

Swarthmore College

## Works

---

Classics Faculty Works

Classics

---

2019

### Reading The Aesopic Corpus: Slavery, Freedom, And Storytelling In The *Life Of Aesop*

Jeremy B. Lefkowitz

*Swarthmore College*, [jlefkow1@swarthmore.edu](mailto:jlefkow1@swarthmore.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-classics>



Part of the [Classics Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Jeremy B. Lefkowitz. (2019). "Reading The Aesopic Corpus: Slavery, Freedom, And Storytelling In The *Life Of Aesop*". *Slaves And Masters In The Ancient Novel*. 233-257.

<https://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-classics/84>

This work is brought to you for free by Swarthmore College Libraries' Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Classics Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Works. For more information, please contact [myworks@swarthmore.edu](mailto:myworks@swarthmore.edu).

# Reading the Aesopic Corpus: Slavery, Freedom, and Storytelling in the *Life of Aesop*

JEREMY B. LEFKOWITZ  
Swarthmore College

## 1. Introduction

About two-thirds of the way through the G recension of the *Life of Aesop*,<sup>1</sup> just after Aesop has gained his freedom and negotiated a peace agreement between Samos and King Croesus of Lydia, there is a curious passage in which we are told that the legendary fabulist ‘wrote down (συγγραψάμενος) the stories and fables that go by his name even now and deposited them in the library (κατέλιπεν εἰς τὴν βιβλιοθήκην)’ (*Vita G* 100).<sup>2</sup> The image of Aesop writing down his fables in Lydia may be the stuff of fiction, but in broaching the seemingly incongruous idea of Aesopic authorship, it also draws attention to the reality that Aesop’s fables were encountered in antiquity not only as an oral tradition but also as a written body of literature. Of course, ancient readers of the *Life* would have been keenly aware of the material nature of the text in their hands. Because the *Life* circulated together with fable collections in our earliest and best manuscripts (e.g., *Vita G*), it is possible to conceive of the biography as a whole – and, in particular, passages

---

<sup>1</sup> The text I use throughout is *Vita G*, as edited by Perry 1952, but I have also consulted Ferrari 1997 and Papatomopoulos 1990. *Vita G* is generally held to be our oldest and best version of the *Life of Aesop*, but cf. Ferrari 1997, 12-20, for a dissenting view. References below to *Vita W* are also to Perry 1952 (with consultation of Papatomopoulos 1999), while references to the so-called ‘Planudean’ version are to Eberhard 1872. The best studies of the text history of the *Life of Aesop* are Perry 1933; 1936, 1-70; 1952, 1-4 and 10-32. Useful overviews can be found in Ferrari 1997, 41-45; Karla 2001, 10-15; Holzberg 2002, 72-73; Kurke 2011, 16-17.

<sup>2</sup> Αἴσωπος οὖν αὐτῷ συγγραψάμενος τοὺς ἰδίους λόγους καὶ μύθους, τοὺς ἄχρι καὶ νῦν ὀνομαζομένους, κατέλιπεν εἰς τὴν βιβλιοθήκην (*Vita G* 100).

such as this one – as lending a kind of authority to the fables it introduced.<sup>3</sup> Thus an ancient reader could feel confident (or, perhaps, take pleasure in the fiction) that the product he was holding was an authentic edition of Aesop's fables, written by the fabulist himself before its safe installation in a Lydian *bibliothēkē*.<sup>4</sup>

What is of primary interest to me in this paper is the crucial moment at which this passage occurs in the *Life*. Not only has Aesop acquired *parrhēsia* and *eleutheria* (*Vita G* 89) in his release from slavery, he has also, for the first time in the *Life*, begun to tell recognizable Aesopic fables. That is, while the *Life* presents Aesop as a skilled manipulator of language and a talented 'performer of wisdom' in a wide range of circumstances,<sup>5</sup> the legendary fabulist does not tell an actual fable until after his release from slavery (*Vita G* 89).<sup>6</sup> Indeed, all of the known fables in the *Life of Aesop* appear between this scene and the end of the work (*Vita G* 94-142). My aim in this paper is to describe the differences between Aesop's manner of storytelling during and after his enslavement, and to explore some of

<sup>3</sup> Holzberg 2002.

<sup>4</sup> With two notable exceptions (Finkelppearl 2003 and Holzberg 2002), this passage is usually ignored by scholars, and that is understandable: the various recensions of the *Life of Aesop* differ from one another in many places, and in some ways this is just one of many un-historical, preposterous moments in the text. Owing to the difficulties of the text history of the *Life of Aesop*, it is indeed risky to put too much interpretive pressure on any specific turn of phrase, especially one that is so blatantly anachronistic, and which, moreover, does not occur in the same form in every recension. As it happens, other versions of the *Life of Aesop* do not describe Aesop's writing and depositing of his fables in precisely the same terms, but the idea that Aesop wrote down his fables after gaining his freedom does surface in *Vita W* at roughly the same point in the narrative (συγγράμματος οὖν τοὺς ἰδίους μύθους τοὺς μέχρι νῦν ἀναγιγνωσκομένους κατέλιπε τῷ βασιλεῖ, 'Then, writing down the same stories known to be his even now, he left them with the king', *Vita W* 100). In the so-called 'Planudean' *Life* there is no mention of writing or libraries, but an essential change in Aesop's status and manner of fable-telling is nonetheless discernible. In addition, the opening section of a version of the *Life* that survives with the fables of Aphthonius (c. 4th century) describes Aesop's fables as deemed 'worthy of the library' (ἡξιώθη βιβλιοθήκης); see Eberhard, 1872, 306-308.

<sup>5</sup> The description of Greek sage figures as 'performers of wisdom' in Martin 1998, which I discuss in more detail below, is especially useful for characterizing Aesop's actions in the *Life of Aesop*; cf. also Kurke 2011, 102-106.

<sup>6</sup> At *Vita G* 94, Aesop addresses a fable on the subject of slavery and freedom – the story of 'The Two Roads' – to the people of Samos. There has always been significant difference of opinion among fable scholars as to what ought to count as a 'fable'. Perry 1959 is still the best overview of the problem (cf. Perry 1952, ix and 1965, xix-xxviii). See also van Dijk 1997, 3-73 for a thorough treatment of ancient terminology and parameters of the fable. On specific questions regarding the quantity and distribution of fables in the *Life of Aesop*, see especially Perry 1952, 478; Nøjgaard 1964, 471; Holzberg 1992, 1996; van Dijk 1995; and Jouanno 2011. For the fable of 'The Two Roads', cf. Hesiod, *Works and Days* 287-292.

the ways in which ideas of writing and archiving function to mark the transformation of Aesop into a fully-developed fabulist.<sup>7</sup> While I am primarily interested in how changes in the manner and register of Aesop's storytelling fit into the overall structure of the narrative of the *Life*, I will also be approaching the *Life* as a text that is a valuable site for thinking about the fable tradition writ large, its status as a literary genre, its orality and textuality, and its relationship to and dependence upon the figure of Aesop.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Reading Aesopic Performances

To borrow a phrase from the work by Richard Martin on the dynamics of sage performances in archaic Greece, we may describe Aesop's actions in the *Life* as 'performances of wisdom'.<sup>9</sup> 'Performance' accommodates both the non-verbal and the verbal elements of communication by drawing attention to the roles played by actor(s), audience(s), and context in the production of meaning. Whether applied to the telling of a famous fable before the people of Samos (cf., e.g., *Vita G* 94) or to Aesop using his body to prove his innocence to his master (cf., e.g., *Vita G* 2-4), the term 'performance' will cover most of the common features of the various types of Aesopic communication we will be analyzing.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> In focusing attention on orality and textuality in the *Life of Aesop*, I do not intend to enter into the debate over when and where the *Life* itself was first written down, or over the particular processes by which oral traditions about Aesop's biography evolved into a written *Life*. See Perry 1952, 2-4, West 1984, Luzzatto 1996, and Kurke 2011. For a recent and judicious overview, see Konstantakos 2013.

<sup>8</sup> That is, my interest is in how *ideas* about oral and written storytelling surface in the narrative of the *Life* as it has come down to us. In this arena I have been influenced by studies of oral and text-based storytelling traditions in the fields of social anthropology and performance studies. In particular, the complex relationship between 'embodied performances' and the concept of the 'archive', as articulated in Taylor 2003, has been instrumental in shaping my approach to the *Life* in this paper.

<sup>9</sup> Martin 1998. For his conception of 'performance' Martin draws on the work of social anthropology and sociolinguists. Kurke 2011, 102-106, discusses the applicability to Aesop of Martin's work on Greek sages in considerable detail.

<sup>10</sup> 'Performance' is a particularly useful descriptor because 'fable-telling' alone would be an inaccurate description of what we encounter in the *Life*. To begin with, the text of the *Life* does not itself *tell* fables, in the way, say, a collection of fables such as the *Collectio Augustana* might reasonably be described as *telling* fables. Nor is it quite as simple as stating that, in the *Life*, Aesop *tells* fables. As it happens, he does much that has nothing at all to do with fable, and, more importantly, scholars disagree over what ought to count as a 'real fable', both in the *Life* and beyond. Moreover, even in the few instances where there is universal agreement that this is precisely what Aesop is doing, there is still the fact that the reader is not being *told* a fable so much as reading *a representation of a scene of fable-*

As we will see below, there are numerous ways in which Aesop's behaviors and communications in the *Life* are shaped by the particular audience he is addressing, and, more generally, by the conditions and exigencies of his status.<sup>11</sup> But first we will look briefly at two particularly revealing examples of the connections between slavery, freedom, and the manner in which Aesop communicates his wisdom: the episode that culminates in Aesop gaining his freedom (*Vita G* 83-89) and the one in which Aesop returns to Samos after his ambassadorial visit to Lydia (*Vita G* 100).

The first passage is *Vita G* 83-89, which exploits the semantic range of λύσις-terms in ways that connect Aesop's ability to interpret signs (τὴν τοῦ σημείου λύσιν λαβεῖν, *Vita G* 83) with his being unshackled (λύσατε αὐτόν, *Vita G* 83). As Aesop's master Xanthus puts it: 'I am *freeing* you so you can *solve* the portent' (ἀλλὰ λύω σε ἵνα καὶ σὺ τι λύσης, *Vita G* 83). In the ensuing passages, links between Aesop's slave status and his wisdom are further developed by forms of λύσις/λύω, with the result that Aesop ends up agreeing to perform a public λύσις ('interpretation') of a portent for the Samian people only if he is first granted his λύσις ('freedom') once and for all (*Vita G* 89):

ἄνδρες Σάμιοι, οὐκ ἔστιν εὐλογον δοῦλον ἐλευθέρῳ δήμῳ σημεῖον διαλύσασθαι· ὄθεν περιθετέ μοι τὴν <τῶν> εἰρημένων παρρησίαν, ἵνα ἐὰν μὲν ἐπιτύχῳ ὡς ἐλεύθερος τὰς πρεπούσας τιμὰς ἀπολάβω, ἐὰν δὲ ἀμάρτω μὴ ὡς δοῦλος, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐλεύθερος κολασθῶ. ἐὰν οὖν ἐμοὶ τὴν παρρησίαν τῆς ἐλευθερίας περίητε, μετὰ πάσης ἀδείας ἄρξομαι λέγειν.

---

*telling*. Everywhere in the *Life* Aesop is shown performing his wisdom for particular addressees in particular situations, and in each instance the fable-telling – or the riddling, or the manipulating of objects, or the gesturing – is framed by details about the performer's own goals and motivations and the effects the performance has on the audience.

<sup>11</sup> A number of recent studies have attended to links between the evolution of Aesop's speech and his rise in social status. See especially Adrados 1979, 1981; Holzberg 1993, 1996; Kurke 2011; Jouanno 2011, 110-111. Aesop's 'rise' in status has been approached from numerous scholarly perspectives. Recent studies have shown how the *Life* sheds light on the conditions of slavery and manumission in antiquity (Hopkins 1993, Ragone 1997, and duBois 2003); while others have shown how changes in Aesop's communication help to plot the overall structure and design of the *Life* as a whole; cf. Mignogna 1992, Holzberg 1993, and Ferrari 1997. Still others have read Aesop's 'rise' in status as revealing of central tensions in Greek culture and ideology (Kurke 2003, 2011) or indicative of the *Life*'s participation in broader Greek discourse on the nature and development of human speech (Ferrari 1997, Hunter 2007). There have also been a number of studies that have emphasized the role of Isis and the Muses in granting Aesop the slave a voice (Winkler 1985, Finkelppearl 2003, Dillery 1999; cf. Hunter 2007).

Men of Samos, it doesn't make good sense for a slave to interpret a portent for a free people. So, grant me freedom of speech for what I have to say. That way, if I am right, I may get the honors due to a free man. And if I am wrong, I won't be punished as a slave but as a free man. If, then, you grant me freedom of speech, I will go ahead and speak fearlessly.

The Samian *demos* demands that Xanthus grant Aesop freedom (ἀξιοῦμέν σε, Ξάνθε, ἐλευθέρωσον τὸν Αἰσωπον, *Vita G* 89) so that he can perform his interpretation (διαλύσασθαι). Soon after his successful interpretation of the portent, Aesop addresses a fable on the subject of slavery and freedom (the story of 'The Two Roads') to the people of Samos (*Vita G* 94), the first fable he tells in the *Life*. As I will suggest below, the fact that Aesop's switch to formal fable-telling occurs after he has negotiated for *parrhēsia* and *eleutheria* suggests a connection between literary fables – of the sort that circulated in antiquity under Aesop's name – and the conditions of freedom. Moreover, the timing retroactively implies that Aesop's earlier performances of wisdom were shaped and conditioned by his enslavement. Indeed, as we will see, a particularly revealing aspect of Aesop's negotiations above is his insistence that he *not* be subject to physical abuse (ἀλλ' ὡς ἐλεύθερος κολασθῶ, *Vita G* 89) if his interpretation turns out to be wrong.

The second passage is *Vita G* 100, in which the description of Aesop writing and archiving his fables in Lydia occurs in a general atmosphere of celebration and memorializing. Immediately after writing, Aesop returns to Samos triumphantly (*Vita G* 100):

Αἰσωπος 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 ὁμολογεῖ κατηλλάχθαι αὐτοῖς ἕνεκεν τοῦ Αἰσώπου, πολλὰ δὲ δῶρα κομισάμενος, ἐπλευσεν εἰς Σάμον. καὶ ἐκκλησίαν συστησάμενος ἀνέγνω τὰς ἐπιστολὰς τοῦ βασιλέως. οἱ δὲ Σάμιοι γνῶντες αὐτοῖς τὸν Κροῖσον διηλλάχθαι διὰ τοῦ Αἰσώπου τιμὰς αὐτῷ ἐψηφίσαντο, καὶ ἐκάλεσαν τὸν τόπον ἐκεῖνον Αἰσώπειον, ὅπου ἦν ἐνηλλαγμένος. ὁ δὲ Αἰσωπος θύσας ταῖς Μούσαις ἱερὸν κατεσκεύασεν αὐταῖς, στήσας μέσον αὐτῶν Μνημοσύνην, οὐκ Ἀπόλλωνα. ὁ Ἀπόλλων ὀργισθεὶς αὐτῷ ὡς τῷ Μαρσῦα.

Then Aesop 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 Aesopeion. 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.<sup>12</sup>

The text appears to go out of its way to advertise Aesop's newfound prestige, underlining that the free and celebrated sage is emphatically no longer Aesop the hideously ugly slave, who for the first two thirds of the narrative was relentlessly disrespected, maltreated, and beaten (*Vita G* 1-89). Further acknowledgements of Aesop's status as a sage frame the passage: upon meeting him, Croesus recognizes Aesop as someone who possesses a universal kind of knowledge (πρὸς τὴν εἰς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τύχην λόγους εἰπεῖν, 'tell me stories of the ways of fortune with men', *Vita G* 99);<sup>13</sup> after he departs Samos, Aesop 'tours the world' (περιελθεῖν τὴν οἰκουμένην, *Vita G* 101), 'lectures to audiences for a fee' (τιμήματα δὲ ἀργυρικὰ λαμβάνων, *Vita G* 101), and is named 'chamberlain' (ἐποίησεν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τῆς διοικήσεως, *Vita G* 101) of King Lycurgus in Babylon. Thus the writing of Aesop's fables becomes conflated with other supposedly lasting honors (τιμὰς), and with permanent signs of Aesop's beneficence on Samos, such as the naming of the 'Aesopeion' and the erection of a shrine to the Muses.<sup>14</sup>

In what follows, I will claim that the *Life* maps Aesop's experiences of enslavement and freedom onto his evolution into a fable-teller in ways that suggest an analogy to the differences between oral and written literature. This does not amount to a claim that the historical or ideological dimensions of slavery or of the *Life of Aesop* as a text are unimportant; far from suggesting that we ignore socio-political realities, I am only suggesting that we attend more closely to the ways in

<sup>12</sup> The apparent snubbing of Apollo and the comparison with Marsyas have received much attention, especially in light of Aesop's imminent, fatal confrontation with the Delphians. See Wiechers 1961, Jedrkiewicz 1989, Compton 1990, and now Kurke 2011.

<sup>13</sup> The point is that Croesus somehow knows to ask Aesop to 'tell stories of the ways of fortune with men' (*Vita G* 99), rather than asking him for help with any *particular* problem. Aesop obliges, telling a tale about a cicada and adding, in a passage that undoubtedly is intended to echo the opening of the text (*Vita G* 1), that he (Aesop) 'speaks words of commonsense and benefits the life of humans' (φρενήρη φθέγγομαι βίον τῶν μερόπων ὠφελῶν, *Vita G* 99).

<sup>14</sup> The concept of the 'archive', as theorized within various disciplines, including especially social anthropology and performance studies, is helpful for thinking through the co-occurrence of acts of writing and memorializing. See especially Foucault 1972, Derrida 1995, Velody 1998, Voss and Werner 1999, Bradley 1999, and Manoff 2004. For the complex relationship between the 'archive' and 'repertoire', see Taylor 2003.

which the *Life* thematizes slavery and freedom in its reflections on communication and on the production, transmission, and reception of Aesopica. Aesop's concerns for his physical safety in his negotiations with the Samian people (*Vita G* 83-89) and the association of 'Aesop's fables' with other fixed, lasting signs of Aesop's wisdom (*Vita G* 99-101), reflect a larger pattern in the *Life*, according to which two distinct types of Aesopic storytelling are systematically differentiated: the enslaved and the free. The former involves an emphasis on the physical presence of Aesop, his *impromptu* responses to the context in which he finds himself, and the manipulation of language and signs to turn the tables against his addressee(s), usually his master (*Vita G* 1-89); the latter involves the telling of actual fables, having recognizable formal features and content (*Vita G* 94-142). While Aesop's body figures prominently in representations of storytelling during the period of his enslavement, after he has earned his freedom and formally written down his fables in Lydia, a related but distinct type of *corpus*-based storytelling obtains, as the slave's ingenious use of his body is replaced by the free fabulist's apparent command of an established collection of fables.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. Performances During Aesop's Enslavement

Practically all of Aesop's actions during the period of his enslavement (*Vita G* 1-89) are reactions: his performances are crafted in response to the immediate circumstances in which he finds himself.<sup>16</sup> In a few instances, Aesop is simply asked a question, by his master Xanthus or by Xanthus' wife, to which he responds directly with a kind of aetiology.<sup>17</sup> More typically, however, Aesop the slave is given an order or threatened in some way, and he reacts by staging an improvised, lesson-bearing performance. That is, Aesop discovers, over and over again, a way to resist or challenge his master's threats and commands by manipulating matters in such a way that his master – and anyone else within earshot – ends up learning

<sup>15</sup> Significantly, after Aesop is freed we hear almost nothing about his body. One exception is the description of Aesop as 'dirty, long-haired, and pale' (ῥυποῦντος καὶ κομῶντος καὶ ὄχρῶντος, *Vita G* 107), after a period of imprisonment in Babylon; but these temporary effects on his appearance appear to have nothing to do with Aesop's famous ugliness, which receives much attention in *Vita G* 1-89. On the meaning(s) of Aesop's ugliness, see especially Jedrkiewicz 1989, Lissarague 2000, Lefkowitz 2008, and Kurke 2011.

<sup>16</sup> See Rosen 2007 on the ways in which Aesop's reactions are typical of ancient satirists.

<sup>17</sup> At *Vita G* 33, Aesop explains the origins of dreams to Xanthus' wife, and, at 67, he explains to Xanthus why people bother to look at their own defecation; cf. 68, in which Aesop intervenes in a fight between Xanthus and his fellow philosophers with an account of Dionysus' invention of wine.



a kind of ‘lesson’. Either implicitly or explicitly, the lesson taught usually involves matters related to the proper and improper treatment of slaves. In these sections of the *Life*, our attention is drawn to the improvisational character of Aesop’s wisdom in numerous ways. Above all, it is the embedded character of these performances in both the immediate circumstances and in the broader context of Aesop’s enslavement that differentiates them from the types of performances enacted by Aesop the free man.

The programmatic stolen-fig episode (*Vita G + W 2-3*), with which the *Life* opens, is typical of the slave Aesop’s ability to discover novel ways to resist those who seek to do him harm despite his utter powerlessness. Characteristically, Aesop uses all he has – namely, his body – to turn the tables on his adversaries and save his own skin.<sup>18</sup> Briefly, what happens is this: Aesop’s first master, whose name we do not learn, asks his servant (οικέτης, *Vita W 2*) Agathopous to look after some recently-acquired figs. Agathopous and another slave decide instead to eat the figs themselves and blame it on Aesop, whom they describe as ‘good for nothing but a whipping’ (οὐδὲν ἄλλο πρέπει αὐτῷ εἰ μὴ δέρεσθαι, *Vita G 2*). As soon as he is summoned before his master and learns he has been accused, Aesop ‘knows he will get a beating’ (μέλλων δαίρεσθαι, *Vita G 3*). Although unable to speak (λαλεῖν δὲ μὴ δυνάμενος, *Vita G 3*), Aesop manages to persuade his master to hold off punishment and, using only gestures, asks for a bowl of warm water (διὰ τῶν νευμάτων ἤτησεν ὕδωρ χλιαρόν, *Vita G 3*), which is described (significantly) as being ‘at hand’ (παρακείμενον). Aesop drinks the water, forces himself to vomit, and proves his innocence *through his resourcefulness* (διὰ δὲ τῆς πολυπειρίας, *Vita G 3*). This dramatic and physical expression of Aesop’s πολυπειρία is programmatic in the sense that it introduces and models one of the legendary fabulist’s defining characteristics: namely, his ability to take whatever he can find ‘at hand’ (παρακείμενον) and, through a process of creative adaptation, transform it into what we might call, for lack of a better term, a teachable moment. Although mute, Aesop again manages to communicate that the other slaves should do as he did (τοῦτο ἠξίωσε καὶ τοὺς συνδούλους αὐτοῦ ποιῆσαι, *Vita G 3*). They promptly vomit up their guilt and are beaten in turn, learning the ‘lesson’ – which is articulated in the spirit if not the form of a conventional *epimythium* – that those who scheme up trouble for others only bring trouble upon themselves.<sup>19</sup>

While Aesop’s initial muteness makes his vulnerable body and his non-verbal gestures more prominent than they are after he gains the ability to speak at *Vita G*

<sup>18</sup> Aesop is introduced in *Vita G 1* as ‘speechless ... dumb, and unable to talk’, but he is later visited in a dream by Isis and granted the gift of speech in *Vita G 6-8*.

<sup>19</sup> δερόμενοι δὲ ἐκεῖνοι ἔγνωσαν ἀσφαλῶς ὅτι ὁ κατὰ ἄλλου μηχανουόμενος κακὸν αὐτὸς καθ’ ἑαυτοῦ τοῦτο λαμβάνει ποιῶν (*Vita G 3*).

7-8,<sup>20</sup> the situation as it unfolds in the stolen-fig episode is analogous to a number of episodes in *Vita G* 1-89. Moreover, the slave Aesop's body – particularly in its susceptibility to physical abuse – remains a significant element in his performances throughout the period of his enslavement. The pattern that emerges is this: Aesop is threatened in some way; although powerless, Aesop makes use of something 'at hand' and somehow parlays it into a lesson-bearing performance. The threat is not always explicit (see below), but every command or task Aesop's first master or second master, Xanthus (*Vita G* 28-90), gives him is given under the implicit threat of physical punishment.

Over time Xanthus comes to see Aesop's quick thinking and improvisational skills as assets. After hearing him respond to the mistress' question about the nature of dreams (*Vita G* 33-34), Xanthus realizes that Aesop 'quickly finds the right thing to say' (εὐρεσίλογος, *Vita G* 34).<sup>21</sup> Xanthus himself is described as unable on the spur of the moment to find answers to a philosophical conundrum (ὁ Ξάνθος ἀκούσας φιλοσόφου μὲν ζήτημα, μὴ εὐρίσκων αὐτὸ δὲ ταχέως ἀναλῦσαι, *Vita G* 35),<sup>22</sup> but when he acknowledges Aesop's sharp wit (ἀγχινοίας, *Vita G* 70),<sup>23</sup> he seeks to benefit from his slave's special gifts and he asks for help.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Aesop, for his part, seems to be well aware of his own improvisational skill set, and in the same terms described by the narrator and other characters: δέσποτα, εἴ τι περὶ λογικοῦ ζητήματος, ἐτοιμῶς ἔχω ἀποκρίνασθαι ('Master, if it is a question of words, I am ready with answers', *Vita G* 84); ἐπιλύσομαι ἐγὼ καὶ εὐκαιρῶς προσκληθήσομαι λέγειν ('I'll have a solution, and at the proper moment', *Vita G* 85).

Thus the link between Aesop's improvisational skills and the circumstances of his enslavement is inscribed in the *Life of Aesop* from the very beginning, and in such a way as to mark the slave's performances of wisdom as fundamentally bound to his condition. Aesop's slave status frames and determines the direction of these performances. Indeed, the motivation behind Aesop's actions is often to resist or to challenge his master. This is most evident in a series of scenes in which

<sup>20</sup> On Aesop's receipt of the gift of speech from Isis, see Winkler 1985, Finkelpearl 2003, Dillery 1999; cf. Hunter 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. εὐεπινόητον ('sharp thinker'), *Vita G* 72.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Vita G* 82, where Xanthus' inability to think and act quickly is described in the following terms: ὁ δὲ Ξάνθος ἔσθη εἰς τὸ μέσον καὶ μὴδὲν εὐρίσκων κατὰ νοῦν εἰπεῖν ἔλαβεν διορίαν ὅπως τὸ σημεῖον ἐπιλύσῃ ('Xanthus came forward and, unable to discover anything to say, requested time to interpret the portent').

<sup>23</sup> Cf. εἴ ἐδράστερος καὶ συνετός, 'you are such a good guesser and so smart', *Vita G* 79; σὺ μέγα δαμόνιον εἶ, 'you are a great genius', *Vita G* 80.

<sup>24</sup> δέομαί σου, Αἴσωπε, εἰ δυνατόν σοι <διά> τῆς σεαυτοῦ ἀγχινοίας, εὐρεῖν τινα πρόφασιν, δι' ἧς νικήσω ἢ τὰς συνθήκας διαλύσομαι, *Vita G* 70.

Aesop repeatedly disobeys and embarrasses Xanthus by putting excessive pressure on the precision of his master's commands and interpreting them so literally that the words lose their intended meaning. In the first scene (*Vita G 38*), Xanthus orders Aesop to take an oil flask and towels (ἄρον ἐπὶ χειρῶν σου λήκυθον λέντια τε) in order to accompany him to the bath. Aesop reacts by deciding to teach his master a lesson: 'Masters who show an unnecessarily stern attitude about the service they want have themselves to blame for the trouble they get into. I'll teach this philosopher a lesson in how to give orders'.<sup>25</sup> Aesop then picks up the oil flask – without putting oil in it – and follows his master. When Xanthus asks for his oil flask and realizes there is nothing in it, he asks, 'Aesop, where is the oil?' (Αἴσωπε, τὸ ἔλαιον ποῦ; *Vita G 38*). Aesop's response is as follows:

“εἰς οἶκον.” ὁ Ξάνθος λέγει “διὰ τί;” Αἴσωπος λέγει “ὅτι σύ μοι εἶπας ‘ἄρον λήκυθον καὶ λέντια’, ἔλαιον δὲ οὐκ εἶπας. ἔδει οὖν με μηδὲν τῶν εἰρημένων πλέον ποιεῖν· ἐπεὶ τοῦ νόμου σφαλεις πληγῶν ὑπεύθυνος ἦμην.” καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἠσύχασεν.

“At home”. Xanthus said, “Why is that”? Aesop said, “Because you told me ‘Take an oil flask and towels’, but you did not say ‘oil’. I was not supposed to do anything more than what you said; since if I messed up my command I would pay for it with a beating”. And with that he was silent.

Our attention is drawn to the ways in which Aesop discovers how to make creative use of all he has to work with – his master's exact words (ἄρον λήκυθον καὶ λέντια) and the objects involved (e.g., λήκυθον), which Aesop has ‘in hand’ (ἐπὶ χειρῶν) – to assert himself and prove a point.<sup>26</sup> Adaptation and appropriation of the immediate context are vital components of improvisation, and utterly necessary for the slave who has no possessions – none, that is, except his body, which the entire performance is designed to try to protect (ἐπεὶ τοῦ νόμου σφαλεις

<sup>25</sup> οἱ τῷ νῶ περιπικροὶ περὶ διακονίαν δεσπότηι κακοδαιμονίας ἑαυτοῖς γίνονται παραίτιοι. ἐγὼ τοῦτον τὸν φιλόσοφον παιδεύσω, ἵνα μάθῃ πῶς αὐτὸν δεῖ ἐπιτάττειν, *Vita G 38*.

<sup>26</sup> Almost identical exchanges occur in subsequent scenes, as when Aesop is told to bring Xanthus a footbath, but, as Aesop remarks, he is not told (οὐκ εἶπες) to put water in it or to wash his master's feet (Αἴσωπος λέγει ‘εἶπας ‘παράθες λεκάνην’, οὐκ εἶπες ‘βάλε ὕδωρ καὶ νίψον μου τοὺς πόδας’, *Vita G 40*); when Aesop is told to ‘cook lentil for dinner’, but not told (οὐ γὰρ μοι εἶπας) to cook ‘lentils’, for ‘the one is singular and the other is plural (Αἴσωπος λέγει ‘ναί, οὐ γὰρ μοι εἶπας ὅτι “φακὸν ἔψησον” καὶ οὐ φακούς; ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἔστιν ἐνικός, οἱ δὲ πληθυντικοί’, *Vita G 41*). Again, as *Vita G 51*, a typically vague command from Xanthus motivates Aesop to say to himself: ‘I will show him not to give me moronic orders’ (Αἴσωπος πρὸς ἑαυτὸν λέγει ‘ἐγὼ αὐτῷ δεῖξω μωρὰ μὴ διατάττεσθαι’).

πληγῶν ὑπεύθυνος ἤμην). Whether it is deliberately forgetting to bring oil to the bath or cooking inappropriate meals by deliberately misconstruing Xanthus' instructions (see note 26), Aesop's repeated subversions of his master's authority are marked in the text in different ways: at *Vita G* 64, Xanthus describes Aesop's insubordination as 'game-playing' (ἐμπαίζων) and begs Aesop to become a well-disposed slave (ἄρκει ἐμπαίζων μοι, λήξον τὸ λοιπὸν καὶ εὐνοϊκῶς μοι δοῦλευε); at *Vita G* 54, Xanthus laments Aesop's determination to 'turn (my) words around' (τὰ ἄνω κάτω λαλεῖν); finally, at *Vita G* 55, one of Xanthus' students calls Aesop an 'abusive and malicious slave' (φιλολοῖδορος καὶ κακεντρεχῆς δοῦλος οὗτος) and describes his efforts to 'drive (his master) crazy' (ταχέως σε εἰς μανίαν περιτρέψει).

The necessity that Aesop figure out a way to make creative use of his master's orders or 'whatever is at hand' reflects, on some level, the powerlessness and helplessness of his position.<sup>27</sup> As a slave, subject to physical abuse at every turn, Aesop's body is utterly vulnerable. Recent scholarship has drawn attention to the important role of Aesop's body in the *Life of Aesop* from a number of different critical perspectives.<sup>28</sup> Here I do not wish to focus on corporeality *per se*; rather, I want to focus on bodies in order to draw attention to the degree to which Aesop's lesson-bearing performances in *Vita G* 1-89 are grounded in the physical, material situation in which he finds himself. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to claim that Aesop's improvisational wisdom in *Vita G* 1-89 is dependent on the presence of bodies – both his own and those of his addressees – and on the particular circumstances in which these bodies find themselves.

There are two primary ways in which bodies figure in Aesop's performances of wisdom in *Vita G* 1-89. First, the body and bodily functions feature prominently as themes of the slave Aesop's performances. As a result, Aesop often uses his own body and the bodies of others to prove a point or to communicate. Second, the utter precariousness of Aesop's slave body is always felt and shapes the performances in fundamental ways. After considering some manifestations of the body in Aesop's performances in *Vita G* 1-89, I am going to claim that all of these

<sup>27</sup> Indeed, this essential powerlessness is precisely what Leslie Kurke's recent work on Aesop has brought to the fore. Borrowing Claude Levi-Strauss' notion of the 'cultural *bricoleur*', Kurke claims that Aesop is a 'culture hero for those who feel themselves disempowered, so his ability to extort the self-incrimination of the powerful functions as a wish-fulfillment fantasy (or how-to guide) for the marginal or weaker members of society' (Kurke 2011, 200). Kurke's reading of Aesopic *bricolage* focuses on the outward, ideological potentialities of the *Life of Aesop*; but there is more to be said about the ways in which the link between slavery and improvisation in the *Life* sheds light on the inner workings of the narrative and, I would claim, on the literary history of the Aesopic tradition writ large.

<sup>28</sup> Lissarague 2000; duBois 2003; Lefkowitz 2008; Kurke 2011.

heavily embodied performances stand in contrast to representations of Aesop's fable-telling in *Vita G* 90-142, in which the significance of bodies is far less marked and in which Aesop's own style of wisdom begins to take on some of the characteristics of the disembodied literary artifact.

Throughout the first half of the *Life of Aesop*, our attention is repeatedly drawn to Aesop's hideous body and to his use of his own body and the bodies of others to make a point or otherwise communicate. Indeed, bodies are the primary tools of Aesop's improvisation, and much of Aesop's demonstration of wit in these chapters either involves bodies directly (vomiting at, e.g., *Vita G* 2-3; defecating, at *Vita G* 67) or is presented in the context of others' reactions to seeing Aesop's body, whether it is his ugliness (e.g., at *Vita G* 11, 15, 27, 55, 87-88) or Xanthus' wife seeing him naked (*Vita G* 75-76). Other times a reaction is triggered by Aesop's observation of the bodies and bodily functions of others, such as Xanthus' public urination (*Vita G* 28) or his mistress' exposed ass (*Vita G* 77). Bodies and bodily functions figure less explicitly but no less significantly when Aesop is charged with the care of his master's body (oil flask for the bath, *Vita G* 38; water for foot-bath, *Vita G* 40) or assisting with his master's eating and drinking (figs, *Vita G* 2-4; shopping for vegetables, *Vita G* 34; preparing lentil, *Vita G* 39; serving bathwater to drink, *Vita G* 40; serving pig's feet for dinner, *Vita G* 42-43; preparing food for dog, not mistress, *Vita G* 44-50; cooking tongue for dinner, *Vita G* 51-55; attending a drinking party, *Vita G* 68 f.; helping Xanthus 'drink the sea dry', *Vita G* 70-74).

Aesop's own body is, from the beginning of the *Life*, one of his primary modes of communication, both intentionally (through deliberate gestures) and unintentionally (through others' responses to his ugliness, his nudity, etc.). As we have observed, it is through gestures (διὰ τῶν νευμάτων) that Aesop is able to prove his innocence in the stolen-fig episode. Similarly, in his interactions with a priestess of Isis (*Vita G* 4-7), which lead directly to Aesop being granted the gifts of speech (*Vita G* 7), Aesop uses 'gestures' (ἤρξατο διανεύειν, *Vita G* 4) to ask her if she has lost her way, then 'leads her by the hand' (ἐπιλαμβάνεται τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῆς καὶ ἤγαγεν, *Vita G* 4) to a grove where he offers her food before 'leading her again' (ὁ δὲ ἤγαγεν αὐτήν, *Vita G* 5) and 'pointing out' (δείξας, *Vita G* 5) the proper road. There is an almost comic exaggeration of what Aesop is able to communicate with non-verbal gestures: we are told that Aesop 'began to nod (to the priestess) as if to say "Why have you left the road and come to the farm?"' (ἤρξατο διανεύειν καὶ δηλοῖν 'διὰ τί ἀπολιποῦσα τὴν δημοσίαν ὁδὸν εἰς τοῦτο τὸ κτῆμα εἰσελήλυθας;' *Vita G* 4). Later (*Vita G* 9), in the same vein, when the overseer Zenas learns that Aesop can now talk, he fears the consequences:

ὅτε γὰρ ἔτι νωδὸς ἦν διένευέν μοι ὅτι ‘ἐὰν ἔλθῃ ὁ δεσπότης μου μεταστήσω σε τῆς οἰκονομίας· κατηγορήσω γάρ σου διὰ τῶν νευμάτων.’ εἰ οὖν νεύμασιν ἐπιγγεῖλατο, πολλῶ μᾶλλον λαλῶν πείσει.

When he was still mute he would gesture to me as if to say ‘If my master comes I’ll have you removed from your position; I will accuse you by means of gestures.’ If, then, he would bring charges against me with gestures, how much more persuasive will he be speaking!

Such aggrandizement of the communicatory powers of Aesop’s gestures also has the effect of establishing a connection between all of Aesop’s performances.<sup>29</sup> It is as if the power of speech merely intensifies Aesop’s communicative abilities rather than simply marking a replacement of the physical with the verbal.<sup>30</sup>

From the beginning, the mute Aesop’s physical vulnerability is linked to his complete dependence upon his body for communication. As we have seen, the fellow slaves who conspire to frame Aesop in the programmatic stolen-fig episode, describing him as ‘good for nothing but a beating’ (οὐδὲν ἄλλο πρέπει αὐτῷ εἰ μὴ δέρεσθαι), do so knowing that Aesop will be beaten precisely *because* he cannot speak.<sup>31</sup> As Corinne Jouanno has observed, the persistent violence against Aesop’s body increases the reader’s emotional involvement in the narrative.<sup>32</sup> But the threat of violence also frames and determines Aesop’s actions in more fundamental ways. The reader is constantly reminded in *Vita G* 1-89 that his master may beat Aesop at anytime.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, Aesop and his master are presented as fully aware of the stakes: at *Vita G* 38, Aesop’s show of resistance against the strict language of his master’s orders is carried out with the knowledge that he is

<sup>29</sup> There are also hints of a more profound commitment to the signifying powers of bodies in the *Life*. For example, throughout the entire scene on the auction block (*Vita G* 20-27), when Xanthus purchases Aesop, there is frequent reference to bodies, including detailed descriptions of each slave’s body and dress (*Vita G* 21), and a number of evaluative comments (*Vita G* 21, 23, 26); indeed, Xanthus explicitly encourages onlookers to view the display of bodies as a kind of philosophical problem (*Vita G* 22): μὴ νομίσητε τὴν φιλοσοφίαν διὰ λόγων μόνον συστάναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ τῶν ἔργων. Cf. Lefkowitz 2008.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Vita G* 13: ἡ δὲ καταστροφή αὐτοῦ τί; ἀφ’ οὗ ἤρξατο λαλεῖν περίεργος γέγονεν (‘What is to become of him (Aesop)? From the moment he started talking he has been trouble’).

<sup>31</sup> ὁ δὲ Αἰσωπος λαλεῖν μὴ δυνάμενος οὕτως δαρήσεται, καὶ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν σου εἰ πεπληροκῶς (‘Since Aesop cannot speak he will be beaten, and you’ll get just what you desire’), *Vita G* 2. Moreover, before Aesop improvises his defense, he himself is said to have realized he will get a beating (μέλλον δαίρεσθαι).

<sup>32</sup> Jouanno 2006, 39 note 17. Cf. Hopkins 1993, 15 note 23, on fear and physical punishment in the *Life of Aesop*.

<sup>33</sup> *Vita G* 2, 3, 42, 50, 56, 58, 77, 80, and 83.

susceptible to physical violence if he does not perform well (ἔδει οὖν με μηδὲν τῶν εἰρημένων πλέον ποιεῖν· ἐπεὶ τοῦ νόμου σφαλεῖς πλιγγῶν ὑπεύθυνος ἤμην). Later (*Vita G* 42), when Xanthus becomes frustrated and embarrassed by his slave's insubordinate challenges, he attempts 'to find some pretext to thrash him' (ὁ Ξάνθος ζητῶν ἀφορμὴν δι' ἧς μαστιγώσει τὸν Αἴσωπον). In addition, there are times when Aesop cannot figure out a way to avoid physical abuse, despite his obvious blamelessness: for example, he is 'thoroughly beaten' (ἐδάρη ἐπιμελῶς) at *Vita G* 77, when he reports two crows outside but Xanthus only sees one (one flew away); and at *Vita G* 80, Xanthus orders Aesop to be 'bound and locked up' (ἐκέλευσεν αὐτὸν δεθέντα συγκλεισθῆναι) despite Aesop's success in decoding an epitaph and discovering a buried treasure of gold for his master.<sup>34</sup> Thus even when Aesop can communicate cogently and eloquently, his actions are determined and constrained by the fundamental vulnerability of the conditions of enslavement.

#### 4. Representations of Fable-Telling After Manumission

As we have seen, for the duration of his enslavement the text repeatedly highlights the ways in which Aesop must draw directly on his surroundings to improvise his performances. But once the fabulist is no longer a slave – no longer subject to the threats and abuse of a master – his wisdom begins to take on many of the qualities of the disembodied literary artifact. One gets the sense that the free Aesop is in command of a kind of *corpus*, from which he can draw on occasion to advise or warn his addressee(s). This is partly a product of the many links between his words in these sections and familiar material in the extant *corpora* of the ancient fable tradition.<sup>35</sup> But even without these demonstrable connections there are a

<sup>34</sup> *Vita G* 79-80. Although Xanthus praises Aesop's quick wit and wisdom (*Vita G* 79), and calls him a 'genius' (*Vita G* 80), Aesop loses in the end. Aesop generates multiple interpretations of the jumbled letters in an attempt to manipulate the lying Xanthus to keep his promise, but ultimately Xanthus does not share the gold or grant Aesop freedom – instead he binds him and locks him up.

<sup>35</sup> This includes two 'classic' fables that were well known in antiquity and frequently ascribed to Aesop both in- and outside of the collections (cf. van Dijk 1995, 135), both of which appear in remarkably similar form in the *Collectio Augustana*: 'Eagle and Dung Beetle' (= Perry 3), at *Vita G* 135-139, and 'Wolves and Sheep' (= Perry 153), at *Vita G* 97. The 'Eagle and Dung Beetle' also surfaces three times in the Aristophanic corpus: *Wasps* 1446-1448; *Lysistrata* 691-695; *Peace* 127-134; cf. also Lucian, *Icar*. 10, 134-139. For 'Wolves and Sheep', cf. Plu. *Dem.* 23,5; Babr. 93; Aphth. 21; Ademar 43; Rom. Anglicus 31 (Hervieux 1893-1899, 2:586). Other fables Aesop tells in the *Life* that are attested in the collections are: 'Cicada' (*Vita G* 99); 'Widow and Plowman' (*Vita G* 129; cf. the story of

number of ways in which our attention is drawn to patterns and internal consistencies in his stories, contributing to a sense that there are certain fixed and traditional *types* of stories the free Aesop tells. Indeed, the nine stories Aesop tells in the *Life* that scholars most commonly acknowledge as ‘fables’ all appear in *Vita G* 90-142: ‘Two Roads’ (94); ‘Wolves and Sheep’ (97); ‘Cicada’ (99); ‘Widow and Plowman’ (129); ‘Simple-minded Daughter’ (131); ‘Mouse and Frog’ (133); ‘Eagle and Dung Beetle’ (135-139); ‘Farmer’ (140); ‘Father and Daughter’ (141).<sup>36</sup> Other passages in the later scenes of the *Life of Aesop*, including the extended borrowing from the Aramaic *Life of Ahīqar* (*Vita G* 101-123), also represent the free Aesop as possessing a kind of storehouse of wisdom. While his words of advice and warning in these sections remain apposite to the situations in which he finds himself, they are nevertheless detachable from their contexts and coherent as standalone narratives in ways that vomiting figs or playing tricks with oil flasks are not.

The free Aesop’s words consistently display a surprising number of distinct narrative elements and structural features, which, in combination with one

---

the ‘Widow of Ephesus’, found also in Petronius 111-112, and Phaedrus *App.* 15); ‘Simple-minded Daughter’ (*Vita G* 129); ‘Mouse and Frog’ (*Vita G* 133; cf. *Batrachomyomachia* 10-104; Ademar 4, Odo 21b).

<sup>36</sup> Taking into account variations in the different recensions of the *Life of Aesop* and in the heterogeneous sets of criteria used to determine what counts as a legitimate ‘fable’, scholars generally agree that Aesop only begins to tell proper fables once he has gained his freedom: cf. Nøjgaard 1964, 471; Holzberg 1992, 1996; Hägg 1997, 179; Pervo 1998, 104; Shiner 1998, 162; Hunter 2007, 55. But, to be sure, there has been disagreement among scholars on the matter of just how many proper fables are to be found in the *Life of Aesop*. While the most common total count of fables in the *Life of Aesop* is nine (see above) as in Nøjgaard 1964, 471, and Holzberg 1992, 1996 (cf. Shiner 1998, 162), Perry 1952 seems to count twelve. Two of these – Perry 3 and Perry 153 – are omitted from the section in *Aesopica* entitled *ENUMERANTUR FABULAE NOVAE QUAE VITA AESOPI TRADITAE SUNT* (‘Listing of new fables transmitted in the *Life of Aesop*’) [Perry 379-388] for no other reason than that they are known from the *Collectio Augustana* and thus not ‘new’. Of Perry’s twelve, another two (*Vita G* 33, 67) occur during the period of Aesop’s enslavement (see above). Van Dijk 1995 identifies thirteen fables in *Vita G* (twelve in *Vita W* and ten in the so-called *Plamudean vita*) and Jouanno 2011 counts sixteen, dividing the total into thirteen fables ‘*en bonne et due forme*’ and three ‘*fables transformées*’ (105). Van Dijk and Jouanno consider different material in *Vita G* 1-90 to count as ‘fable’, either because it may find echoes in the fable collections or may be linked to known fables in other ways. Both scholars also acknowledge and discuss the ways in which Aesop’s fable-telling in *Vita G* 90-142 is notably distinct from the earlier passages and has even closer and more demonstrable links to the fable tradition. Thus, regardless of whether one’s definition of ‘fable’ leads to a count of nine, twelve, thirteen, or sixteen total fables in the *Life*, it is widely acknowledged that there is something qualitatively different about Aesop’s manner of story-telling after he has been freed.



another, amount to a generic *type* of wisdom. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the way in which Aesop now introduces his performances by announcing his intention to ‘tell a fable’ (λόγος)<sup>37</sup> or calling upon his addressee(s) to ‘listen to a fable’.<sup>38</sup> The very first fable Aesop tells in the *Life* begins with a traditional and indefinite ‘Once upon a time’ (ποτε),<sup>39</sup> while several others open by conventionally setting the scene in a distant and imagined past when animals spoke the same language as humans (e.g., καθ’ ὃν καιρὸν ὁμόφωνα ἦσαν τὰ ζῷα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, ‘In the time when animals were homophonous with men’, *Vita G* 96).<sup>40</sup> The themes and manner of characterization in these fables also repeat themselves and, moreover, are typical in the tradition. For example, the conventionally vague adjective ‘some’ (τις) to describe fable characters (animal or human) is used repeatedly: ‘some cicada’ (τινα ἀκρίδα, *Vita G* 99), ‘some woman’ (γυνή τις, *Vita G* 129; 130; *Vita W* 141), and ‘some plowman’ (ἀροτριῶν τις, *Vita G* 129).<sup>41</sup> In addition, the fables the free Aesop tells also display what is perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of the genre, the *epimythium* or ‘lesson’, which explicitly spells out the relevance or ‘lesson’ of the fable.<sup>42</sup> To be sure, while a slave, Aesop’s wisdom performances often had a ‘lesson’ to teach (as we have seen, usually directed at his master). But the structure and delivery of the *epimythia* appended to each of the free Aesop’s stories are standardized in accordance with the formulae and conventions of the extant fable tradition.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>37</sup> *Vita G* 93, 96, 129, 130, 134, 141.

<sup>38</sup> *Vita G* 132, 140.

<sup>39</sup> *Vita G* 93; cf. 67. Cf. van Dijk 1995 and Jouanno 2011, 106.

<sup>40</sup> The same formula appears in fable openings at *Vita G* 99 and 133. For this conventional fable opening, cf. also X. *Mem.* 2,17,13; Call. *Iamb.* 2 (Pf. 192); Babr. *Prol.*; Max. Tyr. 19. Cf. Karadagli 1981.

<sup>41</sup> Some characters in these fables, such as the beetle and the cicada, are virtual celebrities in the fable tradition. For the cicada in Aesopica, cf. Perry 184 (‘The Ass and the Cicada’), Perry 241 (‘The Cicada and the Fox’); Perry 373 (‘The Ant and the Cicada’; cf. Babrius 140, Avianus 34, et al.); Perry 397 (‘The Bird Catcher and the Cicada’; cf. Aphthonius 4); Perry 470 = Plato’s *Phaedrus* 259b-c; Perry 507 (‘The Cricket and the Owl’; cf. Phaedrus 3,16).

<sup>42</sup> For the history of the *epimythium* and its significance in the genre, see espec. Perry 1940.

<sup>43</sup> *Vita G* 97: ἔδει δὲ οὖν ὑμᾶς <κατὰ> τὸν μῦθον μὴ εἰκῆ τούτους χρηστοὺς παραδιδόναι (‘According to the fable, you should not rashly hand over useful men’); 99: ὡσαύτως κἀγὼ (‘Just so I...’); 129: ὥστε καὶ σὺ (‘And you, too...’); 131: ὁμοίως καὶ ἐμοὶ συνέβη, φίλε (‘In the same way also it has turned out for me, friend...’); 133: ὁμοίως κἀγὼ, ἄνδρες, ἀποθανὼν ὑμῖν μόρος ἔσομαι (‘In the same way also, in dying I will be death for you...’); 139: ὁμοίως καὶ ὑμεῖς, ἄνδρες Δελφιοί, μὴ ἀτιμάσητε τὸ ἱερόν (‘In the same way also you, Delphians, do not dishonor the shrine...’); 140: ὡσαύτως οὖν κἀγὼ δυσφόρως ἔχω (‘So it is also that I am aggrieved...’); *Vita W* 141: τοῦτο κἀγὼ πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ὦ Δελφοί (‘This also I (feel) toward you, Delphians...’).

Let us now turn to look more closely at one of the fables Aesop tells in this section, the fable of the ‘Frog and Mouse’ (*Vita G* 133), in order to observe how these performances, although adapted to their contexts,<sup>44</sup> are marked as traditional material. These fables are not direct responses to questions posed by an interlocutor or hyper-literal interpretations of a master’s commands; rather, as if drawing upon an established store of pre-fabricated narratives, Aesop chooses and adapts fables to fit the context by setting up various *symbolic* correspondences between fable and the situation in which he finds himself. Aesop tells the ‘Frog and Mouse’ fable after he is informed by the Delphians that he is to be executed that very day for the crimes of temple-robbery and blasphemy.<sup>45</sup> Understanding the severity of the threat (Αἴσωπος ἰδὼν αὐτοὺς ἀπειλουμένους, *Vita G* 132-133), Aesop presumably expects the fable to persuade the Delphians to change their minds.<sup>46</sup>

‘λόγον ἀκούσατε’. οἱ δὲ ἐπέτρεψαν αὐτὸν λέγειν. ὁ δὲ Αἴσωπος φησιν: [*Vita G* 133] ‘ὅτε ἦν τὰ ζῶα ὁμόφωνα, μῦς φιλιάσας βατράχῳ ἐκάλεσεν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ δεῖπνον καὶ εἰσήγαγεν αὐτὸν εἰς ταμιεῖον πλούσιον πάνυ, ἐφ’ ᾧ ἦν ἄρτος, κρέας, τυρός, ἐλαία, ἰσχάδες· καὶ φησιν ‘ἔσθιε.’ καλῶς ληφθεὶς ὁ βάτραχος φησιν ‘ἐλθέ καὶ σὺ παρ’ ἐμοὶ δειπνήσων, ἵνα σε καλῶς λάβω.’ ἀπήγαγεν δὲ αὐτὸν εἰς λίμνην καὶ φησιν ‘κολύμβησον.’ ὁ δὲ μῦς· ‘κολυμβῆσαι οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι.’ ὁ βάτραχος· ‘ἐγὼ σε διδάξω.’ δήσας τε λίνῳ τὸν πόδα τοῦ μύδος πρὸς τὸν ἴδιον πόδα [ἔδησεν] <ἤλατο εἰς τὴν λίμνην> καὶ τὸν μῦν ἔσυρεν. ὁ δὲ μῦς πνιγόμενος εἶπεν ‘νεκρὸς ὢν ζῶντά σε ἐκδικήσω.’ ταῦτα εἰπόντος αὐτοῦ καταδύς ὁ βάτραχος ἐπιξεν αὐτόν. κειμένου δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τοῦ ὕδατος καὶ ἐπιπλέοντος, κόραξ ἤρπασεν τὸν μῦν σὺν τῷ βατράχῳ συνδεδεμένον, καταφαγὼν δὲ τὸν μῦν ἐδράξατο καὶ τοῦ βατράχου. οὕτως ὁ μῦς τὸν βάτραχον ἐξεδίκησεν. ὁμοίως κἀγώ, ἄνδρες, ἀποθανὼν ὑμῖν μόρος ἔσομαι· καὶ γὰρ Λύδιοι, Βαβυλώνιοι, καὶ σχεδὸν ἡ Ἑλλάς ὅλη τὸν ἐμὸν καρπίσσονται θάνατον.’

‘Listen to this story’. They permitted him to speak. Aesop said: [133] ‘When all the animals spoke the same language, a mouse became friends with a frog and invited him to dinner. He brought him to a richly-stocked storeroom, in which there was bread, meat, cheese, olives, and dried figs. ‘Eat,’ he told him.

<sup>44</sup> Van Dijk 1995.

<sup>45</sup> *Vita G* 132: οἱ δὲ Δέλφιοι εἰσελθόντες πρὸς τὸν Αἴσωπον ἔφησαν ‘ἀπὸ κρηνοῦ σε δεῖ βληθῆναι σήμερον· οὕτως γὰρ σε ἐψηφίσασμεν ἀνελεῖν, ἄξιον ὄντα <ὡς ἱερόσυλον> καὶ βλάσφημον, ἵνα μηδὲ ταφῆς ἀξιώθῃς. ἐτοίμασαι σεαυτόν.’ (The Delphians came to Aesop and said, ‘Today you must be thrown from the cliff. For this is the way we voted to kill you, a temple-robber and blasphemer unworthy of burial. Prepare yourself’).

<sup>46</sup> For the historical and broader ideological implications of the *Life*’s representation of Aesop’s confrontation with the Delphians, see espec. Wiechers 1961 and now Kurke 2011.

Being received so hospitably, the frog said: 'You should come to my place for dinner, too, so I can give you a good reception!' He led the mouse to his pond and said 'Dive in!' But the mouse said, 'I don't know how to dive.' So the frog said, 'I'll teach you.' Using a chord, he tied the mouse's foot to his own foot and, jumping into the pond, dragged the mouse behind. As he was drowning, the mouse said, 'Even though I am dead I will get revenge on you.' As he said these words the frog went under water and drowned the mouse. As he lay there, floating upon the surface of the water, a raven snatched up the mouse, still tied to the frog, and after the raven ate the mouse he also ate up the frog. This is how the mouse punished the frog. So, too, men of Delphi, in death I shall be your doom. For the Lydians, Babylonians, and almost all of Greece will reap the harvest of my dying.'

On the one hand, there are a number of demonstrable formal and thematic links to the fable tradition. The explicit announcement of the 'fable' ('λόγον ἀκούσατε'), the conventional opening (ὅτε ἦν τὰ ζῷα ὁμόφωνα), and the formalized *epimythium* (οὕτως ὁ μῦς τὸν βάτραχον ἐξεδίκησεν. ὁμοίως κἀγώ, ἄνδρες, ἀποθανὼν ὑμῖν μόρος ἔσομαι) all mark the tale as traditional. The fable also treats themes that are well attested both in- and outside ancient collections. As van Dijk has shown, in representations of Aesop's fable-telling in the *Life*, a connection 'between the fable and both its direct context and the *Life* as a whole can be observed'.<sup>47</sup> Here I would like to extend Van Dijk's study by emphasizing that there is a significant difference between, on the one hand, a *direct* connection between the specific circumstances in which Aesop finds himself and his particular performance, and, on the other hand, an indirect, symbolic connection – one that needs to be explicitly drawn out and explained in order to make sense. In this case, according to the analogy set up by the fable, the mouse corresponds to the unjustly murdered Aesop, the frog to the Delphians, and the raven to the avenging force that punishes the guilty party; like the raven, the Babylonians, Lydians, and all of Greece 'will reap the harvest' (καρπίζονται) of Aesop's death.

One of the many peculiarities of the composition of the *Life of Aesop* is the extended borrowing (occurring at *Vita G* 101-123) of episodes from the *vita* of the legendary Assyrian sage *Ahiqar*.<sup>48</sup> The earliest text of the *Life of Ahiqar*, an Aramaic papyrus, is dated 420-400 BCE, and it is generally accepted that Greeks first came into contact with the legend of Ahiqar in roughly the same period. Scholars have identified numerous points of contact between the Aesop and

<sup>47</sup> Van Dijk 1995, 143.

<sup>48</sup> See Perry 1952, 4-10; Conybeare, Harris, and Lewis, 1913, 2:715-784; Lindenberger 1983, 2:479-507; Oettinger 1992; Kussly 1992.

Ahiqar legends, and it is difficult to say with certainty whether the Ahiqar material is a late addition to a pre-existing Aesopic *vita* or whether it is more of a kernel around which a fragmented Aesopic legend took shape and expanded during the Hellenistic period.<sup>49</sup> The episodes borrowed from the story of Ahiqar have Aesop traveling to Babylon (*Vita G* 101-111; 123) and Egypt (*Vita G* 112-123), providing the *Life* with an exotic Near-Eastern aura and serving as a sort of bridge between Aesop's experiences on Samos (*Vita G* 20-100) and his confrontation with the Delphians (*Vita G* 124-142). Reflecting general opinion, Tomas Hägg has observed that the Ahiqar material is 'quite alien to the spirit of the rest of the *Life*,' in particular the way in which Aesop's precepts are 'almost wholly irrelevant to their context'.<sup>50</sup> It is not my intention here to contradict this view by claiming that the Ahiqar material in fact fits quite well in the *Life*. But I would like to draw attention to some broad analogies between certain aspects of the Ahiqar sections and other representations of the free Aesop's fable-telling in *Vita G* 90-142.

Specifically, at chs. 109-110, the sage's manner of imparting wisdom is analogous to the other nine representations of the free Aesop's fable-telling in two important aspects: (1) Aesop is shown delivering established, fixed forms of wisdom (not presented as improvisations); and (2) Aesop's words of wisdom are of a generalized character, not bound to the exigencies of a particular context.<sup>51</sup>

The passages in which Aesop is assimilated to Ahiqar begin with a rapid and dizzying series of events, immediately following upon Aesop's writing down and archiving of his fables in Samos (*Vita G* 100). There are a number of ways in which Aesop is acknowledged now as a famous sage, comparable in stature to the legendary Ahiqar, enjoying a comfortable proximity to royalty and expanding his reputation in the Near East. Having been 'recognized with many honors' (*Vita G* 101), Aesop departs Samos and 'tours the world' (*Vita G* 101), 'lectures to audiences for a fee' (*Vita G* 101) and settles first in Babylon where he 'gives an exposition of philosophy' and is 'acclaimed as a great man by the Babylonians' (*Vita G* 101).<sup>52</sup> Aesop 'solves philosophical conundrums' for the king Lycurgus

<sup>49</sup> Diogenes Laertius ascribes to Theophrastus a work entitled 'Akicharos' (D.L. 5,50). Essential questions about how and when the Ahiqar material came to be incorporated into the Aesopic *vita* tradition are vexed and remain open. Adrados 1979 dates the establishment of a connection between Ahiqar and Aesop to the fifth century BCE (cf. Kurke 2011), while West 1984 dates the connection to the Hellenistic period.

<sup>50</sup> Hägg 1997, 182.

<sup>51</sup> Two of the proverbs spoken by Aesop in the 'Ahiqar' sections in fact find echoes in the Aesopic tradition; cf. Haslam 1986, 153-154.

<sup>52</sup> *Vita G* 101: Πολλοὺς δὲ χρόνους ἐν τῇ Σάμῳ διατρίψας ὁ Αἴσωπος καὶ πολλῶν τιμῶν καταξιώθεις ἠβουλήθη περιελθεῖν τὴν οἰκουμένην, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀκροατηρίοις διελέγετο. τμήματα δὲ ἀργυρικὰ λαμβάνων πᾶσαν τε χώραν περιελθὼν ὁ Αἴσωπος ἐγένετο [δὲ] ἐν Βαβυλῶνι, ἐν ἧ ἔβασίλευεν Λυκοῦργος. ἐπιδειξάμενος δὲ αὐτοῦ τὴν φιλοσοφίαν μέγας

(προβλήματα φιλοσοφίας, *Vita G* 102), who in turn ‘becomes an admirer of Aesop’s character and intelligence’ (*Vita G* 101). Aesop then adopts a son, named Helios, in Babylon as ‘heir to his own wisdom’ (ὡς διάδοχον αὐτοῦ τῆς σοφίας, *Vita G* 103). Before beginning to recite an extended and unrelated series of proverbs to Helios, Aesop tells his adopted son to ‘preserve his words as a sacred trust’ (καὶ νῦν οὖν φύλαξον τούτους ὡς παρακαταθήκην, *Vita G* 109). It is clear that this *parakatathēkē* does not involve imparting an intangible kind of instinct – the ‘quick wit’ (ἀγχινοίας) or ‘readiness with words’ (εὐρεσίλογος) that characterized the slave’s wisdom performances in *Vita G* 1-90. Rather, this type of knowledge is presented as something quasi-material, something Helios can *possess* and *preserve*. Indeed, Aesop presents it to Helios as a body of wisdom in the form of a set of generalized precepts (*Vita G* 109-110):

ἐν οἴνῳ μὴ φιλολόγει ἐπιδεικνύμενος παιδείαν· ἀκαίρως γὰρ κατασοφίζόμενος καταγελασθήσῃ. ὀξύτερα βιάδιζε τῆς γλώττης. τοῖς εὖ πράττουσι μὴ φθόνει ἀλλὰ σύγχαιρε, καὶ μεθέξεις αὐτῶν τῆς εὐπραξίας· ὁ γὰρ φθονῶν ἀγνοῶν ἑαυτὸν βλάπτει. δούλων σου ἐπιμελοῦ, μεταδιδούς αὐτοῖς ἀφ’ ὧν ἔχεις, ἵνα μὴ ὡς κύριον μόνον ἐντρέπωνται σε, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς εὐεργέτην τιμῶσιν. θυμοῦ κράτει. ἐάν τι παρηκμακῶς μανθάνῃς, μὴ αἰσχυνοῦ· βέλτιον γὰρ ὀψιμαθῆ μάλλον ἢ ἀμαθῆ καλεῖσθαι. τῇ γυναικί σου κρύπτου καὶ ἀπορρήτων μηδὲν αὐτῇ δῆλον τίθει· τὸ γὰρ γένος ἀντίπαλον ὄν πρὸς τὴν συμβίωσιν ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν καθημένη ὀπλίζεται, μηχανωμένη πῶς σου κυριεύσει.

When drinking wine do not discuss serious matters to show off your learning, for you will be tripped up in an off moment and get yourself laughed at. Be sharper than your tongue. Do not envy those who are successful, but rejoice with them, and you will share in their good fortune, for he who is jealous unwittingly harms himself. Take care of your slaves, and share what you have with them so that they may not only obey you as their master but also honor you as their benefactor. Rule your passions. If you learn a thing later than you should, do not be ashamed, for it is better to be called a late learner than a dolt. Keep your councils from your wife, and reveal no secrets to her, for womankind is a rival in married life, and she will sit all day plotting and scheming how to get you under control.

---

παρὰ τοῖς Βαβυλωνίοις ἀνεδείχθη, ὥστε καὶ τὸν βασιλέα ἐραστήν αὐτοῦ γενέσθαι τῶν ἡθῶν διὰ τὸ νοῦν αὐτὸν ἔχειν, καὶ ἐποίησεν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τῆς διοικήσεως.

This excerpt is part of a series of twenty uninterrupted and unrelated proverbs, amounting to the material inheritance (*παρακαταθήκη*) promised to Helios.

In keeping with the *Life's* representation of the free Aesop as the possessor of an established body of wisdom, more emphasis is placed upon the free Aesop's status as a wise and learned man in *Vita G* 123 and 124. First, upon his return to Babylon after time spent in Egypt, Aesop is honored again with a statue and celebrated for his wisdom (*καὶ ἐποίησεν ἑορτὴν μεγάλην ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐπὶ τῆ τοῦ Αἰσώπου σοφίᾳ*). Then, we are told that Aesop traveled to other cities before his fateful adventure in Delphi; in these unnamed cities Aesop 'gave demonstrations of his wisdom and learning' (*Vita G* 123). It seems noteworthy that, once Aesop is a freedman – that is, once he becomes an established teller of fables and is no longer the slave *bricoleur* – we no longer hear a word about his hideously ugly body, so prominent in his performances of wisdom in the first half of the work, and we do not hear about any beatings or other forms of physical violence. To be sure, there is plenty of danger:<sup>53</sup> we do read in these sections about two attempts to kill Aesop, and the second, at the hands of the Delphians, is successful.<sup>54</sup>

### 5. Conclusion

In the fictional world of the *Life of Aesop*, the conditions and exigencies of enslavement and freedom give rise to two distinct modes of performance. By looking closely at some key differences between Aesop's enslaved and free performances, I hope to have demonstrated that Aesop's non-verbal communication and improvisatory wit are connected with his physical vulnerability as a slave in various ways, while his transformation into a kind of authority on human nature (cf. *Vita G* 101) is bound up with his manumission and with his subsequent mastery of a coherent, seemingly fixed body of wisdom. To put it another way, the slave's body is replaced by the free author's (putative) corpus.

The distinctions drawn between enslaved and free performances in the *Life* also reflect a dynamic tension that surfaces in virtually every phase of the fable's history: namely, a tension between (1) a putatively oral, improvisational, and precarious past, embedded in slavery, and (2) a written, fixed, and stable present, circulating in the material reality of the literary text. Rather than reading (2) as

<sup>53</sup> Finkelppearl 2003, 45, observes that 'moments of real danger' occur in the *Life* when the fables take on a lasting, physical form. But Aesop faces serious physical danger from the beginning of the *Life*; it is more precise to note that the key difference is that the free Aesop faces *existential* threats but no longer *physical* ones.

<sup>54</sup> *Vita G* 104, 127.

supplanting (1), and leading only to Aesop's *hubristic*, fatal encounter with the Delphians, we ought to recognize how rich and productive the tension between the two has been for authors and fabulists throughout the history of the fable tradition. The two visions of Aesopic storytelling I have been describing are mapped onto a life-cycle or 'career' in the *Life of Aesop*, with the result that the first vision – in slavery – is the fable genre's 'past', while the second vision – in freedom – is the fable's 'present' (or 'future'). A strikingly similar idea can be found in the middle of the prologue to the central book of Phaedrus' five books of Latin verse fables (Phaed. 3 *Prol.* 33-38):

*Nunc, fabularum cur sit inventum genus,  
brevi docebo. Servitus obnoxia,  
quia quae volebat non audebat dicere,  
affectus proprios in fabellas transtulit,  
calumniamque fictis elusit iocis.  
Ego illius pro semita feci viam*

Now I will briefly explain why the fable genre was invented. The slave, being legally vulnerable, since he didn't dare say openly what he wished to say, transferred his personal feelings into fables, and so avoided accusation with joking stories. Where he cut a path I have built a broad road...

Phaedrus represents the pre-literate history of fable as something associated with slavery and something dangerous; but his *literate* product is something very different. Regardless of questions of historicity, Phaedrus presents himself as a *free* writer, one who wants his readers to think that he is writing down material that was originally oral and derived from *slave* experience.<sup>55</sup> Thus in Phaedrus, our earliest surviving collection of Aesopica, the fable is presented as a translation into Latin and a versification of material that was originally Greek, prose, and socio-politically low. But what Phaedrus created is analogous to all of our surviving Aesopica, including the *Life of Aesop*: as it survives in the literary record (in its many different manifestations), it is always in a state of having already undergone a process of becoming a literary product.

---

<sup>55</sup> Champlin 2005.

## Bibliography

- Adrados, F.R. 1979. 'The *Life of Aesop* and the Origins of Novel in Antiquity', *QUCC* 1, 93-112.
- 1981. 'Sociolinguística y griego antiguo', *Revista española de lingüística* 11, 311-329.
- Bradley, H. 1999. 'The Seductions of the Archive: Voices Lost and Found', *History of the Human Sciences* 12.2, 107-122.
- Champlin, E. 2005. 'Phaedrus the Fabulous', *JRS* 95.1, 97-123.
- Compton, T. 1990. 'The Trial of the Satirist: Poetic *Vitae* (Aesop, Archilochus, Homer) as Background for Plato's *Apology*', *AJP* 111, 330-347.
- Conybeare, F.C. – Harris, J.R. – Lewis, A.S. (eds.) 1913. *The Story of Ahiqar: from the aramaic, syriac, arabic, armenian, ethiopic, old turkish, greek, and slavonic versions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Derrida, J. 1995. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz, Chicago – London: University of Chicago Press.
- Dillery, J. 1999. 'Aesop, Isis, and the Heliconian Muses', *CP* 94, 268-280.
- duBois, P. 2003. *Slaves and Other Objects*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Eberhard, A. 1872. *Fabulae romanenses Graece conscriptae*, vol. 1, Leipzig: Teubner.
- Ferrari, F. (ed.) 1997. *Romanzo d'Esopo*. Introduzione e Testo Critico. Traduzione e Note di Guido Bonelli e Girogio Sandrolini, Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli.
- Finkelpearl, E.D. 2003. 'Lucius and Aesop Gain a Voice: Apuleius *Met.* 11.1-2 and *Vita Aesopi* 7', in: S. Panayotakis – M. Zimmerman – W. Keulen (eds.), *The Ancient Novel and Beyond*, Mnemosyne Supplement 241, Leiden: Brill, 37-51.
- Foucault, M. 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith, New York: Pantheon Books.
- Hägg, T. 1997. 'A Professor and His Slave: Conventions and Values in the *Life of Aesop*', in: P. Bilde – T. Engberg-Pedersen – L. Hannestad – J. Zahle (eds.), *Conventional Values of the Hellenistic Greeks*, Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 177-203.
- Haslam, M.W. 1986. '3720. *Life of Aesop* (Addendum to 3331)', in: *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Vol. 53, London: Egypt Exploration Society for the British Academy, 149-172.
- Hervieux, L. 1893-1899. *Les fabulistes latins: depuis le siècle d'Auguste jusqu'à la fin du Moyen Âge*, 5 vols., Paris: Firmin-Didot; repr. Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1970.
- Hock, R.F. – Chance, J.B. – Perkins, J. (eds.) 1998. *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative*, Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- Holzberg, N. 1992. 'Der Äsop-Roman. Eine strukturanalytische Interpretation,' in: Holzberg (ed.), 33-75.
- 1993. 'A Lesser Known 'Picaresque' Novel of Greek Origin: The *Aesop Romance* and Its Influence', *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel* 5, 1-16.
- 1996. '*Life of Aesop*', in: G. Schmeling (ed.), *The Novel in the Ancient World*, Leiden: Brill, 633-639.
- 2002. *The Ancient Fable*, Bloomington – Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- (ed., with the assistance of A. Beschornier and S. Merkle) 1992. *Der Äsop-Roman: Motivgeschichte und Erzählstruktur*, *Classica Monacensia* 6, Tübingen: Gunter Narr.
- Hopkins, K. 1993. 'Novel Evidence for Roman Slavery', *Past & Present* 138, 3-27.
- Hunter, R. 2007. 'Isis and the Language of Aesop', in: M. Paschalis (ed.), *Pastoral Palimpsests: Essays in the Reception of Theocritus and Virgil*, *Rethymnon Classical Studies* 3, Heraklion: Crete University Press, 39-58.
- Jedrkwicz, S. 1989. *Sapere e paradossos nell' antichità: Esopo e la favola*, Rome: Ateneo.



- Jouanno, C. 2006. *Vie d'Ésope*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- 2011. 'Le biographe et le fabuliste: Réflexions sur le rôle des fables dans la *Vie* (grecque) d'*Ésope*', in: J.-M. Boivin – J. Cerquiglioni-Toulet – L. Harf-Lancer (eds.), *Les fables avant La Fontaine*, Genève: Librairie Droz, 105-119.
- Karadagli, T. 1981. *Fabel und Ainos. Studien zur griechischen Fabel*, Koenigstein: Hain.
- Karla, G.A. 2001. *Vita Aesopi. Überlieferung, Sprache und Edition einer frühbyzantinischen Fassung des Äsopromans*, Weisbaden: Reichert.
- Konstantakos, I.M. 2013. 'Life of Aesop and Adventures of Criticism: A Review-Article on Manolis Papatthomopoulos' Recent Edition of the *Vita Aesopi*, Version G', *Myrtia* 28, 355-392.
- Kurke, L. 2003. 'Aesop and the Contestation of Delphic Authority', in C. Dougherty – L. Kurke (eds.), *The Cultures Within Ancient Greek Culture: Contact, Conflict, Collaboration*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 77-100.
- 2011. *Aesopic Conversations: Popular Tradition, Cultural Dialogue, and the Invention of Greek Prose*, Princeton – Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Kussly, R. 1992. 'Achikar, Tinuphis und Äsop', in: Holzberg (ed.), 23-30.
- Lefkowitz, J.B. 2008. 'Ugliness and Value in the *Life of Aesop*', in: R. Rosen – I. Sluiter (eds.), *Kakos: Badness and Anti-Value in Classical Antiquity*, Leiden: Brill, 59-82.
- Lindenberger, J.M. 1983. 'Ahiqar', in: J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2:479-507.
- Lissarague, F. 2000. 'Aesop, Between Man and Beast: Ancient Portraits and Illustrations', in: B. Cohen (ed.), *Not the Classical Ideal: Athens and the Construction of the Other in Greek Art*, Leiden: Brill, 132-149.
- Luzzatto, M.J. 1996. 'Esopo', in: S. Settis (ed.), *I Greci. Storia, Cultura, Arte, Società*, vol. II.1: *Una storia greca. Formazione*, Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 1307-1324.
- Manoff, M. 2004. 'Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines', *Libraries and the Academy* 4, 9-25.
- Martin, R. 1998. 'The Seven Sages as Performers of Wisdom', in: C. Dougherty – L. Kurke (eds.), *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece: Cult, Performance, Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 108-128.
- Mignogna, E. 1992. 'Aesopus bucolicus. Come si 'metta in scena' un miracolo (*Vita Aesopi* c. 6)', in: Holzberg (ed.), 76-84.
- Nøjgaard, M. 1964. *La fable antique: 1. La fable grecque avant Phèdre*, Copenhagen.
- Oettinger, N. 1992. 'Achikars Weisheitssprüche im Licht älterer Fabeldichtung', in: Holzberg (ed.), 3-22.
- Papatthomopoulos, M. 1990. *Ο ΒΙΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΑΙΣΩΠΙΟΥ. Η ΠΑΡΑΛΛΑΓΗ G*, Ioannina: Panepistimio Ioanninon.
- 1999. *Ο ΒΙΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΑΙΣΩΠΙΟΥ. Η ΠΑΡΑΛΛΑΓΗ W*, Athens: Papademas.
- Perry, B.E. 1933. 'The Text Tradition of the Greek *Life of Aesop*', *TAPhA* 64, 198-244.
- 1936. *Studies in the Text History of the Life and Fables of Aesop*, Haverford: APA.
- 1940. 'The Origin of the *Epimythium*', *TAPhA* 71, 391-419.
- 1952. *Aesopica*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- 1959. 'Fable', *Studium Generale* 12, 17-37.
- (ed.) 1965. *Babrius and Phaedrus*, London – Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Pervo, R.I. 1998. 'A Nihilist Fabula: Introducing the *Life of Aesop*', in: Hock – Chance – Perkins (eds.), 77-120.

- Ragone, G. 1997. 'La schiavitù di Esopo a Samo: Storia e romanzo', in: M. Moggi – G. Cordiano (eds.), *Schiavi e dipendenti nell'ambito dell' 'oikos' e della 'familia'*, *Atti del XXII Colloquio GIREA*, Pisa: ETS, 127-171.
- Rosen, R.M. 2007. *Making Mockery: The Poetics of Ancient Satire*, Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press.
- Shiner, W. 1998. 'Creating Plot in Episodic Narratives: The *Life of Aesop* and the *Gospel of Mark*', in: Hock – Chance – Perkins (eds.), 155-176.
- Taylor, D. 2003. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Van Dijk, G.-J. 1995. 'The Fables in the Greek *Life of Aesop*', *Reinardus* 8, 131-150.
- 1997. *Αἶνοι, Λόγοι, Μῦθοι: Fables in Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic Greek Literature*, Leiden: Brill.
- Velody, I. 1998. 'The Archive and the Human Sciences: Notes Towards a Theory of the Archive', *History of the Human Sciences* 11.4, 1-16.
- Voss, P.J. – Werner, M.L. 1999. 'Toward a Poetics of the Archive: Introduction', *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 32.1, i-viii.
- West, M.L. 1984. 'The Ascription of Fables to Aesop in Archaic and Classical Greece', in: F.R. Adrados – O. Reverdin (eds.), *La Fable: Huit exposés suivis de discussions*, Entretiens Fondation Hardt 30, Vandoeuvres, Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 105-136.
- Wiechers, A. 1961. *Aesop in Delphi*, Meisenheim am Glan: Hain.
- Winkler, J.J. 1985. *Auctor and Actor: A Narratological Reading of Apuleius' Golden Ass*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – Oxford: University of California Press.