the assumption that the crow is an intelligent bird and putting his own spin on that

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ἐξεστηκὼς ὑπὸ γήρως, παρακεκινηκὼς ὑφ' ἡλικίας, **ὑπὲρ τὰς ἐλάφους βεβιωκώς, ὑπὲρ τὰς κορώνας, ταῖς νύμφαις ἰσῆλιξ.** (The bolded words are my emphasis; *nihil novi hic*). Artemidorus, *Onirocriticon* 4.11 has a bit of a twist. Artemidorus claims that if one dreams of long-lived creatures like the elephant, stag, crow and similar animals it forecasts slow or delayed times ahead for the dreamer's life and affairs. Interestingly, Babrius 46. ll.8-9:
ἔλαφος δὲ λίμῳ κοὐ νόσῳ κατεσκλήκει,
μή πω κορώνην δευτέρην ἀναπλήσας,
ὃς εἰ φίλους οὐκ ἔσχε, κἂν γεγηράκει.

But the stag had withered away from hunger and sickness,
Not yet having completed the second lifetime of the crow,
Who if it had not had friends, would in fact have reached old age.

The stag in poetically ironic fashion dies without having completed the requirements of its literary pedigree. Oppian, *Cynegetica* 3.117 πολύζωοί τε κορῶναι. Offers another showy epithet in allusion. Horapollo, *Hieroglyphica* 2.89:
[Πῶς ἄνθρωπον ζήσαντα τέλειον βίον].
Ἄνθρωπον ζήσαντα τέλειον βίον θέλοντες δηλῶσαι, κορώνην ἀποθανοῦσαν ζωγραφοῦσιν· αὕτη γὰρ ζῇ ἑκατὸν ἔτη κατ' Αἰγυπτίους, τὸ δὲ ἔτος κατ' Αἰγυπτίους τεσσάρων ἐνιαυτῶν.
[How they depict that a man has lived a full/complete life]
"When they wish to indicate that a man lived a complete/fulfilled life, they draw a dead crow; for it lives for an hundred years according to the Egyptians, while a year according to the Egyptians equals four years." Other than the Hesiod quote, ravens strangely are not mentioned as endowed with extreme longevity, although they in fact live longer than crows. Latin sources mention the raven's longevity with much greater frequency in addition to the numerous citations of the crow's longevity: Priap. 82.12; Seneca, *De beneficiis* 2.29.1; Plin. *NH*. 7.155; Ausonius 365.5; Macrobius, *Saturn.* 7.5.11. Latin literature often mentions the crow's annosity: Cic. *Tusculanae Disputationes* 1.77, 3.69; Lucr. *De Rerum Natura* 5.1082-6; Horace, *Carmina* 3.17.13, 4.13.22-28; *Priap*. 61, 10-12; *Elegiae in Maecenatem* (*Appendix Vergiliana*) 1, 117-118. For many more references see *T.L.L.*IV.961.80-84 and IV.962.1-8.

assumption. In that fable too, the crow capitalizes on the opportunity presented by the aporetic eagle. Of course, there were cultural biases toward certain animals such as those toward wolves, donkeys, camels, snakes, *inter nonnulla alia animalia*, which may have made their depiction less true, by present sensibilities (or biases, depending of the time one writes from), in their essential details, than other animals. Nevertheless, these biases were realistic features of those cultures towards these animals and remarkably consistent, and accordingly a negative depiction of these animals is, oddly enough, a realistic depiction. A positive and more true to life depiction of them would in fact be strange and not in keeping with their general portrayal. Realism is dependent upon reality, and what is real to today may not be real to people tomorrow nor have been real to the Greeks or Romans.

Chapter 3: *Fabulae Augurales*

With fables featuring augural aspects, realism is dependent on belief in augury. This raises the question of how widespread belief in augury in antiquity really was and whether fable faithfully represents the level of belief found in literature outside of it. Augury was influential among both the Greeks and the Romans at all levels of society.[129] This may have to do with the sheer convenience of bird omens and the fact that a

[129] On the belief in and importance of augury in Greek antiquity see Dillon, "The Importance of *Oionomanteia* in Greek Divination," *Religion in the Ancient World: New Themes and Approaches*, edited by M. Dillon (Amsterdam, 1996): 99-100, 102-3, 113-121. On the belief in divination in Greek antiquity in general, pertinent here are: Bouché-Leclerq, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité:* Vol.1-IV (Paris, 1879-82, 1963 reprint), *passim*; Ehrenberg, *The People of Aristophanes: A Sociology of Old Attic Comedy* (London: New York: Methuen, 1974 reprint, of 1943 original), 259-262; Mikalson, *Athenian Popular Religion* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1983) 39-49; Flower, *The Seer In Ancient Greece* (Berkeley, 2008), *passim,* but on belief and skepticism specifically, see 28-9, 132-152.

professional augur was not necessarily required to interpret most bird signs.[130] Belief is hard to demonstrate, however, especially belief within the general population, and this is further complicated if that population existed millennia ago, whose voice is heard through an upper class authorial filter.[131] In any case, works like Aristophanes' *Birds* and the greater inclusion of omens and portents in Cicero's speeches to the *populus Romanus* in proportion to the number found in speeches to the Senate,[132] suggest, and many other examples could be adduced to support this, a strong belief among the common people in omens and augury, a belief which fable supports. Augury and divination are not derided in fable; belief in them is portrayed as legitimate and commonplace, not unusual or superstitious. A single seer or bird might be discounted as fallible but not the art itself. What one encounters in Theophrastus' sketch of the superstitious man is helpful for comparison, but is not the norm and represents belief in excess; fable, especially those of the *Augustana Collection*, by contrast, shows the mean or more likely the general belief in

[130] Dillon, 120: "In conclusion, for those who did not have a prophetic centre in their local area, or did not have the wealth to travel, divination by bird movements and behaviour, *oionomanteia*, provided an effective means of seeking divine guidance. Bird omens were an economical and convenient means by which one could predict the will and desire of the gods, discerning their designs before one did something contrary to their will."

[131] For a defence and discrediting of Roman augury, which equally applies to Greek augury as many of the sources cited are Greek, see especially Cicero's *De divinatione.* Cicero's brother, Quintus, defends augury in a variety of ways, one of which is to argue from consensus belief in it and its antiquity. Cicero, by contrast argues that augury is upheld in Roman state religion as a means of controlling the people, which implies a belief in augury among the general populace, and for the sake of tradition. Commentaries on this work offer ample references concerning belief and disbelief in divination and augury in antiquity. Most relevant here are: Pease's commentary on Cicero's *De Divinatione* (Darmstadt, 1963 reprint, of original Urbana: Illinois, 1920--23) and Wardle's more recent commentary on book 1 of *De Divinatione* (Oxford, 2006).

[132] Wardle, 4: "Some evidence suggests that the views of the elite differed from those of the ordinary people, for example, the different prominence Cicero gives to portents in speeches to the people as opposed to the Senate."

divination.

3.1 Perry 125, Ch. 170 (version I): Κορώνη καὶ κόραξ

Κορώνη φθονήσασα κόρακι ἐπὶ τῷ διὰ οἰωνῶν μαντεύεσθαι ἀνθρώποις καὶ τὸ μέλλον προφαίνειν καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ὑπ' αὐτῶν μαρτυρεῖσθαι, ἐβουλήθη τῶν αὐτῶν ἐφικέσθαι· καὶ δὴ θεασαμένη τινὰς ὁδοιπόρους παριόντας ἧκεν ἐπί τινος δένδρου, καὶ στᾶσα μεγάλα ἐκεκράγει. Τῶν δὲ πρὸς τὴν φωνὴν ἐπιστραφέντων καὶ καταπλαγέντων, εἷς τις ὑποτυχὼν ἔφη· "Ἀλλ' ἀπίωμεν, ὦ φίλοι· κορώνη γάρ ἐστιν, ἥτις κεκραγυῖα οἰωνὸν οὐκ ἔχει." Οὕτω καὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων οἱ τοῖς κρείττοσιν ἀνθαμιλλώμενοι πρὸς τῷ τῶν ἴσων μὴ ἐφικέσθαι, καὶ γέλωτα ὀφλισκάνουσιν.

The Crow and the Raven

A crow, out of jealousy towards the raven for prophesying to men through its omens and foretelling the future and on this account for being taken as evidence by them, wanted to attain the same things. And accordingly when it caught sight of some travellers passing by, it came and took up a position on a certain tree and cawed loudly. Now, when the men turned toward the sound and were panic-stricken, one of their company said in response: "Well, let's go, friends; you see it's a crow, who when it caws signifies no omen." And so, those who vie with better men, besides not reaching equal things also incur laughter.

This is one of a handful of fables surviving from antiquity that deals directly with omens and the reaction they can cause. Direct instances of omen occurrence, especially bird omens, are infrequent in the fable collections, the majority belong to the *Anonymous Fables,* that is, the *Collectio Augustana*, ultimately deriving from Hellenistic times, and the other occurs in Phaedrus (and here, only refers to bird omens in passing, no pun intended). In the *Augustana*, the types of bird omens encountered are *enhodioi symboloi,*[133] those omens which spontaneously occur 'on the way' from one point to

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[133] The word first appears in Aeschylus, *Prometheus Vinctus* 484-6. It occurs as one of the items on a list of inventions Prometheus says he has given mankind:
τρόπους τε πολλοὺς μαντικῆς ἐστοίχισα,
κἄκρινα πρῶτος ἐξ ὀνειράτων ἃ χρὴ 485
ὕπαρ γενέσθαι, κληδόνας τε δυσκρίτους
ἐγνώρισ᾽ αὐτοῖς **ἐνοδίους** τε **συμβόλους**:
"And I organized the many modes of divination,

another, such as those experienced on the road by a traveller. Greek also calls such omens or auguries *symbola*,[134] with the same idea of encounter. Latin has a few different words for this. A direct translation of the term, which only occurs once, is *propterviа* (Fest. 245 (b), 11: "*propterviа auspicia*, (are) those which present themselves near the road).[135] They might also be called *auguria* or *omina oblativa,* omens which get in the way of or confront an individual and are unsought.[136] Such omens or auguries usually have the function either of assent of the action undertaken (which is the less frequent situation and really only applies to important figures and great ventures, not the comings and goings of a middle or lower class individual) or prohibition of that action (suggesting that if the present course is continued something bad is bound to occur). In fable the *enhodioi symboloi* occur in the course of travel, when a bird of augury suddenly interrupts certain *hodoiporoi* and creates a situation of distress by its occurrence and calls for interpretation (here by one of the travellers). In the two fables where such an event occurs, a reason (related to the moral) is given why the bird omen is to be rejected (and ostensibly why the

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And was the first to expound from dreams what would necessarily
Happen in waking hours, I made known to them the hard to interpret utterances made by chance
And the signs/omens encountered along the way."
The only other relevant mention of the word *enhodios* in Greek literature is found in Pseudo-Nonnius (6th Century A.D.), *Scholia Mythologica* Oration 4, historia 72 (entitled Ἑβδομηκοστὴ δευτέρα ἐστὶν ἱστορία ἡ περὶ τῆς οἰωνιστικῆς.): Ἐνόδιον δέ ἐστιν ὅταν ἐξηγήσεται τὰ ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ὑπαντῶντα, ὅτι, Ἐάν σοι ὑπαντήσῃ τις τόδε βαστάζων, τόδε σοι συμβήσεται, ἐὰν ὁ δείνα, τόδε. ὅπερ συνεγράψατο Πόλλις..

[134] See *LSJ* Rev. Ed. on *sybolikos*, *symbolon*, and *symbolos* for the sources. A brief but useful explanation is offered by Dunbar in her commentary on Aristophanes' *Birds* (Oxford, 1995), 457. For a lengthier treatment see Bouché-Leclerq, Vol.1, 120-122.

[135] *propterviа auspicia, quae se propter viam ostentant*.

[136] Most relevantly: Servius, *Aen*. 6, 190: *Auguria aut oblativa sunt, quae non poscuntur, aut impetrativa, quae sunt optata veniunt.* and Serv. *Aen*. 12, 259: *In oblativis auguriis in potestate videntis est, utrum id se pertinere velit an refutet et abominetur.*

company is to proceed on its way with confidence). The one who suggests this interpretation is not a professional augur but provides an interpretation such as any layperson, steeped in a culture of practical divination, might give when such a situation arose. Whether the interpreter was an augur is not stated, but it is unlikely, as his mode of address to the other travellers bespeaks a familiarity (*philoi*) as opposed to the tone a professional seer might adopt with his clients.

Only a handful of birds were used in Greek ornithomancy; they were largely the same as those birds used in Roman augury (of the non-forced variety): crow, raven, woodpecker, hawk, falcon, owl and eagle.[137] Furthermore, in a fashion similar to Roman augury, most important is not the flight of ravens and crows but the sound that they make, as indeed the Latin augural class to which they belong is the *oscines*, birds which convey omens by they sound they make rather than by flight (*alites*).[138] In Greek augury there are one[139] or two[140] other categories as well in addition to flight and cry, namely

[137] For the fullest treatment of ancient Greek augury see Bouché-Leclerq, Vol. I, 127-145. For a comprehensive list of augural birds in Greek *ornithomanteia* see pages 132-135. See also Halliday, *Greek Divination; A Study of Its Methods and Principles* (London, 1913), 270: "The birds of Greek augury are the raven, crow, heron, wren, woodpecker, dove, hoopoe, kingfisher, and all birds of the hawk, eagle, or vulture kind" and Thompson, *passim.* Some of these birds were more frequently used augurally such as the raven, crow and the bigger birds of prey. The oscines and alites in Roman augury were (Fest. 197a) *corvus, cornix, noctua*. The alites: *buteo* (a type of falcon, hawk, or buzzard), *sanqualis* (the osprey), *immusulus* (some sort of vulture, see Capponi for identification 306-309), *vulturius*. The *picus* and *parra* (see Capponi, 381 for identification, either a barn owl or a woodpecker) were included in both.

[138] For the 'rules' of Greek augury, see Bouché-Leclerq,Vol.1, 135-145. See also the article by Dillon, 1996, 98-121.

[139] Synesius (4th-5th century A.D.), *De Insomniis* §2: οὕτως ὁρῶσι σοφοὶ τὸ μέλλον, οἱ μὲν ἄστρα εἰδότες, ἄλλος τὰ μένοντα, καὶ ἄλλος τὰ πυρσὰ τὰ διᾴττοντα, οἱ δὲ ἐν σπλάγχνοις αὐτὰ ἀναγνόντες, **οἱ δὲ ἐν ὀρνίθων κλαγγαῖς καὶ καθέδραις καὶ πτήσεσι**· "Thus wise men see the future, some have knowledge of stars, one (has knowledge of) the

perching/alighting/seating and actions of the birds, and both these categories may also play a minor role here, and perhaps a major role in Perry 236: Ὁδοιπόροι καὶ κόραξ, where it is unclear what the travellers react to. Perhaps I am over-interpreting the omens here, but it is interesting that in each of the two augural fables featuring travellers, the corvid omens, although of the oblative, unsought variety, are met by reactions not to the mere appearance of the bird, nor its flight, but to its sound.[141] Of course, the very division

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stationary ones [i.e. constellations], another the fiery ones that shoot (across the sky) [i.e. shooting stars], while some read it [i.e. the future] in entrails, whereas **others (read it) in the cries, sitting/seating/sitting postures, and flights of birds;"** (my emphasis)**.**

[140] Michael Psellus, *Opusculum 33.) Περὶ ὠμοπλατοσκοπίας καὶ οἰωνοσκοπίας*: ...
Ἀπολλώνιος δὲ ὁ Λακεδαιμόνιος ἐπὶ πάσης πράξεως πάντα τὰ τῶν πτηνῶν περιειργάσατο, προλαβὼν καὶ φωνὴν καὶ πνεῦμα καὶ ἀριθμὸν καὶ κλῆρον καὶ μέτρον καὶ μερισμὸν καὶ περίοδον τελείαν καὶ ἡμιτελῆ καὶ ἦχον τροχαλὸν μογερὸν εὔηχον δύσηχον δυσήκοον σύμφωνον ἀντίφωνον, ἐξ ὧν τὰ διάφορα τῶν ἀποτελεσμάτων εἴδη εὑρίσκεται.
"But Apollonius the Lacedaemonian has thoroughly investigated everything about birds relating to their entire activity, having anticipated (or 'prejudged') the utterance, breathing (?), number, province, measure, division/classification, complete and incomplete circuit/passage and their rapid (lit. rolling', perhaps 'twittering'), distressed, euphonious, cacophonous, ill-sounding, harmonious, and discordant (or 'concordant') sound, from which the different patterns/shapes of the results/events are found."

[141] Interestingly, Michael Psellus (11th century A.D.) in the same section of this work treats the sound of ravens in Greek augury extensively, and shows that the rules governing interpretation were quite complex. The fact that the sound is treated so thoroughly suggests that that was the most important augural feature for corvids and this is perhaps supported by the Latin placement of this group of birds among the *oscines*:
Ἄρχομαι δέ σοι καὶ τῶν ἀφ' ἑτέρων περὶ τῶν ἐσομένων σημειώσεων, καὶ πρότερόν γε ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν κοράκων καὶ κορωνῶν διαιρέσεως, ὧν ἡ διαφορὰ ἐν τέτρασι τούτοις, ἐν πτήσει, φωνῇ, καθέδρᾳ καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ. ἀνισταμένοις γοῦν ἐκ κοίτης ἡμῖν ἢ κατακειμένοις ἂν κορώνη φθέγξηται δίς, ἔργων ἀγαθῶν καὶ ἡδέων δηλοῖ μετάληψιν· εἰ δὲ ἅπαξ ἢ τρὶς ἢ πεντάκις, τὰ ἐναντία σοι προσημαίνει· εἰ δὲ χρήσεται φωναῖς
ἀναμὶξ ἀρτίαις καὶ περιτταῖς, ἀσπούδαστα καταγγέλλει πράγματα. καὶ ὅλως τὰς μὲν ἀρτίους φωνὰς τῶν κορωνῶν πρὸς καλοῦ τίθει, τὰς δὲ περιττὰς πρὸς κακοῦ. παρεξιοῦσι δὲ ἡμῖν τὴν αὔλειον κόραξ ὄπισθεν
καὶ κορώνη ἔμπροσθεν βοήσαντες ἀθυμίαν τινὰ καὶ δυσχέρειαν ἐν πράγμασι προσημαίνουσι, περὶ δὲ τὰ λαιὰ κορώνη παραπταμένη καὶ ἐπικράξασα καὶ κόραξ ὁμοίως ἐκ θατέρου μέρους παραφθεγξάμενος θαρρεῖν σοι παρακελεύονται. εὐχομένοις δὲ κορώνη ὄπισθεν κράζουσα τυχεῖν τῆς εὐχῆς μαντεύεται, εὐώνυμος δὲ διελθοῦσα φόβον

into *oscines* and *alites* by the Romans may have originally been purely practical: crows and ravens are smaller and in comparison to larger birds of prey, harder to spot in flight. On the other hand, they are ubiquitous and vocal, and one need not wait long to bear witness to their vocality. Conversely, eagles and many vultures are a rarer sight and much less vocal,[142] but easily visible in the air or on the ground. Such a division would have

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ἐμβάλλει καὶ ταραχὴν τῇ ψυχῇ. καὶ περὶ μὲν τῶν ἀπὸ κοράκων καὶ κορωνῶν σημειώσεων ἀρκεῖ σοι ταῦτα ἀντὶ πολλῶν. οὐ γὰρ τὰ κατὰ μέρος διασαφῆσαί σοι προειλόμεθα, ἀλλ' οἷον ἀφορμὰς παρασχεῖν τῆς ἐντεῦθεν μαντείας.
"Now I begin for you with both the other signs about the future, and first, at any rate, with the division of ravens and crows, the difference between which rests in the following four things: in flight, sound, sitting posture, and activity. At all events, if ever a crow cries twice to us when we are rising from bed or lying down, it always indicates a succession/alteration of good and agreeable things; whereas if (it cries) once or thrice or five times, it indicates the opposite to you; while if it employs even and odd-numbered cries at random, it announces affairs of no interest. And entirely regard even-numbered cries of crows as auspicious, while odd-numbered ones as unfavourable. Now, if a raven croaks at us behind and if a crow does so in front as we pass by the door of our court, they foretell despondency and difficulty in our affairs, whereas, if a crow flies by and lets out a caw on the left and a raven likewise from the otherside murmurs [i.e. croaks softly] they encourage you to take heart. Now, if a crow caws at us from behind while we are praying, it prophesies that we will obtain our request, whereas if it passes by on the left it strikes fear into one's soul. Concerning both sign-giving from ravens and crows these things are sufficient for you instead of more. You see, we did not prefer to expatiate on them at great length and detail for you, but it is possible to provide the starting points of the science of divination."

[142] Brown and Amadon, *Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World* (Volume I): p. 308 *Neophron percnopterus* (the Egyptian Vulture) of South Europe, the Middle East, all Africa "practically silent"; p. 310 *Gypaetus barbatus* (the Lammergeier) of Southern Europe, North and South Africa, Middle East: "Usually very silent"; p.325 *Gyps fulvus* (Griffon Vulture) of Southern Europe, the Middle East, North Africa: "Normally rather silent"; p. 336 *Aegypius monaachus* (the European Vulture) breeds from Spain eastward: "Very silent..."; Vol. II: p. 658 *Aquila heliaca* (the Imperial Eagle) especially of Europe, "Rather silent..."; p. 666 *Aquila chrysaetos* (the Golden Eagle), Europe and elsewhere "Generally a very silent bird"; p. 677 *Hieraaetus faciatus* (Bonelli's Eagle, African Hawk-eagle) Southern Europe and elsewhere "Usually rather silent..." . There are exceptions, during breeding season many of these species are vocal, but just at that short time. Hawks and falcons tend to be more vocal in general. Rarity is harder to show, but in general one sees and hears far more oscines in one's day-to-day life than alites.

benefited professional augurs (Greek and Roman) who were not in the business of delay and were looking for readily available omens (waiting for an eagle to make noise would have upset the client or would have produced frustration at the delay, waiting for a raven to fly in a certain direction would also importune the client unduly).

Augury, not the professional sort, but bird omen interpretation and (one expects) augury in general, here is treated in a completely serious fashion, even rather casually as though nothing out of the ordinary and a common occurrence for travellers. The only *fabulosa* part of the fable is the crow's jealousy and attempt to coopt the raven's augural standing by effecting a false omen, which is included to point the moral of remaining in one's social stratum; the embarrassment of going against one's nature is also present.[143]

However, as to the one traveller's remark that the crow's cawing signifies nothing omen-wise, a few things can be said. This may be a reference to or variation on another fable in the *Augustana*, that of the crow who sacrifices to Athena because she took away the credibility of her omens. Or it could just be drawing on the same story as that fable, that is, the crow's loss of favour with Athena, though the allusion in the current fable is nowhere near as prominent as in Perry 127. In the end it is probably impossible to say why two similar looking and sounding birds as the crow and raven would have such disparate divinatory abilities. Apart from the fact that ravens live longer, are bigger, and have a larger vocal range and brain size, among other biological differences, they are not too different than crows. Clues in ancient literature are also elusive; it is difficult to determine from what is extant why one bird would be favourable and the other not. Or

[143] Cf. Perry 127, the Fable of Crow Sacrificing to Athena and Phaedrus 3.18 (Perry 509) *Pavo ad Iunonem de Voce Sua.*

why a crow on the left or right might signify something different than a raven in the same position. In the absence of more material, we must be satisfied with speculation. One author, Lucian, in his satire *Eunuchus,* is instructive here and may give us one reason why crows were less favourable than ravens, and the reason might have to do with the kind of crow encountered in Mediterranean countries, that is, the Hooded Crow. In the *Eunuchus*, a eunuch, Bagoas, who is aspiring to a seat as one of the heads of the Peripatetic school on the death of one of its two heads, is disparaged, since he is a eunuch, by the other contender for the seat, Diocles. When the judges deliberate over which man should receive the seat, it is remarked that a eunuch is "an ambiguous creature in the same way as the crows, who cannot be counted among either the doves or the ravens." [144] The remark would be puzzling to many North Americans, because they are familiar with the purely black crow, and to many Europeans familiar only with the Carrion Crow (also all black). But the crow of the Mediterranean is the Hooded Crow which looks as though it is wearing a light grey coat over its black body, and thus could appear in some lights like a cross between a raven and a dove. Such hybrid creatures as mules and (apparently) (Hooded) crows may have been looked down upon.[145] This however, is unlikely to be the only reason for the crow's low social standing, augurally speaking, but in the absence of further data this is perhaps as far as one can go. In fable this distinction is not further investigated outside Phaedrus' fable which discusses the special endowments each creature receives. In any event, crows and ravens in fable have two broad diagnostic

[144] Lucian, *Eunuchus* 8: καὶ ἀμφίβολόν τι ζῷον εἶναι κατὰ ταὐτὰ ταῖς κορώναις, αἳ μήτε περιστεραῖς μήτε κόραξιν ἐναριθμοῖντο.
[145] Alternatively, Lucian could have mistaken the magpie, *kissa,* (which is starkly black and white in hue) for the Hooded Crow.

features: intelligence (expressed variously by biological efficiency, cleverness, etc.) and augural function. Both features are not deemed fabulous but serve to define the schematic corvid in the brief space fable allows. Therefore the schematic representation resulting should realistically represent the typical experience of corvids by the Greeks and Romans. The fact that augural function is included as a defining feature is even made explicit in Phaedrus' fable: the eagle is known for strength, the nightingale for song, the raven for divination, the crow for unfavourable (literally 'left': *laeva*) omens, means not only that the peacock should be content with its beauty after seeing what the crow received (which does not seem so much a gift as a curse) but that augural function was felt to be the primary defining quality of these two birds, and to be their prize possession, their γέρας. Were something along the lines of an ancient Audubon bird guide to be unearthed in either Greek or Latin, it would not be surprising to find among the features more familiar to us such as plumage, breeding cycle and habits, and call, ones not so familiar such as augural function, cleverness, saleability, edibility, ominosity, medicinal uses, etc. Augury, then, was a realistic feature of Graeco-Roman life, and even considered as part of ornithology.

At the crow's caw the men panic, because they fear that something bad is about to transpire not because they are merely startled. As the fact that the first reaction to a crow or raven's cry was negative indicates, the cry would tend to be inauspicious by default.[146]

[146] Pease's commentary on Cicero's *De Divinatione* is most helpful in this regard: Pease (75) discussing the sentence *Quare omittat urguere Carneades, quod faciebat etiam Panaetius, requirens Iuppiterne cornicem a laeva, corvum ab dextera canere iussisset.* (Cic. *De div.* I.VII), observes of the crow that "Its use in augury was rare among the Greeks...but frequent among the Romans...By Festus p. 197 M. both it and the corvus are

The reasons for their inauspiciousness are not given in the ancient sources in any great detail, but some explanations can be taken further. Firstly, their consumption of carrion (including human carrion) would have disturbed most. Additionally, their presence near sites of dead bodies (graveyards, battlegrounds, sacrifices) would have yielded a prejudicial impression of them. Their presence near dead bodies and especially in and around the times of battles (*ante* and *post bellum*) would lead to the impression that they predicted or were even the cause of battles (cf. the same interpretation of vultures in the wake of marching armies). Secondly, the blackness of crows and ravens may have had funereal connotations as well as suggesting evil. Their outer blackness according to physiognomic theory reflected an inner darkness. Thirdly, the call of the crow and raven to many ears is harsh and bracing, certainly not the most pleasant of sounds, especially when compared to other more mellifluous birds, a comparison made in antiquity too.[147]

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classed under *oscines*...and its omens, though occasionally good, are usually unfavorable. ...The *corvus*...either favorable or unfavorable according to the circumstances." Though I omit the references here, on pp.75-77 of his commentary he gives a full list of augural passages relevant to the crow and raven and authors, ancient and contemporary, who treat the subject.

[147] Cf. The fable of the Fox and the Raven (Perry 124); Lucian, *Electrum* 5 οἱ δὲ σὺν γέλωτι, Σύ, ἔφησαν, ὦ ἄνθρωπε, οὐ παύσῃ τήμερον καταψευδόμενος τῆς χώρας ἡμῶν καὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ; ἡμεῖς δὲ ἀεὶ πλέοντες καὶ ἐκ παίδων σχεδὸν ἐργαζόμενοι ἐν τῷ Ἠριδανῷ ὀλίγους μὲν [p. 78] κύκνους ἐνίοτε ὁρῶμεν ἐν τοῖς ἕλεσι τοῦ ποταμοῦ, καὶ κρώζουσιν οὗτοι πάνυ ἄμουσον καὶ ἀσθενές, ὡς τοὺς κόρακας ἢ τοὺς κολοιοὺς Σειρῆνας εἶναι πρὸς αὐτούς, ᾀδόντων δὲ ἡδὺ καὶ οἷον σὺ φῂς οὐδὲ ὄναρ ἀκηκόαμεν ὥστε θαυμάζομεν πόθεν ταῦτα εἰς ὑμᾶς ἀφίκετο περὶ ἡμῶν.

"And they with laughter said: "You, fellow, won't you stop telling lies today about our country and river? We, who are ever sailing (it) and have practically been working on the Eridanus from childhood, occasionally see a few swans on the marshy banks of the river, and they croak very unmusically and feebly, so that ravens or jackdaws are Sirens compared to them, whereas of the ones that sing sweetly, as you claim, we've not heard even in a dream so that we wonder from what source these things reached you about us." See also T. Calpurnius Siculus, *Eclogae* 6 ll. 6-8.

The raven's multitude of sounds (all rather strange, especially its ability, along with other corvids, to mimic human speech) may have had a distancing effect, and given it an aura of eeriness. The inquisitive nature of the crow and raven coupled with their high intelligence may have caused them to be seen in strange situations (strange situations for birds by human standards of proper (?) bird behaviour, that is), such as dropping tiles off a roof onto Tiberius Gracchus (Plutarch, *Tiberius Gracchus* 17.3; in truth the ravens were likely not targeting Tiberius Gracchus specifically[148]) or pecking gold off a god's statue (Pausanias 10.15). Of course, such actions would have been perfectly natural to the crow and ravens, but ancient Greeks and Romans did not think that way and it is not the aim of the present work to explore deeply anthropomorphic trends in antiquity.

In any case, aside from the anthropomorphized motive of the crow, the rest of the fable is quite true to life and probably very much in keeping with what might happen during travel. Travelling in antiquity in general, not to mention during uncertain times,

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Nyctilon ut cantu rudis exsuperauerit Alcon,
Astyle, credibile est, si uincat acanthida cornix,
uocalem superet si dirus aedona bubo.

That uncouth Alcon has outstripped Nyctilus in song,
Astylus, is believable, if a crow should defeat [i.e. outsing] the finch,
If the eerie owl should surpass the melodious nightingale.

As well, see Fronto, p. 113, 8 *M. Frontonis ad M. Antoninum de Eloquentia Liber*. (*ad Anton. de eloqu. 1)*
[2.46 Haines, *LCL* text]
An tu cycnum coges in ultima cantione cornicum voculas aemulari? "Or will you compel a swan in its final song to vie with the cacophony of crows?"

[148] Crows and ravens often engage in play like this see *BWP* (Vol. VIII) 183, where crows (*Corvus corone*) are "Reported to have damaged gold-leaf on roof of Kremlin (Moscow) by sliding down on feet (Boswall 1985*a*). Sliding down slated or tiled roof, culminating in take-off, not uncommon among juveniles (J. R. Harpum)."

was likely a frightening and dangerous experience. [149] Those who set out might not know with certainty whether they would return. This uncertainty and lack of security must have made for a psychologically tense and impressionable mood among travellers, especially ones who could not afford guards or more secure means of transport than their feet and wits. Guinan, in her article "A Severed Head Laughed" highlights this phenomenon,

> The reason omens stand out from the background resides in the cognitive model of the observer. An individual sees many birds during the course of a journey, or two people pass the same black cat, or observe extraordinary events. But a cat, a crow, a flash of lightning in the sky only becomes an omen when the circumstances demand it. The underlying tension of a personal situation kindles the signifying power of an omen.[150]

[149]For the standard work on the subject see Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (London, 1974), 72-76 for travel in the Greek world of Classical and Hellenistic times, and in general. See also the entry on "Travels" in *Brill's New Pauly: Antiquity*, Vol. 14 (2011), 869-870.

[150] Guinan, "A Severed Head Laughed." p. 21 in Ciraolo and Seidel (Eds.), *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World* (Leiden, 2002). This idea was also discussed much earlier by Halliday's *Greek Divination* (London, 1913), 164: "The formal arts of divining the future are not in the first instance rational or arbitrary creations; they have their origin in the sub-rite and in the omen. This "seeking after a sign," and the recognition of a revelation of future calamity in some strange happening, may be traced to the nervous anxiety engendered by some momentous occasion or to the importance attributed to the occurrence of the abnormal. In strict logical analysis we may say that in the one case the anxiety creates the portent, and in the other the portent creates the anxiety; in practice the two motives are often indistinguishably blended." and 168-9 "The portent will naturally have a doubled significance if it occurs in connection with some solemn act, some important crisis, some anxious undertaking....And it is easy to understand how anxiety on important occasions often creates the omen. The perceptions are sharpened; little things are noticed, and assume a disproportionate importance. You are far more likely to notice the fact if you trip over the threshold on the occasion of your marriage, or when you are setting out on a long journey, than if the accident occurs in the course of your normal comings and goings. The importance of the occasion intensifies, where it does not create, the gravity of these minor incidents. We are told that in moments of supreme danger and of hairbreadth escapes the mind automatically focusses (sic) with photographic clearness on apparently unimportant detail." And on augury in this same vein he says (247-8) "In a fashion exactly analogous to the processes we have discussed [referring to 164ff.], the observation of the omens given by birds will under favourable circumstances develop into a systematic science of divination."

For example stubbing one's toe on leaving the house, tripping, sneezing, etc., things which generally would be dismissed or perhaps forgotten seconds later under certain psychological conditions can be magnified and made ominous or memorable.

The suggestion in this fable seems to be that these travellers were already of a far from care-free state of mind and the speed with which they reacted to a mere bird call, which, had they not been on a journey (one presumes of relative importance to them) may have gone unnoticed, underlines this edgy mindset. Another fable (Perry 65 Ὁδοιπόροι καὶ ἄρκτος) also hints at some of the dangers to be encountered, *viz.* a bear (though one imagines highwaymen and slavers probably took pride of place in the list of things most feared by travellers.). Without any regular or internationally recognized police force and in a climate of unstable international and intercity relations, banditry and slavery, among other things, were very real possibilities a traveller might encounter. Travelling in groups was likely as much a safety precaution as for company on a journey. Thus the fact that it is almost always travellers in the plural and not a single one is a realistic touch. It is also a fortuitous touch because it allows for the reaction, discussion, and interpretation of the birds signs.

3.2 Perry 127, H. 129 Κορώνη καὶ κύων

κορώνη <Ἀθηνᾷ θύουσα> κύνα ἐφ’ ἑστίασιν ἐκάλεσεν. ὁ δὲ ἔφη πρὸς αὐτήν· „τί μάτην τὰς θυσίας ἀναλίσκεις; ἡ γὰρ δαίμων οὕτως σε μισεῖ, ὡς καὶ τῶν σῶν οἰωνῶν τὴν πίστιν περιελέσθαι“· καὶ ἡ κορώνη ἀπεκρίνατο· „ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο αὐτῇ θύω, διότι οἶδα αὐτὴν ἀπεχθῶς διακειμένην, ἵνα διαλλαγῇ μοι.“ οὕτω πολλοὶ διὰ φόβον τοὺς πολεμίους εὐεργετεῖν οὐκ ὀκνοῦσι.

H.129 (Version I)
A crow, since she was making a sacrifice to Athena called a dog to a feast; he said to her: "Why do you squander your sacrifices fruitlessly? For the goddess hates you to such a

degree as remove the credibility of your omens." And the crow answered: "But in fact on account of this do I sacrifice to her, because I know that she is hostile, in order that she may be reconciled to me." Thus many through fear do not shrink from doing good to their enemies.

Κορώνη Ἀθηνᾷ θύουσα κύνα ἐπὶ ἑστίασιν ἐκάλει. Ὁ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὴν ἔφη· Τί μάτην τὰς θυσίας ἀναλίσκεις; ἡ γὰρ θεὸς οὕτω σε μισεῖ ὡς κἀκ τῶν συντρόφων σοι οἰωνῶν τὴν πίστιν περιελεῖν. Καὶ ἡ κορώνη πρὸς αὐτόν· "Διὰ τοῦτο μᾶλλον αὐτῇ θύω, ἵνα διαλλαγῇ μοι."
Ὁ μῦθος δηλοῖ, ὅτι πολλοὶ διὰ κέρδος τοὺς ἐχθροὺς εὐεργετεῖν οὐκ ὀκνοῦσιν.

H.129
(Version III)
A crow, since she was making a sacrifice to Athena called a dog to a feast; he said to her: "Why do you squander your sacrifices fruitlessly? For the goddess hates you to such a degree as to remove the credibility of the omens unique to you." And the crow replied to him: "On this account all the more do I sacrifice to her, in order that she may be reconciled to me." The fable shows that many on account of (a desire for) gain do not shrink from doing good to their enemies.

Hausrath gives two main versions of this fable, which are largely similar but exhibit certain interesting differences; the differences between manuscripts of *these* versions are minor and not as notable as those between the two versions to be discussed. These differences between versions I and III are slight ones, of vocabulary; the greatest variation comes in the epimythium, which I shall discuss below. This seems a rather unnaturalistic fable and, in fact, probably the least ethologically pertinent and the most mythological fable presented in this study. The actors, the crow and dog, are almost entirely anthropomorphized in depiction, behaviour, and the content of what they say. Perry 127 is more a case of a pseudo-cautionary tale mixed with an aetiological fable explaining the crow's tendency to give unfavourable omens than the typical agonal fable which we have already seen exemplified in the preceding pages. Crows do not perform sacrifices. Ravens however…are oftentimes depicted as stealing sacrificial meat from the

altars of the gods and in so doing are regarded as profane and irreligious, both within fable and without.[151] The dog, also known to frequent sacrifices and steal meat therefrom, was widely known as the archetypal shameless animal of the ancient world, although in fable he appears to be so to a less marked degree than he does in Greek literature outside of fable.[152] Thus, for the dog to be reproaching the crow for acting shamefully speaks to the sheer folly, according to the fable, of the crow in this situation. In terms of the choice of characters and setting, the fabulist has selected well. Although the location, likely within a temple precinct in a city, is not "nature" as we would describe it, it is realistic, and thus is a natural setting for these specific animals based on their bomolochic habits. The reasoning behind the dog's scolding is that the crow's sacrifice will have been made in vain as she has no hope of gaining the favour of a goddess who so detests her. As proof of this, strangely, he adduces the inauspiciousness of the crow's omens.

It is true that the crow is ubiquitously deemed ill-omened in both Greek and Latin literature beginning with Hesiod,[153] and it is often, but not always, so regarded in fable.[154]

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[151]Perry 323: The Raven and Hermes; Perry 324: The Ailing Raven.

[152]Shameful dog fables: Perry132: The Dog Pursuing the Lion, Perry 136: The Dog and the Hare, Perry 206: The Shepherd and the Dog, Perry 254: The Dog and the Butcher, Perry 308: The Dog and the Square-hewn Statue of Hermes, Perry 332: The Dog Wearing a Bell, Perry 415: The Blacksmith and the Little Dog, Perry 448: Orpheus an the Dogs, Perry 478: Sheep, Dog, and Wolf, Perry 483: The Dog, the Treasure and the Vulture, Perry 517: The Dogs sent ambassadors to Jupiter, Perry 608: The Dung-covered Dog, Perry 701: The Dog and the Wolf, Perry 702: The Dog and the Manger. Among references in Greek literature to the shamefulness of dogs are to be noted: Hom. *Il.* 1.149-160; 1.225ff; 6.344-356; 8.423; 9.370-3; 21.481; 22.354; 22.65-76; Hom. *Od.* 18.338; 22.35; Aesch. *Supp.* 757; Ar. *Eq.* 289; Ar. *Eq.* 415-6; Ar. *Eq.*1067-9; Ar. *Lys.*957; Arist. *Rh*. 3,10, 1411a 24; Theocritus, 15.53; Plut. *Mor*. 717c; Flavius Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2.85; Lucian, *De Morte Peregrini* 30. And of course, the Cynics monopolized, almost trademarked, this attribute by their name and behaviour.

[153]Hesiod, *Opera et Dies* 746-7:

This is the only fable, and one of a very few places in Graeco-Roman literature, where a reason is actually given for why the crow is unfavourable. The story is told in a more complete form by other authors, especially the 4th century B.C. Athenian historian Amelesagoras, and later the Latin poet Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 2. 531-595). It seems worthwhile to give Amelesagoras' version at this point, which is cited by the 3rd century B.C. paradoxographer Antigonus of Carystus:

> Amelesagoras the Athenian, who has written the history of Attica, says that the crow does not fly to the Acropolis, nor yet would anyone be able to say he has ever seen one do so. He explains the reason by way of a story; for he says that when Athena was given to Hephaestus after lying down with him she disappeared, and that Hephaestus having fallen to earth released his sperm, and the earth later yielded Erichthonius, whom Athena nurtured and placed in a chest and gave it to the daughters of Cecrops to look after, Agraulus, Pandrosus, and Herse, and she ordered them not to open the chest until she came. Now, having arrived at Pellene she brought a mountain, in order to make a fence before the Acropolis; but the two daughters of Cecrops, Agraulus and Pandrosus, opened the chest and saw two serpents around Erichthonius; now, a crow, he says, met Athena while she was bringing the mountain, which is now called Lycabettus, and told her that Erichthonius was exposed, and when she heard this, she hurled the mountain to where it now stands, and she said to the crow on account of her bad news, that it will not be permitted for her to come to the Acropolis.[155]

"If you are building a house leave it not unfinished,
Lest a cawing crow should perch upon it and caw."

[154] There follows a list of these fables (I stop short here of the Medieval fables beginning from the sixth century A.D. on, as my study is concerned with the archaic, Classical, Hellenistic, and Imperial periods): Perry 125: The Crow and the Raven; Perry 298: *Grus et Cornix* (Rom. [g.Ad.] 19 (32); *Pavo ad Iunonem de voce sua* (Ph. III 18); Dio Chrysostom 34.5 The fable of the Phrygian man, the Ox, and the Crow.

[155] Ἀμελησαγόρας δὲ ὁ Ἀθηναῖος ὁ τὴν Ἀτθίδα συγγεγραφὼς οὔ φησι κορώνην προσίπτασθαι πρὸς τὴν ἀκρόπολιν, οὐδ' ἔχοι ἂν εἰπεῖν ἑωρακὼς οὐδείς. Ἀποδίδωσι δὲ τὴν αἰτίαν μυθικῶς·φησὶ γὰρ Ἡφαίστῳ δοθείσης τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς συγκατακλιθεῖσαν αὐτὴν ἀφανισθῆναι, τὸν δὲ Ἥφαιστον εἰς γῆν πεσόντα προϊέσθαι τὸ σπέρμα, τὴν δὲ γῆν ὕστερον αὐτῷ ἀναδοῦναι Ἐριχθόνιον, ὃν τρέφειν τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν καὶ εἰς κίστην καθεῖρξαι καὶ παραθέσθαι ταῖς Κέκροπος παισὶν, Ἀγραύλῳ καὶ Πανδρόσῳ καὶ Ἕρσῃ, καὶ ἐπιτάξαι μὴ ἀνοίγειν τὴν κίστην, ἕως ἂν αὐτὴ ἔλθῃ. Ἀφικομένην δὲ εἰς Πελλήνην φέρειν ὄρος, ἵνα ἔρυμα πρὸ τῆς ἀκροπόλεως ποιήσῃ· τὰς δὲ Κέκροπος θυγατέρας τὰς δύο, Ἄγραυλον καὶ Πάνδροσον, τὴν κίστην ἀνοῖξαι καὶ ἰδεῖν δράκοντας δύο περὶ τὸν Ἐριχθόνιον· τῇ δὲ Ἀθηνᾷ φερούσῃ τὸ ὄρος, ὃ νῦν καλεῖται Λυκαβηττὸς, κορώνην φησὶν ἀπαντῆσαι καὶ εἰπεῖν ὅτι Ἐριχθόνιος ἐν φανερῷ, τὴν δὲ ἀκούσασαν ῥῖψαι τὸ ὄρος ὅπου νῦν ἐστι, τῇ δὲ

Ovid livens up this bare-bones description and fills in the gaps as he sees them. According to Ovid, the crow was once a servant of Minerva, who, just as in the above story, uncovered the treachery of one of the daughters of Cecrops, attendants of Minerva. The deviant attendant had, contrary to her mistress' orders, not only opened up the chest entrusted to them but looked inside as well. The crow witnessed this and reported to the goddess what she had seen. As a result, whether because Minerva, in Ovid's depiction, looked down upon gossiping or to vent her anger, the crow was removed from her post and lost favour. The story is embedded in the story of how the raven was turned black. The crow in the story does not lament her metamorphosis from human to bird, which had already happened, for it saved her from being raped by Neptune. Rather, what she laments is her loss of position, as a crow attendant of Minerva. Moreover, she complains that the night bird, the owl, has unjustly usurped her position. Adrados argues that the crow's sacrifice is in vain because the owl is Athena's bird.[156] The myth treated by Amelesagoras and Ovid is presumably the one Adrados is referring to; or perhaps he is merely stating that the owl is widely accepted as Athena's bird and is not making reference to this myth at all. The fable makes no mention of the owl, so it is difficult to say. It does, however, mention that Athena's dislike of the crow was so great as to bring it about that all credibility from her omens be removed, which ostensibly was the outcome of the Erichthonius incident.

κορώνῃ διὰ τὴν κακαγγελίαν εἰπεῖν, ὡς εἰς ἀκρόπολιν οὐ θέμις αὐτῇ ἔσται ἀφικέσθαι. K. Müller, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum (FHG)* 2. Paris: Didot (1841-1870), 22.

[156] Adrados, Vol. III, 167.

At all events, the crow in Perry 127 is depicted in what would seem the least naturalistic fashion, at any rate from an ethological, modern day, standpoint. In no other fable is the crow so unusually, that is so abnormally, treated. Perhaps there are some naturalistic elements hidden away such as the accurate setting mentioned above, or at least in the myth from which the fable is likely derived. The hostility between crows and owls is strangely never mentioned in fable, and the owl in fact rarely appears in fable at all.[157] Owls in many Greek and Roman works are often referred to as the enemy, almost archenemy, of the crow.[158] There is *some* truth to this, too, as modern ornithological works support this hostile relationship between crows and owls, as the number one predator of crows and ravens, aside from man, is the owl.[159] This antagonistic relationship

[157] Perry 437: The Owl and the Birds (Dio Chrysostom, *Orations* 12); Perry 507 (Phaedrus, 3.16): *Cicada et Noctua*; Perry 561: 25. *Cavannus, Cattus et Mus* (Ademar XXV, Hervieux, 130). Only two owl names essentially, other than the sole occurrence of 'cavannus', are used in Latin fable: *noctua* (Phaedrus' and Romulus Anglicus' standard name for an 'owl', though specifically a 'night owl') *bubo* (later replaces noctua). For example, *Fabulae ex Mariae Gallicae Romulo et aliis*, etc. CXXII. *de Accipitre et Noctua* (Hervieux, 575) and *Johannis de Schepeya Fabulae*, LIII. *Bubo et Lepus* (Hervieux, 773).

[158] Arist. *HA* VIII (IX), 609a 8-12; Antigonus Carystus Paradoxographus, *Historiarum Mirabilium Collectio* Chapter 57.1; Diogenianus Grammaticus, *Paroemiae (epitome operis sub nomine* Diogeniani) (*e cod.Mazarinco*) 2.16; Zenobius Sophista <Paroemiographus>, *Epitome Collectionum Lucilli Tarrhaei et Didymi* 1.69; Ael. *NA* III.9, V.48; Plin. *NH* 10. 203. Arnott, 113 makes an interesting comment on whether the Little Owl is really likely as a candidate in this hostility, and says that modern authorities show that the Eagle Owl and Barn Owl are far more likely to be meant as the enemies of the crow. Arnott then points out that crows do mob birds of prey and cites Ael. *NA* VI.45 and XV.22 in support of this.

[159] Most relevant here are the comments made by the renowned corvid expert Goodwin, who, in his discussion on anti-predator behaviour says that although "birds of the crow family usually appear to have relatively few non-human predators, by comparison with smaller passerines" they do have some (53). Of import here is his remark that "even the typical crows are liable to be killed by such birds as the Goshawk and Eagle Owl. A tame Tawny Owl has been known to kill a healthy adult Hooded Crow and it is possible that

between the Little Owl (scientific name: *Athene noctua*; ancient name: γλαῦξ/*noctua*) and the crow could have influenced the formation of the myth and fable of Athena's hostility toward the crow. If ancient Athenians often witnessed crows and owls (Little or otherwise) in combat, they could have interpreted this in a mythological sense, if the owl was already widely accepted as Athena's bird. This may not be mere speculation, as other animals, which are prey and predator respectively in nature, are depicted in fable as interacting.[160] The reasoning would be along these lines: if the owl is the enemy of the crow, and the owl is Athena's bird, therefore Athena is the enemy of the crow. A myth might then be created to explain this animosity in more detail. Other Greek authors cite this avoidance of or ban from the Acropolis and/or the sanctuaries of Athena; some Roman authors mention this too.[161] There are indeed many owls in Attica, albeit not so

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wild Tawny Owls may take other *Corvus* species, besides Jackdaws which they have been known to kill."(53). Cf. Marzluff, *In the Company of Crows and Ravens*, 163, 177-9. Although he is speaking of the American Crow and about its mobbing behaviour, the information he gives is just as relevant to the Carrion and Hooded Crow of Greece and Europe. He specifically mentions that the Great Horned Owl and the Tawny Owl are at the top of the list of Crow predators, although that list is small, which makes corroboration of the ancient citations all the more significant and satisfying.

[160] Some examples: Perry 4: Nightingale and Hawk; Perry 7: The Cat (acting as physician) and the Hens; Perry 78:The Deer and the Lion in the Cave; Perry 128: The Raven and the Snake; Perry 136: The Dog and the Hare; Perry 143: The Lion and the Bull; Perry 155: The Wolf and the Lamb; Perry 156: The Wolf and the Heron; Perry 230: The Tortoise and the Eagle; Perry 244: The Partridge and the Weasel; Perry 281: The Two Roosters and the Eagle; etc.

[161]Arnott lists three ancient authorities who mention that the crow would not enter the Parthenon if the altars were smoking with sacrifices to the goddess: Ael. *NA* 5.8 who is citing Aristotle; Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 6.749-52 and Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 2.10. (114). Lucretius seems to be the only Latin author to cite this specifically:

> And there is one [i.e. a *locum Avernum*] within the walls of Athens, on the very
> Summit, next to the shrine of kindly Tritonian Pallas,
> 750

many now as in ancient times;[162] thus it would not be outside the realm of possibility that the reason why crows do not fly to the Acropolis is from fear of the many owls there. Or, there was not much game or food there at the altitude of the Acropolis.[163] One wonders why the ancient Greeks and later also the Romans would have thought that Athena, in no way involved with prophecy, should want to make the crow into a corvine Cassandra

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Whither harsh-voiced crows never betake themselves by wing,
Not when the altars are smoking sacrifices;
Evermore continually they flee not the wrath of Pallas bitter
Because of the vigil, as the Greel poets sang,
But because the very nature of the place brings it about.
755

Arnott does, however also add Pliny's assertion (*H.N.* 10.3) that the bird (that is the Crow) was seldom encountered in Minerva's precincts between the months of September and February (115).

[162]Arnott, 25 says of the Eagle Owl (*Byas/Bryas*, Latin *bubo*) "Severe persecution in the past, partly perhaps influenced by such superstitions, has led to a serious decline in its numbers throughout Europe, although it still breeds on the Greek mainland and in a few islands probably including Lesbos." This means that it was once flourishing and so relevant to the discussion of the crow/owl hostility. More interesting, although he dismisses the possibility of the ancient assertion of enmity between them, is Arnott's comment on the Little Owl, "It is still a common resident throughout Greece, and up to 1970 was easily seen around Athens, with one or more pairs haunting the rocks of the Athenian Acropolis just as they did in antiquity (Aristoph., *Lysistrata* 760-1, Hesychius, γ 617...), but Greek numbers have declined in recent years as a result of insecticides, persecution in country areas and increasing urbanisation" (55). Although Arnott asserts that the *Glaux* was not likely to have been the enemy of the crow, he goes on to say that "its (the *Glaux'* that is) familiarity led to many accurate descriptions and comments in ancient authors..."(56); he then gives a sizeable list to that end. Now, if its familiarity bred accuracy of description, then would that not lend credence to the repeated citation of the enmity between the Little Owl, the type of owl that is specifically and repeatedly mentioned and the crow? Why would so many authors cite similarly? Of course, the other possibility is that those authors writing after Aristotle cited his words accurately without actually having observed the alleged enmity first hand. And one could add that even if Little Owls are not documented as eating crows, this would not stop them from eating crows' eggs or feeding on the same foods that crows do, which would cause friction between the two birds.

[163]Thompson (1895), explains that this may be attributed to the hill's height and nothing more.

merely for reporting to her mistress that her orders were not being followed. It could be that since the message the crow bore was displeasing to Athena as punishment she made whatever messages it bore, by extension augural signs and omens, unfavourable or bad news.[164]

It is difficult to fit this strange fable into a specific category. Is the fabulist making a satirical or critical commentary on religion through allusion to the crow's mythological backstory? Moreover, what might the lesson to be learned be, what moral can be derived? If we do not include the epimythia appended to the two versions in Hausrath, a few implications can be gleaned from the situation presented. One, the crow is foolish for trying to appease or buy off the goddess, for to deal with an implacable enemy so is pointless; enemies will remain so; nature cannot change. Two, the crow is foolish for holding on to hope of placating a goddess so hostile to it and in consequence one should not hope for something unlikely to happen and should be content with one's present lot, however harsh it may seem. It is only logical and in keeping with ancient Greek religious practice that one would try to appease a hostile divinity any way one could. The crow in other fables laments its curse of only giving bad omens or this state is described as a

[164] Situations like this are common in ancient literature (cf. the phrase "Don't shoot the messenger!" when delivering bad news). There are a few famous examples: Homer, *Il.* 1.101-107: when Thestor, a famed augur/prophet informs the Greeks what must be done to appease Apollo's wrath, Agamamemnon, advised to give up his newly 'won' bride by Thestor calls him a "prophet of evil" who never has anything good to foretell to him. This is Agamemnon's view; Thestor was but prophesying truly to him. Thestor came off far better in that episode than the next messenger. In Plutarch's *Life of Lucullus*, 25, King Tigranes of Armenia has a messenger beheaded for telling him of the advance of Lucullus, a move which leads to no one wanting to tell him anything for fear of a similar reaction.

disadvantage,[165] so it would seem reasonable (from a human perspective, and possibly a corvid one) to want to have that curse removed. When one looks at the moral interpretations given in the epimythia, which are later additions,[166] attached to both versions, one is surprised at how strange the interpretations are, especially that for version III. In the case of version I, the epimythium is "Thus many through their fear do not shrink from doing good to their (personal) enemies." The moralist has perhaps exaggerated here; he paints the crow in a more cowardly way than he should, but the message is not entirely inappropriate, inasmuch as, in keeping with my two interpretations above, the idea of appeasement through dissatisfaction is in a certain degree inherent in this epimythium. In the second version, however, the epimythium does not harmonize with the content of the fable due to one word, κέρδος: "The fable demonstrates that many on account of gain (i.e. in order to attain it) do not shrink from doing good to their (personal) enemies/those hostile to them." The individual who added this epimythium has given a more cynical interpretation than is necessary, attributing a desire not exhibited by the crow. A desire for what, exactly? How is wanting to rid oneself of the curse of giving bad omens greedy? In fact the crow's petition is quite selfless; good omens are good for the one who accepts them. Nowhere does the crow give

[165] Perry 125: The Crow and the Raven; Perry 162: The Baby and the Crow; Phaedrus, 3.18 *Pavo ad Iunonem de Voce Sua*; Ademar, XIX *Grus, Cornix et Dominus* (Hervieux, 128). Cf. the raven's inauspiciousness in certain fables too: Perry 236: The Travellers and the Raven; Perry 245: The Cowardly Soldier and the Ravens; Perotti's Appendix 23: *Viator et Corvus*.

[166] The history of the epimythium, although interesting, is not my concern here, suffice to say they were later developments and not originally part of the fables to which they were added. See especially Perry, "The Origin of the Epimythium," *TAPhA* Vol. 71, (1940): 391-419; Adrados (Vol.I), 29, 38-42, especially 443-465; Zafiropoulos, 7-8, 28, 32-34 (with helpful bibliography to this end).

the impression that it is trying to win gifts from Athena. The jarring interpretation seen in the epimythium of version III is perhaps more a reflection of the moralist's attitudes, personality, etc. than of the fable's actual content or material. It could be that the moralist is attributing greed to the crow based on other lost ancient mentions of this quality in ancient literature, but I can find no citation explicitly referring to the crow as greedy. The raven, however, is said to be greedy or gluttonous by a few Greek and Roman authors, but this is not a widely cited attribute by any means.[167] And were it a mere matter of conflating the two birds, that would be understandable. But specific reference is made to the *crow's* mythology, not the raven's, which was better known in any case, by all accounts. One further possibility for the attribution of greed may stem from the fact that in another fable (Perry 324: The Sick Raven), as well as in later Latin adaptations of this with the traditionally greedy kite in the role of the raven, the raven asks its mother to sacrifice to the gods for it to make it well, but its mother is at a loss as to how to respond, because it has stolen from the temples and altars of all the gods. Certainly the kite is ubiquitously referred to as greedy or rapacious in Graeco-Roman literature,[168] so if the moralist is writing from a later time, he may have conflated these fables with the present,

[167] Specific instances of this are: Alciphron, *Epistulae* III.(Letters of Parasites), Letter 32 (ii. 68) Hêdudeipnos Aristokoraki "Sweet-supping to Breakfast-Raven." In the Loeb (1962 reprint) translation of *The Letters of Alciphron, Aelian, and Philostratus* by Benner and Forbes, the translators comment (227) that the raven element in the parasite *Aristokorax'* name implies the meaning 'thief'. In support of this, a fragment from the Athenian comic poet Cratinus is adduced. Fragment 73 (Kock) comes from the play *Thraittai*: (73.) Ὅτι τοὺς κόρακας τἀξ Αἰγύπτου χρυσία κλέπτοντας ἔπαυσεν. And also Pausanias 10.5.4-5 where Pausanias says that ravens pecked the gold off of a gilt cult statue of Athena and made off with it. See also *AP* 12. 42 for the adj. παιδοκόραξ applied to θυμὸς, here it means "greedy after boys," "boy-raven." Some other instances of theft may be construed as omens and so are not discussed here.
[168]For a good variety of relevant passages see Arnott, 77.

Perry 127 and thus wrote the moral from this confused standpoint. The epimythia here seem later additions due to their unsuitability. If one had to choose the more fitting, then that which ascribes fear to the crow would, in this hypothetical scenario of selecting between these extant epimythia, be correct. Since there are other Greek versions and no later Latin versions of the fable of the crow sacrificing to Athena, and since the fable is so strange in itself, it is difficult to say whether in fact the strangely inapt epimythium belongs to the strange fable. In terms of applicability to events in eveyday life, this fable seems suited to very few of those events. Since there are no other extant versions outside the *Augustana* in fabular form, the fable's peculiarity seems to have made it unpopular (ironically like the crow itself).

Whatever the case may be, this fable is uniquely mythological and rather unnaturalistic in content, neither depicting the animals involved in a realistic setting in nature, nor engaging in remotely appropriate actions. But realistic it indeed is, at least in accordance with Greek augural beliefs and fabular definitions of adherence to the proper ethological (that is popular and conventional) character of the animal. And so, what seems a completely anthropomorphic fable with no ornithologically faithful characteristics, in some lights actually makes a fine fable and is, albeit far less than many of the other fables treated, in keeping with contemporary attitudes towards the crow and certainly towards the dog.

3.3 Perry 236, Ch. 255: Ὁδοιπόροι καὶ κόραξ

Πορευομένοις τισὶν ἐπὶ πρᾶξίν τινα κόραξ ὑπηντησε τὸν ἕτερον τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν πεπηρωμένος. Ἐπιστραφέντων δὲ αὐτῶν καί τινος ὑποστρέψαι παραινοῦντος, τοῦτο γὰρ σημαίνειν τὸν οἰωνόν, ἕτερος ὑποτυχὼν εἶπε· "Καὶ πῶς οὗτος ἡμῖν δύναται τὰ μέλλοντα μαντεύεσθαι, ὃς οὐδὲ τὴν ἰδίαν πήρωσιν προεῖδεν, ἵνα φυλάξηται;" Οὕτω καὶ τῶν

ἀνθρώπων οἱ ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις ἄβουλοι καὶ εἰς τὰς τῶν πέλας συμβουλίας ἀδόκιμοί εἰσιν.

The Travellers and the Raven

A raven, which was blind [lit. defective, maimed] in one of its eyes, encountered some men travelling on business. Now, when they wheeled about and one of them exhorted them to go back, for this indicated an omen, another of their company said in reply: "And how can this one divine the future for us, a creature which didn't even foresee its own blinding that it might take precautions against it?" And so those men who are ill-advised in their own affairs are also inadequate in advising their neighbours.

This fable is basically a variation on Perry 125, with seemingly the same plotline and almost the same ending: a crow/raven encounters travellers, they react to it as an omen (presumably boding ill), one of the group speaks up and discounts the omen. The differences are few but important, however. Firstly, the fabulist does not ascribe a reason to the raven for encountering the travellers, such as one might find in other fables (i.e. a raven was once flying in search of food when...), which is somewhat mysterious and engaging. The raven is described as blind in one eye when introduced, which is also rather mysterious. All the fable says is that the raven *hypêntêse* the travellers, not what it was doing before nor what specifically the travellers reacted to. They merely turn and one of them advises that they go back because the raven's appearance surely amounts to a sign telling them that their present course is unfavourable. The text does not say, as I have mentioned, what specifically the travellers considered ominous–presumably the raven croaked, but this is not stated. Alternatively it may have flown in front of the travellers, stopped mid-road and stared at them (hence the eye detail). A third major difference is the interpretive dispute: one traveller interprets the omen as prohibitive, another says that it should be discounted because the raven could not even predict its own blinding and thus

its value as a conveyor of omens is vitiated and any omens it may give should be interpreted as invalid because of that. The moral given is very different from 125, but bears some similarity: that those men who are ill-advised in their own affairs also make unsatisfactory advisors to their neighbours. The moral suggests that the audience should side with the last speaker and assumes that the raven knowingly gave the omen even though it knew (apparently) that it was unqualified to do so because it could not manage its own affairs. Of course, if we as the ancient and indeed the modern audience were to impute motives so complex to the bird here, we would be reading far too much into an allegorical fable. The raven, at least in this case, should probably be taken as an allegory for or a parody of the professional seer, the *mantis*, in addition to the more generalized character of the ill-advised advisor proposed by the epimythium. The fable's epimythium, its 'intended' message, then, is not one of discouragement about going against one's nature or failing to remain in one's social rank but a warning against false belief and hypocrisy and by extension against charlatan seers. Perry 236, in fact, is illuminated when compared with Perry 161, The Seer.

Perry 161, H. 170 (Version I of III)

μάντις ἐπὶ τῆς ἀγορᾶς καθεζόμενος ἠργυρολόγει. ἐλθόντος δέ τινος αἰφνίδιον πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ ἀπαγγείλαντος, ὡς τῆς οἰκίας αὐτοῦ αἱ θύραι ἀνεσπασμέναι εἰσὶ καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔνδον ἐκπεφορημένα, ἐκταραχθεὶς ἀνεπήδησε καὶ στενάξας ἀπῄει δρομαῖος τὸ γεγονὸς ὀψόμενος. τῶν δὲ παρατυχόντων τις θεασάμενος εἶπεν· "ὦ οὗτος, σὺ τὰ ἀλλότρια πράγματα προειδέναι ἐπαγγελλόμενος τὰ σαυτοῦ οὐ προεμαντεύου;"
τούτῳ τῷ λόγῳ χρήσαιτο ἄν τις πρὸς ἐκείνους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, οἳ τὸν ἑαυτῶν βίον φαύλως διοικοῦντες τῶν μηδὲν προσηκόντων προνοεῖσθαι πειρῶνται.

A seer was seated in the marketplace selling his services. Now, when someone suddenly came and reported to him that the doors of his house were broken open and everything inside carried off, greatly troubled he leapt up and with a groan departed at a run to see what had happened. Then one who saw the sight amongst those who happened to be there

said: "Hey you, although you make a profession of foretelling others' affairs, you couldn't foresee you own!"
Someone would use this fable in reference to those men who although they poorly manage their own lives try to plan ahead for things which are of no concern to them.

Perry 236 is extremely similar in many points to 161. What is most interesting is that the raven is almost placed in exactly the same position as the seer or placed on the same level. One need not speculate as to how often the physical deformities of birds would invalidate their ability to give omens. A more logical explanation would be that the raven, as has been mentioned, is to be taken as a sham augur, whose predictions are not always in keeping with what in fact happens. As to the idea shared by both fables that if the seer can see the future why can he not predict his own misfortune, should he not live an uneventful, and presumably peaceful and profitable existence? If he cannot predict his own misfortune, why does he feel himself qualified to predict others' futures or advise them in their affairs at all? This is a difficult question to answer. Does the comment represent a general scepticism about seers who sell their services, suggesting that they are only in it for the money and have no ethical standards of dependability or consistency, but without actually amounting to an attack on divination itself?[169] Or does it represent a sceptical attitude towards divination in general? The likeliest answer is the former. Flower offers a useful explanation to the question of skepticism towards seers in Greek antiquity:

> "Skepticism no doubt existed, and is expressed in both tragedy and comedy, but this is characteristic of all societies that rely on seers. In other words, many Greeks may have questioned the ability or honesty of individual seers, but very few indeed doubted the validity of divination itself. As Evans-Pritchard notes of the Azande, although many of them say that the majority of

[169] For discussion of this issue: Flower, 12-14, 132-53 (esp. 132-3 and 145).

> witch doctors are liars whose sole concern is to acquire wealth, there is no one who does not believe in witchdoctorhood. This type of doubt acts as a kind of escape valve. If a particular diviner is proven wrong, it was because he did not practice his art well: the failure of the individual practitioner does not undermine or disprove the system as a whole."[170]

In all other fables which deal with divination, scepticism is never ultimately directed at divination itself but at individual seers, or, when referring to the oracle of Delphi, the scepticism is invalidated and the oracle's power verified.[171] The fables which call the seer into question one could call kakomantic fables. The motif of fallibility can be

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[170] Flower, 12-13.
[171] Perry 36: Ἀνὴρ κακοπράγμων. Where a man tries to disprove the oracle of Delphi's abilities.
Perry 56: Γυνὴ μάγος. This is another unmasking fable, commenting on the witch's inability to save herself. But it does not disclaim magic in general.
Perry 89: Ἑρμῆς καὶ Τειρεσίας. Divination by birds is neither attacked nor condemned, but merely depicted, very briefly and in passing, with an abbreviated display of it by Tiresias to Hermes, who is trying to test the seer, which proves unsuccessful.
Perry 125: The Crow and the Raven.
Perry 127: The Crow and the Dog.
Perry 128: The Raven and the Snake. Whether this is also an attack on professional seers via the raven not predicting its death when attempting to seize a poisonous serpent is in no way clear. Prophetic connotations seem absent from the fable and in another version the kite replaces the raven. In all likelihood, then, it is not a fable on augury.
Perry 161: The Seer.
Perry 162: The Baby and the 'Raven'.
Perry 236: The Travellers and the Raven.
Perry 245: The Cowardly Man and the Ravens.
Perry 295: The Farmer Who Lost His Mattock (Babrius 2). This is a spin on the fallibility fable; here exceptionally a god is shown as fallible for not being able to recover his own stolen temple property.
Perry 310: The Eunuch and the Priest. A eunuch attempts to find out his chances for children. Neither diviner nor divination is criticized.
Perry 495: (=Phaedrus 3.3) *Aesopus et Rusticus*. Soothsayers are unable to divine cause of human headed lambs. Divination is not criticized, but soothsayers are.
Perry 546 (=Phaedrus *Appendix* VIII): *De Oraculo Apollinis*. In fact, this is quite a positive comment on the oracle and Apollo.
Perry 551 (=Phaedrus *App*. XXIII): The Traveller and the Raven.

found in a number of other fables as well.[172] Outside fable, too, there is scepticism in some authors shown towards seers (frequent) and sometimes towards divination.[173] One very similar example to the fables examined above may be found in Ovid, who in his *Metamorphoses* explores the theme of divine fallibility and by extension the fallibility of seers in his telling of the tale of Apollo's attempt to rape Daphne. There, although Apollo is the god of prophecy and one would expect that it would be easy for him, knowing the future, to catch Daphne or at least to realize that he cannot catch her, regardless of that attempts to trap her and fails. His mind is, of course, blinded by a powerful love brought on by an outraged Cupid, but still his powers should ostensibly remain undiminished. At one point the aporetic Apollo's situation is described as follows (Ov. *Met.*.1.490-1): "Phoebus fell in love and desired marriage with Daphne when he saw her, /but what he desired, he hopes for, and his own oracles failed him."[174] One Ovidian scholar, Solodow, calls this phenomenon a 'split-divinity' joke and sees it as a way in which Ovid humanizes the gods in his work.[175] In any case, fable's treatment of divination largely accords with the treatment of seers found outside fable and should thus be taken, along with the general depiction of crows and ravens as augural/ominous birds, as a realistic, that is to say, true

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[172] Perry 56, 40, 125, 295, 495.
[173] For a full treatment of this skepticism see Flower, 28-9, 132-152. For Roman perceptions of the seer see Pease's commentary on Cicero's *De Divinatione, passim.* Wardle's more recent commentary on book 1 of *De Divinatione* is also helpful in this regard. For a useful and eminently relatable comparison of skeptical attitudes towards seers, see Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles And Magic Among The Azande* (Oxford, 1972 reprint of 1937 edition), chapter 2: Zande faith in Witch-Doctors, p. 183ff.
[174] *Phoebus amat visaeque cupit conubia Daphnes,*
quodque cupit, sperat, suaque illum oracula fallunt.
[175] Solodow, *The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 94.

to life (life as lived by Greeks and Romans), element. Here again, the actual augury and interpretation of the omen are dealt with in a completely serious fashion, and again this corroborates the identification of augural functionality/utility as a defining feature of corvids in Graeco-Roman antiquity.

3.4 Perry 245, Ch. 47[176]

Ἀνὴρ δειλὸς καὶ κόρακες.

Ἀνὴρ δειλὸς ἐπὶ πόλεμον ἐξῄει. Φθεγξαμένων δὲ κοράκων, τὰ ὅπλα θεὶς ἡσυχαζεν, εἶτ' ἀναλαβὼν αὖθις ἐξῄει, καὶ φθεγγομένων πάλιν, ὑπέστη καὶ τέλος εἶπεν· Ὑμεῖς κεκράξεσθε μὲν ὡς δύνασθε μέγιστον· ἐμοῦ δὲ οὐ γεύσεσθε. Ὁ μῦθος περὶ τῶν σφόδρα δειλῶν.

The Cowardly Man and the Ravens

A cowardly man was going off to war. But when ravens croaked, he set down his weapons and kept still, then he took them up and set out again, and when they croaked a second time, he halted and said at last: "Croak as loudly as you can, but you won't taste me!" The fable is about the very cowardly.

The epimythium either mistakes the original anecdote by Phocion or has been omitted by Plutarch, for Phocion did not consider himself very cowardly, rather providentially cautious. Be that as it may, it is not important for our understanding of the fable how the epimythium got attached, but just that it did. Although not mentioned specifically for ravens, but rather vultures,[177] the same idea is implied here as well as in

[176] In fact the same as Plutarch, *Vita Phocionis* 9.
[177] Arist. *HA* 563a5-12 and Ael. *NA* 2.46. Cf. also Horapollo, *Hieroglyphica* 1.11:"And it (represents) a boundary because, when a battle is about to occur, it [i.e. the vulture] marks out the site, where the battle is going to happen, [ie. and it does this] by being present at it [i.e. the site] seven days beforehand; and (it represents) prescience for the aforesaid reason, or since it is present at the scene/fight [?] or at the quarry, it looks toward the ones being slain and being defeated [i.e. who will be slain and lose], divvying up its food from the fallen (bodies), and on account of this the kings of old would despatch scouts to observe towards which quarter of the battle the vulures looked [lit. look], whence noting

the countless citations of the phrase 'a feast for the dogs and birds' found in Graeco-Roman literature. Of course, the fear that one would be eaten by birds, namely carrion-eating birds such as ravens, crows, and vultures, was related to the fear of not getting a proper burial and thus not being able to cross the Styx immediately on arrival in the Underworld. That is what the 'cowardly' man is afraid of here and what he refers to essentially by stating that the ravens will not taste him. The man claims that the ravens are croaking because they want a taste of him (alive or dead is not specified) and ostensibly he retreats to prevent that from happening, but really he is running away from death on the battle field and the pain of being killed there (the actual devouring by the ravens would hopefully not be something he would feel). The ravens, then, are used as an excuse to turn back. The excuse, however, is a rather weak one, that is, a cowardly one, as the fable suggests. That the man did not attribute an augural significance to the ravens' croaking is somewhat strange, as it would have exculpated him entirely. Perhaps the reason why an augural reading is not cited lies in the nature of the source from which the fabulist took his fable, the Phocion anecdote cited above. There, the issue was not one of cowardice but of making light of the charges of cowardice levelled against Phocion, and his real message was that if the Athenians went to war they would end up a feast for the birds, and so prudence and restraint were the best course, despite their superficial appearance as cowardice. The ravens are largely secondary to the message of the fable

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down the losing party." Also to be noted is the poem by the 13th-14th century A.D. ecclesiastical poet Manuel Philes, *Carmina* 3.36: Περὶ γυπῶν ἔφοδος, on the prescient nature of vultures.

and the interpretation Phocion wished to impart, that is, they stand for carrion birds in general; their augural/ominous capacity is not at the forefront. Whether there is a slight connotation of the augural and ominous call of the ravens embedded in the story is not as important as the fact that the fabulist has appended an epimythium slightly at variance with the anecdote given by Plutarch. The fabulist presumably saw that Phocion presented a fable and extracted it without heeding the surrounding context. In this way the fable does become solely a rebuke against cowardice and not one a fable defending prudence.

3.5. Perry 162, H. 171: ΠΑΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΚΟΡΑΞ

(1.) μαντευομένης τινὸς περὶ τοῦ ἑαυτῆς παιδὸς νηπίου ὄντος οἱ μάντεις προέλεγον, ὅτι ὑπὸ κόρακος ἀναιρεθήσεται. διόπερ φοβουμένη λάρνακα μεγίστην κατασκευάσασα ἐν ταύτῃ αὐτὸν καθεῖρξε φυλαττομένη, μὴ ὑπὸ κόρακος ἀναιρεθῇ. καὶ διετέλει τεταγμέναις ὥραις ἀναπεταννῦσα καὶ τὴν ἐπιτηδείαν αὐτῷ τροφὴν παρεχομένη. καί ποτε ἀνοιξάσης αὐτῆς καὶ τὸ πῶμα ἐπιθείσης ὁ παῖς ἀπροφυλάκτως παρέκυψε. οὕτω τε συνέβη τῆς λάρνακος τὸν κόρακα κατὰ τοῦ βρέγματος κατενεχθέντα ἀποκτεῖναι αὐτόν.
ὁ λόγος δηλοῖ, ὅτι τὸ πεπρωμένον ἀπαρεγχείρητόν ἐστι.

The Baby and the "Raven"

When a certain woman consulted seers concerning her still infant child, they foretold that he would be killed by a raven. Therefore she fearfully prepared a very large chest and confined him in it, taking care lest he should be killed by a raven. And at regular times she continued opening it and providing him with the necessary food. And one day when she opened it up and propped open the lid, the baby incautiously peeped out. And so it happened that the iron prop (lit. the raven) fell down upon the front of his head and killed him.

The fable teaches that what has been ordained is not to be tampered with.

Not much need be said here. The fable plays with the theme of enigmatic oracles, their possible interpretations, and their ultimate truth. Oracular prediction is not satirized or ridiculed here and elsewhere in fable, as I have mentioned, but rather promoted or at least cast in a favourable light. In the present case, oracular prediction is verified. There

may be a slight criticism of individual seers here, however, as the mother *does* consult multiple seers (οἱ μάντεις) who give the same answer. Just to be on the safe side, one imagines, she consulted more than one in order to ascertain the veracity of the original direful prediction. This was presumably a common practice, at least with contract seers.[178] That aside, this fable is included for the interesting use of the word *korax* ("raven", but also "crow-bar" based on the shape of the raven's beak). It is probably not based on observation of the raven's method of prying open carrion in a crowbar like fashion with its beak, which it does do, but rather comes merely from the shape (cf. the word "door-handle" translated by the word *korônê/korax* for the same reason and the 'grappling-hook' used by Roman ships named the *corvus,* again for the hooked feature of the corvine beak).[179] Ironically the raven *qua* implement itself is used in an oracular prediction. This is ironic because it happens to be an augural bird too, and in its capacity as a bird gives omens, and as an implement is ominous as well in a darkly comic fashion. Therefore even as an implement it is a good conveyor of omens. There are also interesting word choices in the fable which highlight this ambiguity both of oracles and language. Among the several meanings of *anaireô*, two here are important: "to kill, destroy," on the one hand, and "to answer, ordain," on the other, used of an oracle's answer to an

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[178] See especially Flower, 147-152 in the section: "How Does One Test a Seer?" for the most comprehensive treatment of this topic.

[179] See also Philoxenus, frag. 315: "Crow: refers to the creature (*Odyssey* 12.418), to the bow [i.e. to its points] (*Iliad* 4.111), to the door [i.e. to its handle] (*Od.* 7.90), and to the ship's prow, and the *korônis* [curved line or pen-flourish at the end of a book or section of a work; by extension it comes to mean finishing touch on a work] on account of its curving shape. Now, these things have been called from the creature the crow; for it is rational/reasonable and as it has a curved neck/beak. And from the part of the body, as it were from the bend, it can be derived. So says Philoxenus in his book concerning the speech of the Romans."

inquiry.[180] Both meanings may be at work here, thus "the seers foretold that he would be killed/answered by a raven." The word *larnax* "chest, box" can also mean also "coffin," another ambiguous word, both meanings of which may be felt here.[181] Such playing with language is a characteristic feature of ancient oracles.[182] The mother was watching for real ravens when she forgot that a much closer 'raven' was present in her vicinity. Another fable deals with the ambiguity of dream interpretation and also features a prediction of death by an animal, here a lion.[183] That fable is not so aptly ambiguous as Perry 162, but in any case it is very similar, for the father of a boy dreams that his son will be killed by a lion. Out of fear he sequesters the boy indoors to prevent the lion attack. Little does he know that in decorating his son's room with animal pictures on the walls (pictures which included a lion) he causes his own son's death. His son, sick of being cooped up and aware of the prediction scratches out the lion on the wall and receives a sliver of wood under his fingernail which leads to infection and his death, ultimately by lion, albeit not a

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[180] See *LSJ* Rev. Ed. *s.v.* ἀναιρέω II.1 and III.
[181] See *LSJ* Rev. Ed. *s.v.* λάρναξ A.1 and 2.
[182] Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination* (Malden, MA; Oxford, 2008) 13-14 makes an excellent comment about this which, although not specifically related to oracular prediction but to divination by signs (be they omens, auguries, etc.) may equally be applicable to the types of oracle-mongers or professional prophets mentioned in the fable: "One of the most interesting things about the sympathetic explanation for divination, as Peter Struck has discussed, is that its apologists had to enforce a semantic system that was founded on mystification. That is, if the links between a given occurrence and what it portends were as obvious as the link between a crowing rooster and the coming dawn, divination would cease to be a special art - anyone would be able to do it. The technical diviner presents himself as performing an inductive task, then - he does not make his predictions by deducing "rational" relationships between things." Dream interpretation was always enigmatic, as dreams are often difficult to remember and thus the enigma is self-produced in many cases and probably easily exploitable by dream-interpreters for hire.

[183] Perry 363: Παῖς καὶ λέων γεγραμμένος.

real-live one, just like the 'raven' here. Although this is not a living raven here, divination is yet again evident as a feature of the bird in one way or another, and is treated seriously and as something commonplace, that is, not a fantastic element such as a talking animal or an ape king.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

The crow and raven in fable have been discussed at length throughout; so little more need be said here past a brief overview of the ground covered hitherto. Although fable by its very name (*mythos/logos* in Greek, *fabula* in Latin) implies something made up, a tall-tale or rumour, apart from Aristotle, Pliny, Plutarch, and Aelian (*inter alios doctos et humanos*) the best source for ethology, and in this case corvid ethology, as understood in the ancient world, is in fact fable. Of course, as my last remark suggests, context is key, and we should not expect to find at all times what is zoologically "right," among the ethological details of fable. Aside from the fact that fable was drawing upon nature to produce a practical application to human life or to prove a point in oratorical arena, zoological specificity or accuracy was likely not the fabulist's utmost concern, but a plausibility-producing tool to drive home his point. It is a happy accident for us that one of the "rules" in fable-creation was adherence to an animal's correct ethology as then understood. Fabulists–rather orators, symposiasts, then fabulists–specifically working in that genre in parallel to the former two, did not write about animals out of humanitarian concern. If they felt something for them it was interest rather than some deep-seated drive to spread the word about animals (*pace* Apollonius of Tyana). Plutarch, it should be noted, was not a fabulist, at least, we do not possess extant any collection of fables by

him. Whether this seeming absence of bias towards animals makes the realism inherent in fable more objective is difficult to determine. Where what we consider realistic and what the audience of fable did coincide, it should not be taken as a case absolute realism, but rather coincidence only in many cases. This should not diminish the value of fabular realism but should in fact heighten it as it affords an opportunity to examine the Graeco-Roman mindset as regards animals and their importance to and place in those societies. Crows and ravens present an interesting case because they can be seen in nearly the same contexts as in antiquity. In this case, and in the case of a few other animals in fable, when modern realism and ancient coincide it may possibly be taken as a sign of either a cultural inheritance or a shared mindset and worldview.

The diagnosis of ancient realism is key, then. When approaching fables concerning crows and ravens the same procedure to find this element is requisite, namely what features of these birds characterize them as such and as different from any other bird or animal, and additionally, whether this quality or these qualities are purely found in fable or can be supported in genres without. Consequently fable tends to broadly define crows and ravens as beings demarcated by their intelligence and augural significance. And indeed fabular realism proved realistic in context, as the Greeks and Romans, by and large viewed ravens and crows as highly intelligent, that is highly clever and resourceful (attributes which defined the animal version of intelligence in antiquity). Of course this is not to say that fable is a realistic genre in all its particulars, but rather the way it portrays animals has to be founded, generally speaking and in the majority of cases, on acceptable and contextual ethological bases; aside from that it is a genre often marked by levity, the

fantastic, and the absurd–all usually in service of the moral (not necessarily moral in terms of morality but more societally beneficial) application.

As mentioned, our realism is different, and the best example of this may be seen in the field of augury. Augury was a realistic science among the Greeks and Romans and it should by now come as no surprise that it comprised an important part of the realistic depiction of certain birds such as the crow and raven. Thus, we see augury loom large in fable when birds are characters. However, it is not made part of the fantastic, nor in fact, derided at all, but shown to part of the realistic backdrop that creates the plausibility of fable, as societally and contextually real, common even. Interestingly in fable, the augural function of crows and ravens allows for their identification or allegorization with the contract-seer, charlatan or otherwise, adding a further level of realism.

However, there may still be some lingering questions concerning them. Why have the features which characterize crows and ravens in fable been selected as diagnostic, as well as those features chosen to characterize other fabular animals by extension? Further, why is this particular set of features advocated by the rhetoricians as definitively representing these animals' real ethology? A few answers may be hesitantly offered here. Take the fox, for example. The rhetoricians often claim that its character has to be crafty, criminal-minded, and intelligent (cunningly so), as well as (more positively) resourceful because this is how it really is in nature, as *everyone* knows. So this is the sum of the fox. Really? Everyone thought so? Of course, we find it easy, writing from the present day, from an urban and very different cultural, religious, political, and geographical standpoint, and from a generally safer context, to express doubt over the veracity of this

stereotypical picture. Context is key. Fables were written at a time when most people had a far greater connection to nature and animals, via agriculture, animal husbandry, transportation, sacrifice, and divination. Animals were also far more numerous. When we think of foxes today the idea of cleverness of course likely comes up; this is a holdover from antiquity. However, we might not immediately think of its harm to farm animals and poultry. Most of us are not thinking from a perspective of the economic value or destructiveness of a fox, whether it is good or bad for our business. Some farmers may have had greater curiosity about foxes, but most probably had their curiosity, if present, overridden by the image of them as economically destructive, and from their ever more "inventive" ways of stealing hens' eggs or the hens themselves. Richer Greeks and Romans could of course indulge their curiosity or activism and write more detailed accounts of a more "realistic" nature, Plutarch, for example.

This same attitude of utility, of benefit vs. harm to oneself and one's interests, goes for most other fabular animals, to greater and lesser degrees. Birds, generally, are in a somewhat different category, being somewhat ambiguous, as they often are neither harmful in any great degree nor beneficial (unless domesticated).[184] Or their theological connection may override the harm they do. If an eagle steals one of your roosters, Zeus may be showing you his favour, meaning your business will rise, just like the rooster. Or not. The way we experience crows (and ravens, if ever) today is vastly different than how the average person may have understood them in antiquity. Firstly, being devoured on the battlefield after one has fallen and thus failing to receive a proper burial and subsequently

[184] Although some species like starlings, jackdaws, and cranes (among others) were considered economically destructive to agriculture.

having a hundred year wait to look forward to on the bad side of the Styx would not immediately come to mind today. Obviously such an occurrence would be bad, horrible even, but would not likely be an occurrence that befell anyone nowadays. This is one fear that crows and ravens would immediately inspire in the far less secure environment of antiquity, from Homer to Romulus Augustulus. On a different note, ravens, to say nothing of crows (which are probably more prolific today) were much more frequent in antiquity, especially in urban contexts than at present (most people have never seen a raven, only crows; so greatly have their numbers decreased, they no longer are the city dwelling birds of Aristotle). Such ubiquity and numbers allowed for far greater observation and interaction than we experience today. The description that many persons might now offer, if asked to give a description of a raven or crow (if the difference was important or noted at all), would likely run: "the crow/raven is an eerie bird; it's loud; it eats garbage; it's loud; it's off-putting (somehow); it's black and funereal (somehow); oh, and it is ominous and mysterious (again, somehow)." That's it, largely. Ancient descriptions had far greater variation, and distinguished quite sharply, even in fable, between the two birds. This was likely for a few reasons, e.g.: 1) the frequency, longevity, permanence, and visibility of both birds in both rural and urban contexts; 2) both had augural functions (augury was a tool useful to man for ascertaining the will of the gods); 3) pet keeping (the ability of crows and ravens to imitate human speech made them popular pets (parrots were only for the rich and a relatively late importation to the Graeco-Roman world[185])). Other reasons

[185] For the sale and trade in birds among the Greeks and Romans, as well as information on the keeping of birds as pets (including corvids), see Dembeck, *Animals and Men* ([1st

could be adduced, but it is hopefully clear that ancient and modern perspectives produce different diagnostic features.

Now, however, some general remarks and further points of inquiry are more in order. Fable, since the rhetoricians, the fable pundits of antiquity, stressed that those attempting to compose a fable write in accordance with correct animal ethology, it is then perhaps a better compass for what realism implied in antiquity than Aristotle's seemingly more modernly realistic work. In sum when trying to determine what represents commonly held beliefs about animals, whether they be true or not by modern standards, no better source than fable can be found in ancient literature. More study, however, is required for other fabular animals to further substantiate this claim. It is ultimately difficult to distinguish what constituted "common" or "popular" belief (that is, the belief of the *demos*, the *vulgus*, the common man and majority of the populace from the belief of the "learned", "informed" and hence "right" man (who generally thought himself right either to himself alone or was deemed right by a small circle of friends). Sometimes this minority view turned out to be what we consider realistic today–take for instance much of the work of Aristotle, especially on animals. It goes beyond the scope of the present work to investigate the means of delineating the two. One avenue might be to document all instances where beliefs about animals are said to belong to the "crowd;" for example, consider Pliny's comment *NH* 8.17 *volgum credidisse*, and other like examples) and compare them with fabular treatment of animal behaviour. Where the 'vulgar' belief

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ed. in U.S.A.].). Garden City, N.Y., 1965, from an original German edition of 1961), 320-325.

matches the fable depiction we can "distinguish" a "stereotype".[186] Quotation marks are one's best asset when investigating topics like this.

Conversely, Pliny and others like him may not reflect the minority view on some topics. This method may also prove fruitful when we perform the opposite operation, looking for correspondences of fable ethology in Aristotle and other natural historians and scientists. Where the match is found this time, widespread, undisputed belief may be assumed, i.e. all believe the fox is sly (some can back this up with proofs of a scientific nature, others just recognize the "fact").

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[186] A similar operation might be carried out when certain beliefs about animals are derided as belonging to children and old women, and hence not to be believed by those "knowledgeable", like Pliny.

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