

## The Gift of Logos

### The *Life of Aesop* and Socrates' Poetic Initiation

While philosophy and storytelling are, at least at first sight, two very different pursuits, Socrates and Aesop, in the Greek tradition, share many traits. It took the disciplinary compartmentalisation of us moderns to ignore, for a long time, what seems now to be fairly obvious: with their uneasy combination of outer ugliness and inner wisdom, their tendency to question received values and their troubled biography, Socrates and Aesop are indeed kindred spirits, as ancient authors were ready to remark.<sup>1</sup> In the last few years, the similarity, especially as regards the traumatic outcome of their lives ending in a death sentence, has been attracting much scholarly attention in a number of areas, including Platonic studies, the rise of Greek prose, anthropology, history of religion, and ancient biography.<sup>2</sup> The aim of this paper is to explore a crucial, if neglected, common feature. As we shall see, both Socrates and Aesop belong to the Greek tradition of poetic initiations. This tradition goes back to the very beginning of Greek literature and works as a powerful tool to define genres. The combined study of how Socrates and Aesop fit into that tradition, then, provides an invaluable vantage point to explore the generic boundaries of Socratic dialogues and Aesopic fables. Aesop's initiation as described in the *Life* will prove crucially connected with a defining feature of Aesopic fables, namely the major role of *speaking* animals. Moreover, I will argue that the scene closely recalls a number of passages in Plato's dialogues, in which Socrates echoes the *Dichterweihe* tradition in terms of both poetic inspiration and conversion to writing. Combined together, the passages under examination from Plato and from the *Life* amount to a literary manifesto pointing to the canonisation of prose genres.

#### Poetic initiations

The seminal work of Diskin Clay on the cult of poets in ancient Greece has shed new light on the quintessentially Greek phenomenon of poetic heroism: qua friend of the Muses, the poet experiences a metamorphosis that turns him into a divine figure, enjoying renown and hero cults after his death.<sup>3</sup> Figures such as Hesiod, Epimenides and Archilochus are well-documented examples. They all enjoyed heroic cults, and there seems to be an obvious link between their special status and the experience of divine inspiration that turned them into men of wisdom. Interestingly, these stories may be found in the poems themselves, as is the case for Hesiod and his encounter with the Muses in the *Theogony*, or we may know them from external sources, the most famous case being the inscription from the *Archilocheion* of Paros. The earliest example is found in Hesiod's *Theogony*:

And one day the Muses taught Hesiod glorious song while he was shepherding his lambs under holy Helicon, and this word first the goddesses said to me [...]: «Shepherds of the wilderness, wretched things of shame, mere bellies, we know how to speak many false things as though they were true; but we know,

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<sup>1</sup> Liban. *Ap. Soc.*, 181, provides an especially explicit example. This and other sources are aptly discussed by Desclos 2000, 441-443.

<sup>2</sup> Kurke 2011 and Zafiroopoulos 2015 provide a recent orientation, with added bibliography. Cf. also Jedrkiewicz, 108-115.

<sup>3</sup> Clay 2004.

when we will, to utter true things». So said the ready-voiced daughters of great Zeus, and they plucked and gave me a rod, a shoot of sturdy laurel, a marvellous thing, and breathed into me a divine voice to celebrate things that shall be and things there were aforetime; and they bade me sing of the race of the blessed gods that are eternally, but ever to sing of themselves both first and last. But why all this about oak or rock? (Hesiod *Theogony* 22–35, trans. Finley).

Epimenides' initiation closely resembles Hesiod's. The relevant narrative emerges from a number of different and often late sources, though the core of the story is deemed to date back to the archaic or the classical age:<sup>4</sup>

Epimenides—when his father sent him to the countryside to fetch a sheep—made a detour about midday: he fell asleep in a cave, and slept for 57 years. When he woke up, he looked for the sheep, for he was certain he had had just a quick sleep [...] (Diogenes Laertius 1.109). He claimed he had met, in his dream, the gods ... Aletheia and Dike (Maximus of Tyros 10, II Hobein). Apparently, the goddesses made fun of him in a way that closely resembles that of Hesiod's Muses: "Cretans always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons" («Paul of Tarsus» *Letter to Titus* 1.12). Epimenides is eventually turned into a seer, endowed with «enthusiastic and telestic wisdom», which the Athenians put down to his being the son of a nymph (Plutarch *Life of Solon* 12.4).

The best known example, however, is the initiation of Archilochus. The story is recounted in the so-called Mnesiepes inscription, dating to the Hellenistic era.

They recount that Archilochos, when he was still a young man, was sent by his father Telesikles to the fields, to the district called the Meadows, to bring a heifer down for sale. He got up at night before sunrise, while the moon was still bright, to lead the heifer to the city. As he came to the place called Slippery Rocks, they say that he thought he saw a group of women. And, since he thought that they were leaving work for the city, he approached them and made fun of them. But they greeted him with good humor and laughter, and asked him if he intended to sell the cow he had in tow. When he answered that he did, they said that they would give him a good price. But, once they had said this, neither they nor the heifer could be seen, but lying before his feet he saw a lyre. He was dumb-founded and, after he had the time to regain his wits, he realized that the women who had appeared to him were the Muses ... ('Mnesiepes inscription' E<sub>1</sub> II 22–38, trans. Clay 2004, 109).<sup>5</sup>

The story, however, is surely earlier. Antonio Aloni has persuasively suggested that (part of) it was probably included in Archilochus' own poetry.<sup>6</sup> At any rate, the story is apparently depicted on a *pyxis* dating to ca 460-450 BCE,<sup>7</sup> as Clay has shown:

«The *pyxis* divides into two panels. In the first a cowherd and a draped female figure flank a cow, whose four legs are still just visible. The female figure framing this composition to the right holds a *plektron* and a strap in her hand. Turn the vase and the scene that next appears represents a poet seated on a *diphros* holding a lyre. He is flanked by two Muses. I say 'he', recognizing that this seated figure has universally been identified as a Muse. As I read the narrative, Archilochos is shown in the first panel as young cowherd: in the second he is shown holding the Muses' gift of a lyre, flanked by two Muses. To the right of this grouping are two more Muses. [...] The dividers of the two panels are a tree and the back of a standing Muse».

The three accounts share a recurrent pattern

#### 1. Man in the in countryside

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<sup>4</sup> For a good overall reconstruction of Epimenides' initiation, based on a number of various fragmentary sources, see Brillante 2004. For a sensible account of Epimenides' place in the epic tradition, see Arrighetti 2006, 109-118. The collection provided by Federico and Visconti 2001 offers a number of valuable insights on different aspects of this elusive figure.

<sup>5</sup> See Clay 2004, 109.

<sup>6</sup> Aloni 2011. On the historical context of Mnesiepes' peculiar inscription, cf. now the sensible discussion by Low 2016, 162-165, with further bibliography.

<sup>7</sup> Hesiod painter. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Inv. no. 98.887.

2. Noontime<sup>8</sup>
3. Livestock animal present
4. Tree and/or rock present<sup>9</sup>
5. Man meets gods
6. Gods make fun of man
7. Metamorphosis into man of wisdom symbolised by (disparition of) animal
8. Man loses control (absent in Hesiod)
9. Gods bestow a gift on man, e.g. inspiration

These features are not found simultaneously or explicitly in all cases, yet there can be no doubt that a common pattern is indeed at work. No less obviously, there are a number of differences. Far from being coincidental, however, these differences seem to be highly significant. For example, it is surely no coincidence that Hesiod receives a rod, as this is in fact a defining feature of rhapsodes. Similarly, Archilochus, unlike Hesiod and Epimenides, turns the tables against the Muses and mocks them in turn: this detail is specific to his story, and it is an easy guess that it reflects the iambic quality of his poetry. Finally, Epimenides' story resembles closely Hesiod's, but the Muses are replaced with Dike and Aletheia. This alludes no doubt to his status as a poet-seer, which distinguishes him from more 'mundane' poets. All of this suggests that initiations narratives amount to a powerful code: on the one hand, they signal the poet's belonging to the tradition of inspired poetry; on the other, they point at specific features that situate the poet within a more specific generic tradition. As such, they amount to a sort of implicit manifesto, one that is embedded in the poems themselves or in the biographic tradition. These narratives can be seen as a ramified tradition: while each narrative can be said to refer to an implicit, archetypal blueprint, a given narrative may feature specific allusions to earlier similar stories. Thus, Epimenides' initiation clearly points to Hesiod's, and the allusive mode, predictably, becomes more frequent in Hellenistic poetry: Posidippus, for example, explicitly mentions the initiation of Archilochus as a convenient background for his own, in a poem that discusses his friendship with the Muses and his potential status as a poet-hero.<sup>10</sup>

### Socrates' initiation in the *Phaedrus* and the rise of dialogue

Against this backdrop, it is especially interesting to see that nobody less than Plato resorts to the code when it comes to define the boundaries of a new poetic genre, namely

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<sup>8</sup> This is perhaps implicit in the cases of Hesiod and Archilochus. Cf. the discussion in Kambylis 1965. In light of *AP* 9.64 and of other parallels involving noon inspiration, he concludes that «dass diese Vorstellung auch in der Zeit des Hesiodos und besonders unter den Landleuten verbreitet war, ist nach den bereits angeführten Beispielen durchaus wahrscheinlich. Man wird sich heute noch umso leichter davon überzeugen lassen, wenn man einmal im Sommer diese geheimnisvolle und wirklich göttliche Stunde des Mittags im Süden erlebt hat» (60-61). Cf. also Sens 2011, 312, for more parallels related to noontime inspiration. Most scholars assume that Archilochus' encounter with the Muses takes place at night or very early in the morning, but the inscription is vague on the point and the *pyxis* certainly does not support a nocturnal setting. Brillante 1990 makes a strong case for noon as the implicit time of the encounter as recounted in the inscription. Two more examples are worth mentioning. In the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes*, the child god plays the first ever lyre at midday (17). Secondly, Pausanias tells the story of a shepherd who fell asleep by the tomb of Orpheus around midday and suddenly started singing Orpheus' poems while sleeping. (9.30). On the latter, see Grottanelli 1992:233.

<sup>9</sup> For Hesiod, cf. the mention of oak and rock at *Theog.* 35 ἀλλὰ τίη μοι ταῦτα περὶ δρῶν ἢ περὶ πέτρην; This is a notorious *crux* (cf. the thorough discussion of West 1966, *ad loc.*).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Posid. 118 AB with Capra 2014, 129-134.

the Socratic dialogue.<sup>11</sup> The initiation narrative can be recognised in the cicada myth found in the *Phaedrus* and binding together the first part of the dialogue, devoted to eros, and the second, which discusses rhetoric. Intriguingly, Socrates describes the story as something that no «friend of the Muses» should ignore.<sup>12</sup> Almost the whole passage reads as follows:

Σχολή μὲν δὴ, ὡς ἔοικε· καὶ ἅμα μοι δοκοῦσιν ὡς ἐν τῷ πνίγει ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς ἡμῶν οἱ τέττιγες ἄδοντες καὶ ἀλλήλοις διαλεγόμενοι καθορᾶν καὶ ἡμᾶς, εἰ οὖν ἴδοιεν καὶ νῶ καθάπερ τοὺς πολλοὺς ἐν μεσημβρία μὴ διαλεγόμενους ἀλλὰ νυστάζοντας καὶ κηλουμένους ὑφ' αὐτῶν δι' ἀργίαν τῆς διανοίας, δικαίως ἂν καταγελῶεν, ἡγούμενοι ἀνδράποδ' ἅττα σφίσιν ἐλθόντα εἰς τὸ καταγώγιον ὥσπερ προβάτια μεσημβριάζοντα περὶ τὴν κρήνην εὔδειν· ἐὰν δὲ ὀρῶσι διαλεγόμενους καὶ παραπλέοντάς σφας ὥσπερ Σειρήνας ἀκηλήτους, ὁ γέρας παρὰ θεῶν ἔχουσιν ἀνθρώποις διδόναι, τάχ' ἂν δοίεν ἀγασθέντες ... λέγεται δ' ὡς ποτ' ἦσαν οὗτοι ἀνθρώποι τῶν πρὶν Μούσας γεγονέναι, γενομένων δὲ Μουσῶν καὶ φανείσης ὥδης οὕτως ἄρα τινὲς τῶν τότε ἐξεπλάγησαν ὑφ' ἡδονῆς, ὥστε ἄδοντες ἠμέλησαν σίτων τε καὶ ποτῶν, καὶ ἔλαθον τελευτήσαντες αὐτούς· ἐξ ὧν τὸ τεττίγων γένος μετ' ἐκεῖνο φύεται, γέρας τοῦτο παρὰ Μουσῶν λαβόν, μηδὲν τροφῆς δεῖσθαι γενόμενον, ἀλλ' ἄσιτόν τε καὶ ἄποτον εὐθύς ἄδειν, ἕως ἂν τελευτήσῃ, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἐλθὼν παρὰ Μούσας ἀπαγγέλλειν τίς τίνα αὐτῶν τιμᾶ τῶν ἐνθάδε. Τερψιχόρα μὲν οὖν τοὺς ἐν τοῖς χοροῖς τετιμηκότας αὐτὴν ἀπαγγέλλοντες ποιοῦσι προσφιλεστέρους, τῇ δὲ Ἐρατοῖ τοὺς ἐν τοῖς ἐρωτικοῖς, καὶ ταῖς ἄλλαις οὕτως, κατὰ τὸ εἶδος ἐκάστης τιμῆς· τῇ δὲ πρεσβυτάτῃ Καλλιόπῃ καὶ τῇ μετ' αὐτὴν Οὐρανίᾳ τοὺς ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ διάγοντάς τε καὶ τιμῶντας τὴν ἐκείνων μουσικὴν ἀγγέλλουσιν, αἱ δὴ μάλιστα τῶν Μουσῶν περὶ τὸ οὐρανὸν καὶ λόγους οὔσαι θεῖους τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνους ἴασιν καλλίστην φωνήν. πολλῶν δὴ οὖν ἔνεκα λεκτέον τι καὶ οὐ καθευδητέον ἐν τῇ μεσημβρίᾳ.

We have plenty of time, it seems; and I think, too, that as the cicadas sing above our heads [i.e. on the plane-tree] in their usual fashion in the heat, and dialogue with each other, they look down on us too. So if they the saw two of us as well, just like most people at midday, not dialoguing but nodding off under their spell through lazy-mindedness, they would justly laugh at us, thinking that some slaves had come to their retreat and were having their midday sleep around the spring, like sheep; but if they see us dialoguing and sailing past them unbewitched by their Siren song, perhaps they may respect us and give us that gift which they have from the gods to give to men [...] The story is that these cicadas were once men, belonging to a time before the Muses were born, and that with the birth of the Muses and the appearance of song some of the men of the time they got carried away by pleasure, so much that in their singing they neglected to eat and drink, and failed to notice that they had died; from them the race of cicadas was afterwards born, with this gift from the Muses, that from their birth they have no need of sustenance, but immediately sing, without food or drink, until they die, and after that go and report to the Muses which among those here honors which of them. To Terpsichore they report those who have honored her in the choral dance, and make them dearer to her; to Erato, those who have honored her in the affairs of eros; and to the other Muses similarly, according to the form of honor belonging to each; but to Calliope, the eldest, and to Ourania who comes after her, they announce those who spend their time in philosophy and honor the music which belongs to them—who most of all the Muses have their sphere both the heavens and talk, both divine and human, and pour the most beautiful voice. So there are many reasons why we should say something, and not sleep in the midday heat. (258e–259d trans. Rowe modified)

The solar gift of the cicadas amounts to an ultimately *positive* paradigm: in the *Phaedrus*, then, cicadas stand for music *and* philosophy, in that they both sing *and* dialogue, and it is Socrates' wish that he and Phaedrus may receive the same *geras* the cicadas once received from the Muses (including Calliope and Ourania, who are explicitly credited with a philosophical nature).<sup>13</sup> What the cicadas receive from the

<sup>11</sup> Stories about Plato's poetic inspiration were common in antiquity, but are usually regarded as fanciful and late constructs. See e.g. Lefkowitz 2016.

<sup>12</sup> "It certainly isn't appropriate for a man who loves the Muses (φιλόμουσον ἄνδρα) not to have heard of things like this" (259b).

<sup>13</sup> This should be enough evidence to discourage readers from construing the cicadas as a negative paradigm, and it is worth mentioning that Hermias Alexandrinus had no hesitation in identifying them as divine creatures, whose metamorphosis and devotion to music he ascribes to their philosophical nature

Muses, only to pass it on to humans, is a ‘gift’ (Greek *geras*), the gift of the Muses. Within the Greek tradition, this term was used to signify poetic inspiration, or some material object that symbolized it: the gift of the Muses is, of course, the culminating moment of poetic initiation,<sup>14</sup> and it is from this perspective that I interpret the passage.<sup>15</sup>

We are in the middle of the dialogue, and Socrates and Phaedrus are talking under a plane-tree. They listen to the cicadas who sing and *dialogue* in the midday heat—a very unusual detail. Both of them (note the striking and exceptional form of the dual pronoun)<sup>16</sup> should do the same, because if they fail to do so and nod off like sheep, the cicadas, who are in fact the prophets of the Muses, will laugh at them. On the other hand, if they keep dialoguing, the cicadas will give them a divine gift. The cicadas were once men, but then the Muses were born, and the men got carried away by *mousikê*, to the point that they forgot to eat or drink, and died without even realizing it. The Muses were amazed and turned them into cicadas, who now spend their entire lives singing as prophets of the Muses. As such, they report to the Muses on the behaviour of men. Each Muse has her own followers: lovers follow *Erato*, choral dancers follow *Terpsichore*, and Calliope and Ourania preside over philosophers, since philosophy is the most beautiful kind of *mousikê*. Either concretely, potentially, or in an otherwise oblique form, the elements of traditional initiation scenes are all present in the cicada myth: 1. countryside; 2. noontime; 3. sheep; 4. plane-tree; 5. Muses; 6. mocking gods; 7. metamorphosis; 8. unhinged mind; 9 gift from the muses. It is also worth noting that cicadas are a prominent feature of Hesiod’s summer landscape in the *Works and Days*, and that in the *Theogony* Calliope’s gift takes the form of dew (ἑέρση),<sup>17</sup> which both poets and philosophers recognized as the sole, distinctive nourishment of cicadas.<sup>18</sup> An element of *frugality* too seems to be essential: Hesiod is turned into an inspired poet when he ceases to be a ‘mere belly’,<sup>19</sup> and singing cicadas were traditionally (and favourably) contrasted with gluttonous asses.<sup>20</sup> As for Archilochus, it is worth mentioning that he explicitly identified himself with a cicada, and was eventually associated with a hero named Tettix (Cicada).<sup>21</sup>

Plato’s myth follows the traditional template while also echoing specific texts. As mentioned above, the initiation code can be used to highlight specific features, and this is arguably the case here. Most importantly, the song of the cicadas is referred to as *dialogue*. Nor is this initiation that of a poet wandering in the countryside all by

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(cf. ρη’ ad 259b). Among modern critics, however, ‘negative’ interpretations seem to be predominant, with a bias that I discuss in Capra 2014, 106-109, with bibliography.

<sup>14</sup> For the equation gift of the Muses = poetic inspiration, cf. e.g. Aloni 2011.

<sup>15</sup> That γέρας refers to inspiration is made quite clear from its further use at 262d, when Socrates refers back to his inspired palinode and attributes its efficacy to the inspiration provided by the local gods and by the cicadas.

<sup>16</sup> In classical prose, νό, a poetic form, is found only in the *Phaedrus* (in the cicada myth and at 278b) and in the *Greater Alcibiades* (124d).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Hes. *Theog.* 79-84.

<sup>18</sup> Poets: Hes. *Scut.* 393-397; Call. *Ait.* 1.29-34; *Anacreontea* 34. Philosophers: Aristot. *Hist. An.* 532b10-13. For further details and parallels, cf. Borthwick 1966, 103-104 and 107-108.

<sup>19</sup> For the importance of this connection, see Nagy 2009. Haubold 2010 interprets the episode as the first stage of a «narrative of cultural and intellectual progress» (11) which spans the three major works of the Hesiodic corpus.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. e.g. Aesop 195 Hausr., Call. *Ait.* 29-33, with the useful discussion provided by Lelli 2001.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Arch. 223 W. and see Petropoulos 1994, ch. 5, who provides illuminating parallels with modern Greek folklore. As for Tettix, cf. Suda s.v. Archilochus. Cf. the useful discussions of Clay 2004, 25-26, and Cunha Corrêa 2010, 200-209. The Roman Phaedrus, too, implicitly identifies with a cicada (cf. 3.16 with Lelli 2001, 247).

himself, as is the case in the other stories. This initiation involves *two* dialoguing friends. Hesiod had singled out one Muse, namely Calliope, with her etymologizing ‘beautiful voice’. On the other hand, Plato, who likewise implicitly etymologizes the Muses’ names, appropriates the motif in a particularly significant manner. Not only do the Muses favour philosophers, as opposed to Hesiod’s princes, but Plato singles out *two* Muses, namely Calliope and Ourania. Thus, Calliope and Ourania stand for a new, superior form of dialogic poetry. Put in a nutshell, the four Muses of the myth embody the old-yet-new inspiration of Plato’s dialogues, both in their mythical components—such as myths, allegories, fairy-tales—and in their dialectical, argumentative character.

### Aesop’s initiation and the speaking animals

The background of initiation narratives, complete with Plato’s original reworking of it, is of direct relevance to Aesop’s life. This is not the place for a discussion of the complex textual tradition of this romance. Suffice it to say that the story, in its broad outline, was well known by Plato’s time, but the text we can read is the result of a reworking, with a number of later additions, that dates to the imperial age.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, there are two competing branches in the manuscript tradition, with two significantly different versions of the story.<sup>23</sup> One (G) is represented by just one manuscript, and one of its defining features is the presence of the Muses, who are mentioned several times and, as we shall see, initiate Aesop to human speech. The other one (W) survives in a more ramified tradition, represented by several manuscripts. Which of the two is earlier, and hence closer to the story known in classical times, is a matter of dispute, with a few scholars favouring the latter and others, more numerous, favouring the former.<sup>24</sup> While there is evidence that G and W sometimes draw from one and the same source, an ‘archetype’ dating to the classical age, whether written or oral, seems to be out of the question: this is an open and fluid tradition, one that reflects oral and popular storytelling and takes the form of a series of competing versions that cannot be fully reconciled.<sup>25</sup>

Version G of the romance begins with a description of Aesop’s ugliness: the slave is repellent and dumb, which is why his master keeps him away from town and uses him to work the land. His dumbness results in the story’s first episode: his fellows slaves devour the master’s figs and then put the blame on him on the assumption that he will not be able to speak in his defence. However, Aesop comes up with the first of a long series of tricks and manages to unmask his persecutors and have them punished. He then sees a lady wearing the raiment of a goddess and, being a pious man, he helps her find her way and shares his frugal meal. The lady is in fact a priestess of Isis, who

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. e.g. the introduction in Ferrari 1997.

<sup>23</sup> A third, Byzantine version of the *Life of Aesop*, which is irrelevant for the ancient development of the story, is thoroughly discussed in Karla 2001.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Ferrari 1997, Luzzatto 2003, Schirru 2009 (favouring the latter) and e.g. Perry 1952, La Penna 1962, Jedrkiewicz 1989, Konstantakos 2013b, 122-123, Kurke 2011, 162 (favouring the former). The essays collected in Holzberg 1992 amount to a defence of G as a carefully conceived piece of literature.

<sup>25</sup> «When we move into the world of folklore and romance, the controlled transmission which normally operates in the case of ancient texts gives way to a profusion of protean forms» (Reynolds and Wilson 1991, 236). In the case of the *Life of Aesop*, this is confirmed by the papyrological record. Cf. Giannattasio 2007. Jedrkiewicz plausibly concludes that «W è in massima parte una rielaborazione ‘dotta’ di G, ma le due version derivano in alcuni casi parallelamente da un archetipo comune, cui W sembra a volte più vicino di G (34-35).

prays the goddess to reward Aesop appropriately and grant him the power of speech. What follows is an initiation narrative, complete with the intervention of the Muses:<sup>26</sup>

ὁ δὲ Αἴσωπος, σφοδρῶ καύματος ὄντος, εἶπεν πρὸς ἑαυτόν· “δύο ὥρας ἔχω ἀπὸ τοῦ προστάτου εἰς ἀνάπαυσιν· κοιμηθήσομαι τὰς τοῦ καύματος ταύτας.” ἐπιλεξάμενος δὲ τινα τόπον τοῦ κτήματος εὐθαλέστερον καὶ ἀπαρενόητον, δεινῶδη καὶ κατάσκιον, εἰς ὃν γλοερᾶς βοτάνης παμποίκιον ἄθος ἐπιῤῥξανεν καὶ διὰ τὴν παρακειμένην ὕλην καὶ λιβάδα τὸν τόπον καθέλισσεν, <Αἴσωπος>ος ταῖς βοτάναις προσκλίνας καὶ τῇ γηπόνῳ προσβαλὼν δικέλλα τὸν μάνδικα καὶ τὴν μηλωτὴν πρὸς κεφαλὴν θέμενος, ἀνεπαύετο ἔνθα <ἐκ> τῶν περὶ δένδρων ὁ ποταμὸς ἤχει. μαλακοῦ πνεύματος ὄντος [ἀνέμου] Ζεφύρου γλοερὰ τιναχθέντα φυτὰ κατέπνεεν αὐραν[τὴν περὶ φυτῶν τῶν ἄνθεων ὕλην] ἠδέαν καὶ προσηνῆ [προσέφερον], καὶ πολὺς ἐπὶ κλάδοις ἕτερετίζε το τέτιξ καὶ ποικίλων ὀρνέων [καὶ] πολύθρουν ἤχει τὸ θρύλλημα. ὅπου μὲν γάρ ἦν καὶ πολύθρηνος ἀηδὼν, συνεπῆδον ἐλαίαις ἐμπαθούμενοι κλάδοι, ἐπὶ δὲ λεπτοτάτης πίτυος ὀρμὴ ἠεροπέτης ἀπεδίδου μίμημα κοσσύφου· καὶ μιγνυμένη συνῳδὸς ἢ φωνόμιμος ἅμα πᾶσι κατέκραζεν ἠγῶ, αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ κεκραμένον ἐξ ἀπάντων εὐμελὲς ψιθύρισμα. ἐφ’ ὧν ψυχαγωγούμενος ὁ Αἴσωπος εἰς ἠδὺν ὕπνου κατήγετο. ἐνταῦθα δὴ ἡ θεὸς, ἡ κυρία Ἴσις, παραγίνεται ἅμα ταῖς ἑννέα Μούσαις, εἶτα ἔφη· “ὄρατε, θυγατέρες, εὐσεβείας κατακάλυμμα, τὸν ἄνθρωπον τοῦτον, πεπλασμένον μὲν ἀμόρφως, νικῶντα δὲ ἴεις ἀμορφίαν ἅπαντα νόγον· οὗτός ποτε τὴν ἐμὴν διάκονον πεπλανημένην ὠδήγησεν, πάρεμι δὲ σὺν ὑμῖν ἀνταμείψασθαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον. ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν τὴν φωνὴν ἀποκαθίστημι, ὑμεῖς δὲ τῇ φωνῇ τὸν ἄριστον χάρισσασθε λόγον.” εἰποῦσα δὲ ταῦτα καὶ τὸ τραχὺ τῆς γλώττης ἀποτεμοῦσα τὸ κωλύον αὐτὸν λαλεῖν, αὐτὴ δὴ ἡ Ἴσις ἐχαρίσατο <τὴν φωνὴν> [τὸν λόγον καὶ Ἑλλήνα λόγων μυθικῶν εὐρέσεις], ἔπεισεν δὲ καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς Μούσας ἐκάστην τι τῆς ἰδίας δωρεᾶς χάρισσασθαι. αἱ δὲ ἐχαρίσαντο λόγων εὐρεμα καὶ μύθων Ἑλληνικῶν πλοκὴν καὶ ποιήσεις. Κατευξαμένη δὲ ἡ θεὸς ὅπως ἔνδοξος γένηται, εἰς ἑαυτὴν ἐχώρησεν. καὶ αἱ Μούσαις δέ, ἐκάστη τὸ ἴδιον χαρισάμεναι, εἰς τὸ Ἑλικῶνος<sup>27</sup> ἀνέβησαν ὄρος. ὁ δὲ Αἴσωπος αὐτὸ τὸ ταχθὲν ὑπὸ τῆς φύσεως ὑπνώσας διεγέρθη καὶ φησιν· “οὐα, ἠδέως ὕπνωσα· λαλῶ ἀκωλύτως καὶ τὰ βλεπόμενα ὀνομάζων· δίκηλλα, πήρα, μηλωτὴ, μάνδικε, βοῦς, ὄνος, πρόβατον. λαλῶ, μὰ τὰς Μούσας, πόθεν ἔλαβον τὸ λαλεῖν; πόθεν; νενόηκα· πάντως ἀνθ’ ὧν εὐσέβησα εἰς τὴν ἱεροφόρον τῆς Ἰσιδος. ὥστε καλὸν ἐστὶν εὐσεβεῖν. προσδέχομαι οὖν ἀπὸ θεῶν λήψεσθαι χρυστὰς ἐλπίδας.”

It was very hot, and Aesop said to himself, ‘The overseer allows me two hours for rest. I’ll sleep these hours while it’s hot.’ He picked out a spot on the farm that was green and peaceful, a wooded, shady place where all kinds of flowers bloomed amid the green grass and where a little stream wandered among the neighboring trees. There Aesop threw his mattock on the ground, lay down on the grass and, putting his napkin and his sheepskin under his head, went to sleep. The stream whispered and, as a gentle zephyr blew, the leaves of the trees around about were stirred and exhaled a sweet and soothing breath. There was much humming of cicadas from the branches, and the song of birds of many kinds and many haunts was to be heard. There the nightingale prolonged her plaintive song, and the branches of the olive murmured musically in a sympathetic refrain. On the slenderest branch of a pine-tree the stirring of the breeze mocked the blackbird’s call. And mingling with it all in harmony. Echo, the imitator of voices, uttered her answering cries. The combined sound of all these was soothing to hear and Aesop, lulled by it, drifted off into a pleasant slumber. Thereupon the goddess, our lady Isis, appeared along with the nine Muses and said, ‘My daughters, you see here a man who may be ill-favored in appearance but who rises above all criticism in his piety. It was he who guided my servant on her way when she was lost, and I am here with you to recompense him. I restore his voice, and do you bestow upon his voice most excellent speech.’ So saying, Isis herself removed from his tongue the impediment which prevented his speaking and persuaded the Muses as well to confer on him each something of her own endowment. They conferred on him the power to devise stories and the ability to conceive and elaborate tales in Greek. With a prayer that he might achieve fame the goddess went her way, and the Muses, when each had conferred her own gift, ascended to Mount Helicon. When Aesop had his sleep out, he awoke and said, ‘Ah! I’ve had a pleasant nap.’ And naming things he saw — mattock, pouch, sheepskin, napkin, ox, ass, sheep — he said, ‘By the Muses! I speak! Where have I gotten the power of speech? Where? Surely it is in return for my piety toward the priestess of Isis, and piety is a good thing. I look, then, to realize good hopes from the gods.’

A few decades ago, Cristiano Grottanelli rightly recognised that this story fully belongs into the tradition of poetic initiations and put forth a comparison with the stories of

<sup>26</sup> Unless otherwise stated, I reproduce the text established by Ferrari 1997. Translations are taken from Hansen 1998. Version W has an abridged account, with no Muses and with Tyche replacing Isis.

<sup>27</sup> I reproduce here the text established by Papatomopoulos 2010 and defended by Konstantakos 2013b (Ferrari has Ἑλικῶνα).

Hesiod, Archilochus and Epimenides.<sup>28</sup> His conclusion is that Aesop's initiation represents a Hellenistic and somewhat softened version of the ancient pattern, with Isis standing for a more recent and more popular divinity. I would like to add two points to his useful reading of the story.

To begin with, just as I mentioned in the case of Plato's *Phaedrus*, Aesop's initiation corresponds point by point to the traditional pattern. Either concretely, potentially, or in an otherwise oblique form, the elements of traditional initiation scenes are all present: 1. countryside; 2. noontime; 3. sheep; 4. trees; 5. Muses; 6. (non)-mocking gods; 7. metamorphosis; 8. unhinged mind; 9. gift(s) from the muses. It is also worth noting that cicadas are a prominent feature, just as in Hesiod, Archilochus and Plato. An element of *frugality* is also essential, both in the simple meal Aesop offers to the priestess and in the way he is contrasted with his fellow servants, whose gluttonous attitude is unmasked and punished. A second point that is worth stressing is the variations. To begin with, Aesop is so pious as to be above criticism, so that the goddesses' mocking, quite understandably, is mentioned only to be denied, as Aesop is «above criticism», which makes sense: unlike Hesiod's shepherds, he is not a «mere belly», as he has not eaten the figs. Moreover, Aesop's initiation is marked by variety. Instead of *one* tree, we hear of a variety, including a pine and an olive-tree. This foreshadows the emphasis on the comprehensiveness of the initiation: *each* of the nine Muses bestows a *distinct* gift to Aesop. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, item 9, that is the Muses' gift, results in an intriguing reversal. While in the other stories the goddesses *bestow* a concrete gift to the mortal, in Aesop's case Isis *removes* a concrete impediment from his mouth, thus restoring his ability to speak. Before receiving the additional gifts of the Muses, Aesop needs to be restored to normality.<sup>29</sup>

As we have seen, initiation scenes work as a powerful meta-poetic code. Let me leave aside for a moment the thorny problem of dating the *Life of Aesop* and ask a question from a synchronic perspective: what do these variations tell us about the Aesopic genre, including both the fables and the *Life*? To begin with, Aesop's irrefragable piety must be connected with his clash with Apollo, which in version G leads to his death in Delphi. Aesop's fables are highly moralising and potentially subversive stories: this uneasy combination might lie at the heart of Aesop's (im)piety. Secondly, the all-encompassing variety of the Muses' gifts may point to the fable as a novel genre inheriting and mingling the features of all pre-existing poetic genres: this is exactly how Kurke reads Aesop in connection with what she calls «the invention of Greek prose». Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Aesop acquires the faculty of speech that is the distinctive quality of humans as opposed to animals. This is hardly a coincidence, if we think that a defining feature of Aesop's fables is the ubiquitous

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<sup>28</sup> Grottanelli 1992. More recently John Dillery has made a similar point «What we may have, then, in the story of Aesop's waking is a scene of initiation. Sleep, followed by waking is a common metaphor for initiation into a 'new' life; Aesop's life is 'new' because he has been fundamentally transformed, from being mute to being endowed not just with speech, but the artful use of speech. Insofar as Aesop becomes not just a speaker but a skilled manipulator of words and stories, Aesop's initiation parallels the long-standing Greek notion that poets had to be initiated into their craft of storytelling: indeed recall that Isis persuades each of the Muses to grant Aesop the invention of words, the weaving of Greek *muthoi* and *poieseis* ... This phrase aligns Aesop's new skill with the craft of poetry» (Dillery 1999, 279). Mignogna 1992 opts for an intertextual approach, pointing to Hesiodic and Callimachean echoes in the episode.

<sup>29</sup> Another exceptional feature is that Aesop's initiation is a 'non-theophany', as S. Jedrkiewicz puts it: «Aesop goes to sleep, and has no dreams: he experiences no incubation. The theophany is only for the reader, who learns that Isis physically removes the impediment blocking Aesop's tongue» (Jedrkiewicz 2009, 177).

presence of *speaking* animals, and speaking animals, as is clear as early as Achilles' horses in *Iliad*, whose voice is impeded by the Erinys, are such insofar as the gods remove an impediment.<sup>30</sup> In other words, Aesop's acquisition of speech reflects that of his characters and points to the fable as a poetic genre.<sup>31</sup>

### Socrates and Aesop: poetry and writing

A synchronic perspective is perhaps a necessary shortcut given the inextricable complexity of the tradition behind the *Life of Aesop*. As it stands, the text of G, when it comes to the initiation scene, seems to be reminiscent of the *Phaedrus*, and can be construed as one of the countless imitations of Plato's celebrated *locus amoenus*. However, in the words of Martin West, «in the latter part of the fifth century something like coherent Aesop legend appears».<sup>32</sup> In fact, a number of episodes recounted in the *Life of Aesop* were known well before Plato, either orally or perhaps – as West and other scholars have maintained – in a book of sorts.<sup>33</sup> As a consequence, it is equally possible that an early version of the scene was already established before the 5<sup>th</sup> Century: such a version may have worked as a model for Plato's *Phaedrus*, which in turn affected the ever-changing tradition of such a volatile and open text as the *Life of Aesop*. The stemmatic approach of textual criticism, however sensitive to perturbing phenomena such as *contaminatio*, is of little help with the *Life*.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps a 'stemmatics of contents' would be required, that is a systematic comparison between narrative chunks in an attempt to determine which of them bear the signs of earlier cultural traits.<sup>35</sup> In the case of the initiation scene, one may venture to say that the initiation pattern points to an early date, all the more so because the relevant scene, while superficially (and probably indirectly) influenced by the *Phaedrus*, is in fact quite different and therefore independent from it in its general outline, and can hardly be the result of literary imitation.<sup>36</sup> An early core, then, seems to coexist with later additions and modifications, such as the presence of Isis – who might have replaced Mnemosyne as the mother of the Muses.<sup>37</sup> If that is the case, the initiation of Socrates in the

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<sup>30</sup> 19.418.

<sup>31</sup> This is not to deny the motif is not relevant to the *Life* from a narrative and structural perspective, a point made by a number of scholars: cf. e.g. Ferrari 1997 and Dillery 1999. Animal speech must have been a prominent feature of Aesop's life as early as the fifth century, as is suggested by the famous Attic kylix in which he is shown conversing with a hare (cf. e.g. Jedrkiewicz 1989, 56-57).

<sup>32</sup> West 1984, 119.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. e.g. Holzberg 2001 and Giannattasio 2005, providing general orientation with added bibliography. Cf. also Jedrkiewicz 1989, 24-25, for a very clear summary of the question.

<sup>34</sup> The introduction to Jouanno 2006 provides bibliographical references.

<sup>35</sup> A similar approach is in fact recognisable in the work of scholars such as Konstantakos (2013a) and Robertson (2003). The latter, for example, notes that «the Aesopeion and the reputed shrine of the Muses imply a fairly early tradition, similar to what we hear about Archilochus and to what Hesiod says about himself. The *Archilocheion* and the *Theogony* further indicate the sort of gift that Archilochus and Hesiod received from the Muses. The Aesop tradition must have done so too» (155).

<sup>36</sup> La Penna 1962, 265, aptly notes that «Opporre il linguaggio popolare e un po' prolisso di G al linguaggio epurato e più sobrio di W è grosso modo giusto, anche se qualche riserva va fatta, sia perché in G affiora una tendenza maldestra ad un certo preziosismo letterario (il caso più vistoso è il pezzo d'a sofistica nuova del cap. 6, la descrizione idilliaca e leziosa del prato in cui Esopo si addormenta nell'ora di più violenta calura), come tante volte avviene nella letteratura popolare, che subisce il fascino di quella dotta».

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Robertson 2003: «Isis has nothing more to do in the story, except that Aesop once swears 'by Isis' (§15). The Muses however are kept before us in many offhand mentions, mostly in the oath 'by the Muses', up to the end of Aesop's career at Samos, when he commemorates his success with a shrine of the Muses and Mnemosyne (§ 100). His success at Babylon is similarly commemorated with statues of

*Phaedrus*, like so many other features found in the dialogues, may be the result of Plato's decision to model his Socrates after Aesop, all the more so because the cicada myth can be easily compared to Aesop's fables.<sup>38</sup>

The above scenario is of course highly speculative, but I think it may be interesting to explore the implications. Let us imagine that an early version of the story, featuring the initiation of Aesop, was indeed known to Plato, who was surely familiar with the fables themselves.<sup>39</sup> This story included all the religious elements that are conspicuously absent from the W version of the story, namely Aesop's cult of the Muses and his rivalry with Apollo, which results in his death at Delphi. Very briefly, I would like to conclude by suggesting that Socrates' conversion to poetry in the *Phaedo* may be ultimately modelled on an early version of the *Life of Aesop*. The initiation of Socrates in the *Phaedrus* remains potential: Socrates and Phaedrus, we are told, will receive the gift of the cicadas-Muses only if they fight back sleep and are willing to dialogue untiringly in the midday heat.<sup>40</sup> Of course they do so, which means that they are on the right path. But Socrates' eventual metamorphosis into a poet does not take place in the *Phaedrus*. Rather, it is in the *Phaedo* that *potency* comes close to becoming *act*, and this crucial development is crucially and explicitly linked with Aesop. Almost at the beginning of the dialogue, once Xanthippe is taken away and the chains removed, Socrates bends down and rubs his legs with a mixed feeling of pleasure and pain. He remarks that the two feelings, however different, are interrelated. Aesop, Socrates claims, «would have made a myth (μῦθον ἄν συνθεῖναι) about God trying to reconcile their strife, and how, when he could not, he fastened their heads together; and this is the reason why when one comes the other follows» (60c).<sup>41</sup> A few lines further, we hear that Socrates, while in prison, has tried his hand at poetry: not only has he composed a hymn to Apollo, but he has reworked Aesop's *muthoi* because, as he points out, *muthos* is a *conditio sine qua non* for poetry. Socrates, then, had in his hands some kind of Aesopic book, and there is no shortage of scholarly speculation about its possible contents, which may have included an early version of the *Life*.<sup>42</sup> His reason for doing that is a divine dream, presumably inspired by Apollo, urging him to compose *mousike*.

Socrates' conversion to poetry and composition under the auspices of Apollo, then, is closely connected with Aesop. It is also important to remember that Plato's academy hosted a statue of Socrates in the precinct of the Muses, which has been interpreted as a hero-cult to the master who had called Apollo as a witness in the trial that resulted in his death sentence. The portrait had silenic features, and scholars rightly point to the literary portrait found in the *Symposium*, where Socrates is compared to

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himself and the Muses (§ 123). At Delphi, during his final ordeal, he takes refuge at the sanctuary of the Muses (§ 134, cf. 139), and they are mentioned twice more (§§ 127, 142). We might suppose that the Muses are independent of Isis, that they came into the story before she did» (248). Cf. also Jedrkiewicz 1989, 88-91.

<sup>38</sup> E.g. Aesop 195 Hausr. Intriguingly, fable 57 Chambry ('Men and Zeus') focuses precisely on speech as the specific gift bestowed upon humans by Zeus (on this fable, cf. Desclos 1998). On the cicada myth as a fable, cf. Jedrkiewicz 1987, 57-58.

<sup>39</sup> Besides the mention in the *Phaedo*, Aesop is famously referred to in *Alc. Maj.* 123a drawing from the 'Fox and the Lion'. Cf. Desclos 1997. Early references to Aesop's fables are discussed e.g. by Jedrkiewicz 1987 and 1989.

<sup>40</sup> 259b.

<sup>41</sup> McPherran 2012 tries to imagine which of Aesop's extant fables might have inspired Socrates' versifying, as mentioned immediately afterwards. Betegh 2009 notes that the tale shares a number of structural features with other fables found in the dialogues, such as Aristophanes' in the *Symposium* and the myth of origins recounted in the *Protagoras*. By presenting the gods as «rational and benevolent agents» (91) these tales, according to Betegh, meet Plato's conditions for ethical narratives.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. e.g. Luzzatto 1996.

Silenus and to Marsyas, whose myth – he is killed as a result of a vote – resonates ominously with Socrates' own.<sup>43</sup> With that in mind, let us review Aesop's encounter with Croesus. Aesop tells the king a story set in the time «when animals talked the same language as men», and the king is so pleased that he grants Aesop his life and any wish he may have. Aesop asks the king to make peace with the Samians, and the king fulfils his wish:

ὁ δὲ προσπεσὼν αὐτῷ ἠγαθήσει. Αἰσωπὸς οὖν αὐτῷ συγγραψάμενος τοὺς ἰδίους λόγους καὶ μύθους, τοὺς ἄχρι καὶ νῦν ὀνομαζομένους, κατέλιπεν εἰς τὴν βιβλιοθήκην καὶ λαβὼν παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως ἐπιστολὰς [ἐγένετο πάλιν] πρὸς τοὺς Σαμίους, ἔνθα ὠμολόγει κατηλλάχθαι αὐτοῖς ἕνεκεν τοῦ Αἰσώπου, πολλὰ δὲ δῶρα κομισάμενος, ἔπλευσεν εἰς Σάμον. καὶ ἐκκλησίαν συστησάμενος ἀνέγνω τὰς ἐπιστολὰς τοῦ βασιλέως. οἱ δὲ Σάμιοι γνόντες αὐτοῖς τὸν Κροῖσον δηλλάχθαι διὰ τοῦ Αἰσώπου τιμὰς αὐτῷ ἐψηφίσαντο, καὶ ἐκάλεσαν τὸν τόπον ἐκεῖνον Αἰσώπειον, ὅπου ἦν ἐνηλλαγμένος. ὁ δὲ Αἰσωπὸς θύσας ταῖς Μούσαις ἱερὸν κατεσκεύασεν στήσας μέσον αὐτῶν ἑαυτοῦ μνημόσυνον, οὐκ Ἀπόλλωνος. ὁ Ἀπόλλων ὠργίσθη αὐτῷ ὡς τῷ Μαρσύᾳ.

Aesop fell at his feet and thanked him. Then he wrote down the stories and fables that go by his name even now and deposited them in the library. When he had gotten from the king a letter wherein he agreed to make peace with the Samians for the sake of Aesop, he sailed for Samos, taking many gifts with him. He called an assembly and read the king's letter. The Samians, recognizing that Croesus had made peace with them for the sake of Aesop, voted honors for him and named the place where he had been turned over the Aesopeum. As for Aesop, he sacrificed to the Muses and then built a shrine to them, erecting in their midst a statue of Mnemosyne and not of Apollo. Thereupon, Apollo became angry with him as he had once been with Marsyas (100)

The comparison with Marsyas, as more generally his conflict with Apollo, is arguably an early element of the *Life*.<sup>44</sup> Like Aesop, Socrates is described as a new Marsyas, and both figures suddenly convert to writing, which in turn is the ultimate result of a poetic initiation experienced by both.<sup>45</sup> A crucial difference, however, is the relationship they entertain with Apollo.<sup>46</sup> Nowhere is this as clear as at the very end of the *Life*:

Αἰσωπὸς καταρασάμενος αὐτοὺς καὶ τὸν προστάτην τῶν Μουσῶν μάρτυρα προσκαλούμενος ὅπως ἐπακούσῃ αὐτοῦ ἀδίκως ἀπολλυμένου, ἔρριψεν ἑαυτὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ κρημοῦ κάτω καὶ οὕτω τὸν βίον μετήλλαξεν.

Aesop cursed them [i.e. the Delphians], called on the leader of the Muses to witness that his death was unjust and threw himself over the cliff. And so he ended his life (142).

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<sup>43</sup> Cf., most recently, Catoni-Giuliani 2017 and Capra 2017, with bibliography.

<sup>44</sup> «Indeed, the anti-Apollonian tendency may have formed part of older traditions about Aesop. It is interesting that Aesop (called a Thracian in the earliest Greek sources) starts being presented as a Phrygian from the Hellenistic period onwards; it has been conjectured that the Phrygian origins were invented or emphatically highlighted for the first time by Demetrius of Phaleron in his work on Aesopic fables, probably because of Aesop's similarities to the Phrygian Marsyas, the notorious enemy of Apollo. If so, the conflict of Aesop with Apollo must have existed in legend from much earlier than the *Vita*: either it was one of the characteristics which brought about Aesop's correlation to the figure of Marsyas, or else it was trans-ferred to Aesop from Marsyas after their association, just like the Phrygian origins» (Konstantakos 2009, 122-123).

<sup>45</sup> Socrates' discussion of Aesop's fables in *Phaedo*, in fact, points to an ambiguous status involving both writing and oral improvisation. Cf. Jedrkiewicz 2013.

<sup>46</sup> Aesop, who enjoyed a Delphic cult, founded upon what may be described as a ritual antagonism with Apollo (The clearest testimony is P.Oxy. 1800.fr. 2 ii 32-63 = Aesop *Testimonia* 25 Perry). Historically, this antagonism took the form of a polarity between high and low discourse (see Nagy 2011, with added bibliography (including references to Nagy's own previous work and to Kurke 2011, who articulates the polarity between Apollo and Aesop in ways that significantly differ from Nagy's).

Like Aesop, Socrates famously calls Apollo to witness during his trial.<sup>47</sup> Unlike him, however, he enjoys the protection of the god and he does not curse his accusers, nor does he try to escape his death sentence.

Needless to say, the present paper has only scraped the surface of this fascinating analogy-cum-antithesis: a much more comprehensive study would be in order. However, I hope it is not too far-fetched to say that Plato's Socrates, in many ways, is a new Aesop whose divine inspiration, against the foil provided by Aesop, is Apollonian in character. Similarly, in version W Apollo's conflict with Aesop «was presumably suppressed for religious reasons, by a redactor who was embarrassed by Aesop's apparent impiety towards the god».<sup>48</sup> Plato's 'purification' of Aesop, then, foreshadows the complex story of the romance and the evolution of its main character.

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<sup>47</sup> *Apol.* 20e τῆς γὰρ ἐμῆς, εἰ δὴ τις ἐστὶν σοφία καὶ οἶα, μάρτυρα ὑμῖν παρέξομαι τὸν θεὸν τὸν ἐν Δελφοῖς.

<sup>48</sup> Konstantakos 2009, 122.

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