

AESOP, ISIS, AND THE HELICONIAN MUSES

JOHN DILLERY

AESOP IS A CUNNING and clever fellow. Among the many talents hidden in his loathsome appearance is a fine ability to speak and tell stories. This ability is at the heart of his role as a representative of “common intelligence” or “folk culture.” Further, it is an ability that is very carefully signaled at the beginning of the *Life of Aesop* in ways that have not been, to my knowledge, noted before. This signaling is accomplished in three ways: Aesop’s Phrygian origins, the presence of Isis (popularly regarded as a deity responsible for the invention of writing, but also language in general), and the presence also of the Heliconian Muses (the goddesses of articulate speech, and consequently literature). These latter two connections, both to Isis and the Muses, raise the possibility that the *Life* exploits the world of Isiac cult. When attention is paid to the text’s origins in imperial Greco-Roman Egypt, its reliance on this world becomes manifestly clear.

At the beginning of the G recension of the *Life*, we learn that this famous figure of Greek legend was, among other misfortunes, mute: “In addition to these [a long list of physical deformities] he possessed a fault still greater than his ugliness—lack of speech (ἄφωνίαν); indeed, he was mute and unable to speak” (ἦν δὲ καὶ ῥῶδος καὶ οὐδὲν ἠδύνατο λαλεῖν, §1).¹ While the Latin *Vita Aesopi Lolliana* preserves this same feature in a simplified form (*et inter haec omnia fuit mutus*), the W recension makes Aesop halting in his speech and with booming voice (βραδύγλωσσος καὶ βομβόφωνος).

It has been noted that Aesop’s inability to speak is important at the narrative level because it is involved in a story that demonstrates his basic honesty in the face of false accusation. Shortly after the start of the *Life*, fellow slaves who have consumed some figs falsely accuse Aesop of having eaten the fruits; unable to defend himself with speech, he vomits up the contents of his stomach, revealing no figs. His accusers are compelled to do the same; they disgorge the figs, and thereby convict themselves (§§2–3). But this lack of

The origins of this paper sprang from a seminar given on the *Life of Aesop* in the fall of 1997 at the University of Virginia by Prof. J.-Th. Papademetriou of the University of Athens. I would like to thank him again for his stimulating presentation. An anonymous referee for *CP* made several substantive improvements in the argument, and considerably broadened its scope. Neither is responsible, however, for any errors that remain.

1. I follow the text of B. E. Perry, found in *Aesopica* (Urbana, 1952). For a recent discussion of the different recensions, see N. Holzberg, “Fable: Aesop. *Life of Aesop*,” in *The Novel in the Ancient World*, ed. G. Schmeling (Leiden, 1996), 633–34; cf. Holzberg, “A Lesser Known ‘Picaresque’ Novel of Greek Origin: the *Aesop Romance* and Its Influence,” *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel 5* (1993): 1–16. The fundamental study is still B. E. Perry, *Studies in the Text History of the Life and Fables of Aesop* (Haverford, PA, 1936).

speech is also central in another vignette from the beginning of the *Life* that brings to light Aesop's moral qualities.² A priestess of Isis is lost in the countryside; Aesop, while working in the fields, spots her, gives her refreshment, and puts her back on the road. In return for Aesop's kindness, the priestess prays to Isis "of the many names" (Ἴσι μυριώνυμε, §5) that for his piety the goddess grant him the ability to speak (τὸ . . . λαλεῖν αὐτῷ χάρισαι). Meanwhile, Aesop takes a nap in the fields, and while he is asleep, Isis herself, accompanied by the Nine Muses, appears. She announces that she gives back to Aesop a voice (φωνήν, §7), and calls upon the Muses to endow this voice with excellent speech (τῇ φωνῇ τὸν ἄριστον χαρίσασθε λόγον). She persuades each one of the Muses to bestow something from her own specialty (ἔπεισεν δὲ καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς Μούσας ἐκάστη(ν) τι τῆς ἰδίας δωρεᾶς χαρίσασθαι), and they confer upon him "the invention of words, and the weaving and construction of Greek stories" (λόγων εὔρεμα καὶ μύθων Ἑλληνικῶν πλοκὴν καὶ ποιήσεις); they then return to Mt. Helicon.³ The delightful scene of the waking of Aesop is as follows (§8):

ὁ δὲ Αἴσωπος αὐτὸ τὸ ταχθεὶν ὑπὸ τῆς φύσεως ὑπνώσας διεγέρθη καὶ φησιν "οὐα, ἠδέως ὑπνώσα." καὶ τὰ βλέπομενα ὀνομάζων—δίκελλα, πήρα, μηλωτή, μάνδιξ, βοῦς, ὄνος, πρόβατον—"λαλῶ" (ἔφη), "μὰ τὰς Μούσας. πόθεν ἔλαβον τὸ λαλεῖν; πόθεν; γενόηκα: πάντως ἀνθ' ὧν εὐσέβησα εἰς τὴν ἱεροφόρον τῆς Ἴσιδος. ὥστε καλὸν ἔστιν εὐσεβεῖν. προσδέχομαι οὖν ἀπὸ θεῶν λήψεσθαι χρηστάς ἐλπίδας."

Aesop, having slept the very amount allotted him by nature, woke, and he says, "Wow, I slept well." And naming everything he saw—pitch-fork, leather bag, sheepskin, wallet, cow, ass, sheep—he said, "I speak, by the Muses! From where did I get the ability to speak? Where? I know! Surely it is because I was pious towards the priestess of Isis. And so it is good to be pious! I expect then to receive good hopes from the gods."

This passage is important in a number of respects, and may help to explain odd details earlier in the work, all of which have to do with language and its invention.

1. AESOP: THE PHRYGIAN FROM PHRYGIA

The text is strangely redundant regarding Aesop's race: "he was by chance a slave, and by race a Phrygian from Phrygia" (τῇ μὲν τύχῃ ἦν δοῦλος, τῷ δὲ γένει Φρυγῆ τῆς Φρυγίας, §1). At one level this may simply be an allusion to the fact that Phrygia was a common source of slaves in antiquity, and that many would have known about Phrygians only through contact with Phrygian slaves who were resident in their communities throughout the Mediterranean.⁴ Aesop, on the other hand, was a Phrygian from Phrygia—not,

2. Cf. J. J. Winkler, *Auctor and Actor* (Berkeley, 1985), 286.

3. For the text at this point, see J.-Th. Papademetriou, "Notes on the Aesop Romance," *RhM* 123 (1980): 27.

4. Phrygians at Athens were especially known as slaves who worked in the mines; furthermore, the Phrygian name, Manes, in Attic comedy was immediately understood as referring to a slave. See O. Masson, "Les noms des esclaves dans la Grèce antique," in *Actes du Colloque 1971 sur l'Esclavage* (Paris, 1972), 15–19; M. M. Austin and P. Vidal-Naquet, *Economic and Social History of Ancient Greece* (Berkeley, 1977), 105; M. I. Finley, *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece* (Harmondsworth, UK, 1981), 169. M. Rostovtzeff, *The*

that is, the more frequently met Phrygian slave in service in a foreign land.⁵ But there may be something more as well.

Aesop is always characterized as Phrygian in origin, but the redundancy, the insistence, if you will, on his Phrygian heritage is what is noteworthy here.⁶ The scene of Aesop's waking from sleep may provide a clue for the presence of this oddity. When he rises, he names everything that he sees. This recalls the famous experiment of the pharaoh Psammetichus reported in Herodotus' *Histories* (Hdt. 2.2). There, it will be remembered, Psammetichus, wishing to learn which race is the most ancient, has two newly born infants brought up in isolation in order to see what language they speak, on the assumption that the speech in question will be completely "natural," and hence the oldest. At two years of age the children utter the word *becos* when they see their keeper approach, which, it is later discovered, is the Phrygian word for 'bread'. Lloyd assumes that this story has some grounding in popular accounts, both East Greek (Ionian) as well as Egyptian (via Greeks living at Memphis or Naucratis).⁷ Be that as it may, it seems that there was a popular tradition in the Greek world that made the Phrygians one of the oldest races in the world, and their speech an *ur*-form of human language. Perhaps the naming scene of Aesop relies in part on this common understanding: waking, the Phrygian names items he sees (cf. Adam in the Bible, Gen. 2.19); the words he speaks, however, are Greek, not Phrygian. (Similarly, the story of the children in Herodotus betrays a Greek background.)⁸ I would hesitate to assert that the Herodotus story plays any direct role in the story of Aesop's acquisition of speech, but the ideas behind it, especially regarding Phrygia as a place associated with the first development of human speech, may very well do so. It should, however, be added that close connections between Aesop and Herodotus do exist apart from this episode: Herodotus provides our earliest testimonium for Aesop (Hdt. 2.134),⁹ and some features of Aesop's fables may have been written in imitation of the historian.¹⁰

Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World (Oxford, 1941), 3:1515 n. 49 observes that there was a considerable traffic in slaves from Phrygia in the middle of the first century B.C. on the basis of *MAMA* 6.260. Cf. too, e.g., Herodas 2.100–101. The concept of the Phrygians as a servile people lasted for a long time: Philostratus claimed that Phrygians frequently sold their children into slavery (*VA* 8.7.12); cf. G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (Ithaca, 1981), 163 and Finley, *Economy and Society*, 174. Romans regarded certain races as particularly servile; see K. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge, 1994), 65.

5. It could be that Aesop's status as a slave from Phrygia is further accented by a passage such as *Life* §25, where Aesop's master Xanthus asks him what his nationality is; he replies, "Phrygian," and when asked what he knows how to do, replies, "absolutely nothing." This is patently not true, for he is good at storytelling, and will prove himself adept at outsmarting his master.

6. For the redundancy one may wish to adduce texts such as *Xen. An.* 5.2.29 (a man named Mysus from Mysia) or Theopompus *FGrH* 115 F 344 (a man named Magnes or perhaps an anonymous Magnesian); however, these are cases of men who may bear the same name as that of their ethnic group (there are textual difficulties in the case of the Xenophon passage). Names showing ethnic origin were common names for slaves: see Masson, "Noms des esclaves," 19.

7. A. B. Lloyd, *Herodotus Book 2* (Leiden, 1976), 10–11.

8. Lloyd, *Herodotus Book 2*, 10.

9. M. L. West, "The Ascription of Fables to Aesop in Archaic and Classical Greece," in *La Fable*, *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique*, no. 30 (Geneva, 1983), 116–20.

10. Perry, *Studies*, 222, 224.

In his *Studies* (p. 15) Perry notes that Marsyas, like Aesop, is from Phrygia, and that the two figures are representative of “common, folk literature,” in contrast with the Apollonine literature of the elite. Hence, this Phrygian connection may be due to the status of both figures as folk-culture heroes (see also sec. 3 below). I hasten to add, however, that this connection does not explain the odd repetition of “a Phrygian from Phrygia.”

2. ISIS

It has been argued that Isis' sudden appearance in the text is “quite gratuitous”;¹¹ that, in a sense, her presence in the text is ornamental and lacks a real point. One item, however, that connects the goddess logically to the story of Aesop's acquisition of speech is the fact that she was widely regarded as a god responsible for language. Typically, she is characterized as the inventor of writing (γράμματα), but she was also not infrequently connected to speech as well. A good example is her aretology from Cyme (first century B.C.). While at the beginning of this document she is identified, together with Hermes her “teacher,” as the inventor of written language (§3),¹² later she announces that she was the one who bestowed the different languages upon Greeks and barbarians (ἐγὼ διαλέκτους “Ἕλλησι καὶ βαρβάρους ἔταξα, §31).¹³ In both passages it is clear that language is meant to differentiate, in the first case between sacred and profane matters, and in the second, between Greek and barbarian. Of course in the *Life*, she is credited with giving Aesop only a voice (φωνή). It is certainly the case that in the *Letter of Aristeas*, for example, φωνή is used to indicate a specific language, not the faculty of speech in general.¹⁴ I will return to this problem towards the end of the paper. It suffices here merely to state that a particularly well-known tradition in the Greco-Roman world characterized Isis as a deity with strong connections to language.

Something of the aretological tradition seems in fact to be reflected earlier in the *Life* as well: recall that her priestess addresses Isis in her prayer for Aesop as “many-named,” a title that she often bears in a number of other

11. Winkler, *Auctor*, 286.

12. “Ἰσις ἐγὼ εἰμι ἢ τύραννος πάσης χώρας | καὶ ἐπαιδεύθην ὑπὸ Ἑρμοῦ | καὶ γράμματα εὗρον μετὰ Ἑρμοῦ, τὰ τε ἱερὰ καὶ τὰ ἡμόσια ἵνα μὴ τοῖς αὐτοῖς πάντα γράφηται (Text: M. Totti, *Ausgewählte Texte der Isis- und Sarapis-Religion* [Hildesheim, 1985], no. 1.) Cf. the most recent version of the basic text, Y. Grandjean, *Une Nouvelle Arétologie d'Isis à Maronée* (Leiden, 1975), 75–79. Consult also D. Müller, *Ägypten und die griechischen Isis-Aretologien*, ASAW vol. 53, no. 1 (Leipzig, 1961), 21; W. Peek, *Der Isishymnus von Andros und verwandte Texte* (Berlin, 1930), 31–34. On Isis' association with Hermes = Thoth, as well as Isis as scribe, see J. Bergman, *Ich bin Isis* (Uppsala, 1968), 234–37, and J. G. Griffiths, *Plutarch's “De Iside et Osiride”* (Cambridge, 1970), 263; cf. the *Kore Kosmou* §12 (Totti p. 12).

13. Cf. Grandjean, *Une Nouvelle Arétologie d'Isis*, 82–84; Müller, *Isis-Aretologien* 54–57.

14. χαρακτηῖται γὰρ ἰδίους κατὰ τὴν Ἰουδαίαν χρῶνται, καθάπερ Αἰγύπτιοι τῆ τῶν γραμμάτων θέσει, καθὼ καὶ φωνὴν ἴδιαν ἔχουσιν. ὑπολαμβάνονται Συριακῆ χρῆσθαι· τὸ δ' οὐκ ἔστιν, ἀλλ' ἕτερος τρόπος (*Letter of Aristeas* §11). Cf. A. Pelletier, *Lettre d'Aristée à Philocrate* (Paris, 1962), p. 106, n. 2. This observation comes from Demetrius' explanation to Philadelphus of why the sacred text of the Jews has not already been translated. One is left to wonder whether this passage reflects an awareness of the difficulties of resolving unvocalized characters. Indeed, later in the same text we may have evidence suggesting that there was not a reliable Hebrew version of the Law for translation, perhaps for this reason: see §30, Pelletier, *Lettre*, pp. 118–20, n. 3, and R. Shutt, “*Letter of Aristeas: A New Translation and Introduction*,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. Charlesworth, vol. 2 (New York, 1985), p. 14, note e, with bibliography.

texts.¹⁵ It shows up, for example, as her epithet in the famous hymn to Anubis from Kios in Bithynia (first century A.D.), line 6: σή τε μάκαιρα θεὰ μητῆρ πολώνυμος Ἰσις (Totti p. 14).¹⁶ Of course, the praises of Isis can simply be a list of names and epithets (e.g., *P Oxy.* 1380).

It may of course be questioned whether the world of Greco-Roman Egypt could play a significant role in the *Life*. In response to this it needs to be pointed out that the Egyptian features of the story are so manifest and important that they have led many to believe that the earliest version of the *Life* was written in Egypt, not before the second century A.D.:¹⁷ we have not only Isis, but also the appearance late in the story of the legendary pharaoh Nectanebo.¹⁸ It has been argued that Nectanebo is found in the *Life* merely as a convenient representative of the “famous king” type, and that his Egyptian race is basically immaterial.¹⁹ This observation has its merits; indeed, it seems accurate when applied to Lycurgus “the Babylonian,” who is also prominent at the end of the *Life*. But in the case of Nectanebo, I would like to offer an interpretation of the *Life* §§112–15, the most important scene in which he is found, that makes sense of his place in the narrative from an Egyptian perspective.

There we read that on his arrival in Egypt, Aesop is first confronted by the pharaoh dressed in white and wearing horns on his head, attended by his court also dressed in white. When asked by Nectanebo, “What do I look like?” and, “How do you see all the ones about me?,” Aesop replies, τῆ σελήνῃ ἔοικας, καὶ οἱ περὶ σὲ τοῖς ἄστροις (“you are like the moon, and those about you are like the stars,” §113). The pharaoh appears the next day in purple, carrying flowers; Aesop likens him to the sun in springtime, and his attendants to the fruits of the earth. On the third day, Nectanebo appears in white again, his attendants in scarlet robes; Aesop likens him to the sun with its rays.²⁰ When the pharaoh claims that his power is superior to that of Lycurgus of Babylon, Aesop forcefully contradicts him.

It is true that several elements in this scene are conventional in Greek praise literature,²¹ that images of solar and lunar rays as well as horns are common throughout the Greco-Roman world, and that the story itself is

15. R. Merkelbach, *Isis regina-Zeus Sarapis* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1995), 94–101 and *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Munich and Berlin, 1962), p. 5, n. 4.

16. Cf. Grandjean, *Une Nouvelle Arétalogie d'Isis*, 66.

17. See esp. Perry, *Aesopica*, 2–3.

18. An important figure in the *Alexander Romance*, indeed the “real” father of Alexander, as well as in the *Dream of Nectanebo*: see L. Koenen, “The Dream of Nektanebos,” in *Classical Studies Presented to W. H. Willis*, ed. D. Hobson and K. McNamee, *BASP*, vol. 22 (Urbana, 1985), 171–94. A demotic version of the *Dream* has now been published: K. Ryholt, “A Demotic Version of Nectanebos’ Dream (P Carlsberg 562),” *ZPE* 122 (1998): 197–200.

19. F. Pfister, “Aesoproman und Alexanderroman,” *Philologische Wochenschrift* 43 (1923): 813–14, and Winkler, *Auctor*, 280.

20. As Perry notes in his text ad loc., chap. 114 has dropped out of the G version, and has to be reconstructed from W.

21. Hence, in the hymn to Demetrius Poliorcetes, we find σμνόν τι φαίνεθ’, οἱ φίλοι πάντες κύκλω | ἐν μέσοισι δ’ αὐτός, | ὅμοιον ὡσπερ οἱ φίλοι μὲν ἀστέρες, | ἥλιος δ’ ἐκεῖνος (Duris of Samos, *FGrH* 76 F 13. I owe this parallel to my student, Pavlos Avlamis). Further, Demetrius was similarly depicted with bull’s horns, probably to link him with Dionysus: see R. Smith, “Kings and Philosophers,” in *Images and Ideologies: Self-Definition in the Hellenistic World*, ed. A. W. Bulloch, E. Gruen, A. Long, and A. Stewart (Berkeley, 1993), pp. 207–8 and n. 19.

fashioned along the lines of the interview between sage and king, a motif common in Greek narratives (e.g., Solon and Croesus), as well as elsewhere (e.g., Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel and Belshazzar).²² However, it should not be forgotten that these images are connected to a legendary pharaoh of Egypt, and as such, can be linked to specific details of Egyptian cult, in particular, the representation of pharaoh.

The first image we see, Nectanebo as a horned figure representing the moon, immediately recalls images of the goddess Isis: she is regularly represented as a standing figure with horns on her head, and a disc symbolizing the moon between the horns. Furthermore, like Nectanebo in his second appearance, Isis is frequently shown holding flowers or other plant forms such as the cornucopia.²³ Alternatively, when Nectanebo appears on the third day in the guise of the sun, one thinks immediately of Harpocrates-Helios, a byform of Horus, who is often shown with rays of the sun emanating from his head, and holding in his hands a cornucopia.²⁴ These connections probably constitute general allusions to Isiac worship only, inasmuch as it is difficult to see Nectanebo actually being assimilated to a female deity. Indeed, the clothing—both the pure white, and the more garishly colored—that is so prominent in this scene is precisely the type worn by Isiac worshippers.²⁵

But this is not the only way to connect Nectanebo to Egyptian cult in this scene; there is another, not necessarily competing explanation. The very multiplicity of Nectanebo's aspects over the three days may very well also have a point of contact with the elaborate royal titlature of pharaohs.²⁶ The horns interpreted as signifying the moon suggest Nectanebo might be represented as an Apis bull figure, the incarnation of the ever-returning Osiris, a concept closely allied to the reigning pharaoh as Horus.²⁷ Images of a human figure with an Apis bull head, complete with horns and disc, have even been found.²⁸ It is of course true that the disc represents the sun when found on the Apis bull; later authors, however, writing in periods closer to the composition of the *Life* (second century A.D. or later), often mistakenly connect Apis to the moon.²⁹ If Nectanebo is depicted here as an Apis bull, it would be an appropriate representation of the first of the names of a pharaoh, the Horus-name, or, as the Rosetta Stone explains (*OIG* 90), "the Youth and

22. It should be noted in this connection that this portion of the *Life* is based on the Aramaic *Ahiqar Romance*: see, e.g., Holzberg, "The Aesop Romance and its Influence," 2.

23. For images of Isis with horns and lunar disc on her head, as well as flowers/vegetation in her hands, see, e.g., Merkelbach, *Isis regina-Zeus Sarapis*, plates 88, 95, 96, and 97.

24. E.g., Merkelbach, *Isis regina-Zeus Sarapis*, plate 127.

25. Thus the famous fresco of Isiac worship from Herculaneum: see Merkelbach, *Isis regina-Zeus Sarapis*, plate IV (color) = plate 72 (black and white). Cf., e.g., Apul. *Met.* 11.9, of women in the procession of Isis: "mulieres candido splendentes amicimine"; Suet. *Otho* 12.1: "[Othonem] sacra etiam Isidis saepe in lintea religiosa veste propalam celebrasse," where white vestments are no doubt meant. For other colors, see J. G. Griffiths, *Apuleius of Madauros: The Isis-Book* (Leiden, 1975), 126–27.

26. For what follows I depend on L. Koenen, "The Ptolemaic King as a Religious Figure," in *Images and Ideologies: Self-Definition in the Hellenistic World*, ed. A. W. Bulloch et al. (Berkeley, 1993), 48–50; consult also A. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3d ed. (Oxford, 1957), 71–76.

27. Cf. Bergman, *Ich bin Isis*, p. 252 and n. 2; Koenen, "The Ptolemaic King," 58.

28. See *LIMC* 2.2 (1984), sv "Apis" (p. 180, nos. 27–29).

29. See Griffiths, *Plutarch's "de Iside et Osiride,"* ad 368A (pp. 462–63); he cites, among others, Lucan, Aelian, Ammianus Marcellinus, Theoderet, and Porphyry.

the one who has taken the kingship from his father." The second and third images of Nectanebo find parallels in most of the other canonical pharaonic name-types: to judge again by the Rosetta stone, and especially the hieroglyphic version, the fertility of Egypt is especially prominent in both the second "Lord of the Two Crowns" name, as well as the third or "Golden Horus" name.³⁰ Of course, the sun image is obviously very close to the notion of the Son of Re (the sun-god), technically the fifth and last element in pharaonic titlature. What we see in the appearances of Nectanebo may well be an awareness, albeit imprecise, of the elaborate system of royal titles and names that was central to the identity of pharaoh. As such, the fact that Nectanebo is Egyptian is scarcely a feature of little or no consequence for the story.

The Egyptian orientation of the work is an especially important point, to which I will return immediately below in my discussion of the Muses. In general, it is enough to say here that the present discussion is similar in approach to the controversial position that ancient novels and related narratives have elaborate cultic subtexts, a line of thought associated especially with R. Merkelbach.³¹ I would, however, characterize the relationship between the *Life* and Isis mystery religion rather differently: the language and ideas of Isiac cult do seem to be in play in the *Life*, but we do not have a systematic treatment of Aesop's life viewed from a mystic perspective, a sort of "Aesop's Progress."

3. THE MUSES

Perry noted that while in recension W of the *Life* the Muses do not come up at all,³² in G they are frequently found. Perry observes that the Muses may be connected to Aesop in G in part to represent the "native talent of the common folk as opposed to the formal learning of the aristocrats and academicians whose god is Apollo": Aesop is the champion of folk intelligence and cunning, and hence an emblem of folk tradition.³³ This opposition to Apollo helps to explain the legend of Aesop's death at Delphi.³⁴

30. Hieroglyphic version of the Rosetta Stone (from Koenen): "Lord of the Two Crowns | the Glorious | who has made firm the Two Countries | who has made Egypt beautiful . . ." From the third name, "Horus triumphant over Seth of Ombos | who is green life for men . . ." The one name that does not find a ready parallel with Nectanebo's appearances is the fourth element, the "Sedge and Bee" name, a title that is close to the "Lord of the Two Crowns."

31. Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium passim*; on Isis in particular, see Register, sv "Isis." A close parallel in this connection with the *Life* is the famous "Isis Book" (11) of Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, though see sec. 4 below. For criticism of this view, see, e.g., E. Bowie and S. Harrison, in their comprehensive review of studies on the novel, "The Romance of the Novel," *JRS* 83 (1993): 160–61; it should be pointed out that even these scholars find in the main convincing Merkelbach's views that Isiac elements are found throughout Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, *ibid.*, 171. Isis in Greek novels: Heliod. 1.2.6, 30.4 (in dream), 9.9.4–5; Achilles Tatius 5.14.2, 26.4 (Isis and justice); Xenophon Ephesius 5.13.3 (Isis savior).

32. Perry, *Studies*, 14. One should add that Isis is found only once in the W recension, in the parallel episode: there priests of Isis (or one priest, the text is uncertain: see Perry, critical note ad loc.) are similarly lost and led to safety by Aesop; he naps in the fields and the goddess Tyche appears in his dream and bestows upon him excellent speech and story-telling (§§4–7). Tyche can be a byform for Isis: see Merkelbach, *Isis Regina-Zeus Sarapis*, 99, and Griffiths, *Plutarch's "de Iside et Osiride"*, p. 390, n. 4.

33. Perry, *Studies*, 15. See esp. J.-Th. Papademetriou, *Aesop as an Archetypal Hero* (Athens, 1997), 15. Note also Winkler's remarks, *Auctor*, 279 and 287, about grotesques who "utter critical truths about authority."

34. Schol. to Ar. *Vesp.* 1446 = Perry, *Aesopica*, p. 220, no. 21; cf. Hdt. 2.134. See also below.

A further reason for the presence of the Muses is perhaps also the fact that they were sometimes made the companions or followers of Isis. Plutarch, in the *De Iside et Osiride* §3 (352B), observes that Isis was connected to Hermes, “the discoverer of writing and of music and of poetry”; and that in Hermopolis in Egypt the one who was “the leader of the Muses” (Μουσῶν τὴν προτέραν, trans. Griffiths) was called at one and the same time Isis and Justice.³⁵ This is an important connection to which I will return at the end. Here it should be stated first of all that in Ptolemaic Egypt the constellation Virgo, identified with Isis, was also called Dike and Nemesis;³⁶ further, in her aretalogies she is connected strongly with justice.³⁷ In *OGI* 83, Isis even seems to be called Dikaiosyne. Secondly, it should be added that in the Hermetic *Asclepius* (§9), the Muses are described as being sent by the supreme deity into the world to teach humans song; this connection to Hermes/Thoth may be important for the Aesop passage in question, for again we have language discovery and the Muses linked; and with Hermes/Thoth, Isis is never far away either. It is perhaps no accident that the gift that the Muses give Aesop is characterized as λόγων εὑρεμα (“the discovery of speech”). Of course, the word εὑρεμα may mean here nothing more than “a windfall [from the gods]” (LSJ, s.v. εὔρημα II),³⁸ or even “power to devise [stories]” (Daly’s translation).³⁹ Nonetheless, the mention of εὑρεμα here does call to mind the world of Isis as “culture hero” and “inventor.” Indeed, we may recall that in her aretalogies she claims γράμματα εἶρον μετὰ Ἑρμοῦ (“I discovered writing, together with Hermes/Thoth”).

In fact once we appreciate fully the link between the *Life* and Greco-Roman Egypt, other connections between Isis and the Muses emerge. In Ptolemaic Egypt there was a concerted effort on the part of the Macedonian dynasts to identify themselves with the pharaonic past; as we have already seen in connection with pharaonic royal titlature, pharaoh was routinely connected to Horus, and the Ptolemies exploited this identification.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the queens could be linked to Isis. Accordingly, when we read in Diodorus 1.18.4 that Osiris was accompanied by nine maidens capable of singing and educated in the other arts, we should understand that Osiris represents not only Apollo “leader of the Muses” (Musegetes), as in fact the text tells us,⁴¹ but we should also see the passage as furthering a link between pharaonic kingship ritual and the Greek world of the Ptolemies. Osiris becomes Apollo, who when transferred back to his Egyptian setting

35. Cf. Griffiths, *Plutarch's "De Iside et Osiride"* ad loc. Importantly, the association of Isis with the Muses seems not to be found in visual art in the Greco-Roman period: cf. Tran Tam Tinh, *LIMC* 5.1 (1990), s.v. “Isis.”

36. Koenen, “The Ptolemaic King,” pp. 106–7, with notes.

37. Griffiths, *Plutarch's "De Iside et Osiride,"* p. 264, n. 1.

38. εὑρεμα is a late form of εὔρημα: see LSJ, s.v. εὑρεμα.

39. In *Anthology of Ancient Greek Popular Literature*, ed. W. Hansen (Bloomington, 1998), 114.

40. See esp. Koenen, “The Ptolemaic King,” 58; note also idem, “Die Adaptation ägyptischer Königsideologie am Ptolemaerhöf,” in *Egypt and the Hellenistic World*, ed. E. van’t Dack, P. van Dessel, and W. van Gucht, *Studia Hellenistica*, vol. 27 (Louvain, 1983), 143–90. See also, e.g., R. Hunter, *The "Argonautica" of Apollonius* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 158, n. 20.

41. παρθένους ἑννέα δυναμένης ᾄδειν καὶ κατὰ τὰ ἄλλα πεπαιδευμένης, τὰς παρὰ τοῖς Ἑλλήσιν ὀνομαζομένης Μούσας· τούτων δ' ἡγεῖσθαι τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα λέγουσιν, ἀφ' οὗ καὶ Μουσῆγεν ἄντων ὀνομάσθαι.

would become Horus, Osiris' avenging son, or the reigning monarch. Moreover, it is Apollo as leader of the Muses who serves as the connection to Egypt.

The Muses were very important to the Ptolemies, for the Muses had been linked to the Macedonian royal house: Diodorus 17.16.4 reports that Alexander held a dramatic contest at Dium, before his departure for Asia, in honor of Zeus and the Muses, a festival that we are further told had been instituted by one of his predecessors, King Archelaus.⁴² Since Ptolemy I Soter tried to link himself to the house of Alexander, it makes sense that he would cultivate the link to the Muses, which we see for instance in the foundation of the Museum in Alexandria.⁴³ It is significant in connection with Apollo Musegetes that towards the end of the G version of the *Life*, as part of the explanation for the origin of the fables that bear his name, Aesop makes a dedication on Samos to the Muses, and sets up also a statue of Mnemosyne, not of Apollo, for which the god becomes angry with Aesop as he has done with Marsyas.⁴⁴

Importantly, the queen as well as the king in Ptolemaic Egypt may have been connected to the Muses. Although the text is highly fragmentary, it is possible that in his *Aetia* Callimachus made Arsinoe, wife and sister of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, the "tenth muse" (*Callim.* F 2a Pf.). The London scholium to this section of the *Aetia* reports that Callimachus included the number ten at the end of the prologue, either because it was the real total of Muses, or because this is the number one gets if one adds to their ranks either Apollo Musegetes or Queen Arsinoe.

Even more convincing of the identification of Arsinoe with Isis are documents of early Ptolemaic date in which she is called "Isis, Arsinoe, Philadelphus" (*OGI* 31, *PSI* 539.3). Furthermore, she is especially prominent in reliefs on the Isis temple at Philae.⁴⁵ Insofar as the queen in Egypt was also Isis, one could say that there may well have been a precedent for thinking of Isis as connected to the Muses.

Although Ptolemaic practice may seem remote in time from the date of the composition of the first form of the *Life*, it should be remembered that the Roman emperors often imitated Alexander and the Ptolemies in their self-presentation in Egypt as pharaoh: in other words, at the same place and time as the origin of the *Life*, Isis-cult broadly defined was still very much

42. Note that this same event is alluded to in Arrian (*Anab.* 1.11.1), although it is unclear whether the story derives from Aristobulus or the "Vulgate." A. Bosworth, *A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1980), 97, points out that the sacrifice and festival of the Muses at Dium was in fact a celebration of the Olympia. In another relevant text, Eurydice, mother of Philip, made a dedication to the Muses (*Plut. Mor.* 14B-C); cf. U. v. Wilamowitz, "Lesefrüchte," *Hermes* 54 (1919): 71, cited by N. G. L. Hammond, *A History of Macedonia*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1979), 16.

43. I do not mean to suggest that dynastic connection was the only reason why Ptolemy I was interested in the Muses.

44. ὁ δὲ Αἰσωπος θύσας ταῖς Μούσαις ἱερὸν κατεσκεύασεν αὐταῖς, στήσας μέσον αὐτῶν Μνημοσύνην, οὐκ Ἀπόλλωνα. ὁ Ἀπόλλων ὀργισθεὶς αὐτῷ ὡς τῷ Μαρσύᾳ (§100); cf. §127. It should be noted that Mnemosyne is sometimes connected to Isis (Merkelbach, *Isis regina-Zeus Sarapis*, 234). See also *Life* 123, where king Lycurgus of Babylon sets up a golden statue of Aesop and the Muses: Aesop becomes himself the Musegetes.

45. See esp. Koenen, "The Ptolemaic King," 92-94. For Arsinoe at Philae, see L. Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis in Her Temple at Philae* (Hanover and London, 1988), 12-15.

connected to royal ideology.⁴⁶ A few examples will have to suffice. In the Isis temple at Philae, the emperor Tiberius is shown as a triumphant conqueror before Isis, Horus, Hathor, and Ha, in scenes modeled on those featuring Ptolemy XII from the same complex.⁴⁷ Later, Vespasian clearly patterned his visit to the Sarapeum in Alexandria on Alexander's visit to Siwah; what is more, while in Egypt he seems to have acted as a representative of Sarapis/Osiris.⁴⁸ Vespasian's son Titus was suspected of preparing to revolt against his father when he appeared in Memphis wearing a diadem at the consecration of the Apis bull; this story especially reveals an awareness in the Roman period that kingship in Egypt was especially connected to the cult of Apis, for our source for the episode (Suetonius) makes it very clear that the rite as conducted by Titus, although in accord with ancient practice, was tantamount to a claim of sovereignty.⁴⁹ Domitian, of course, rebuilt the sanctuary of Isis and Sarapis at Rome. The emperor Caracalla was famous for his devotion to Isis, as was Caligula earlier.⁵⁰

But in addition to these historical considerations, there is clearly another element at work that makes the presence of both Isis and the Muses important in the G version of the *Life*. Isis' own words to the Muses make it very clear that she will bestow the basic power of speech on Aesop, but that she wishes the Muses to give him the ability to use this faculty *artfully*, that is, in the composition of stories (μύθων). It seems to me that what is aimed at here is the distinction between voice (φωνή) and articulate speech (αὐδή). This was an old and widely observed distinction.⁵¹ That being the case, an awkward repetition from the introduction may find an explanation.

In the description of Aesop's inability to speak we are told that he was afflicted with a "lack of speech (ἀφωνίαν); indeed, he was mute and unable to speak" (ἦν δὲ καὶ κωδός καὶ οὐδὲν ἡδύνατο λαλεῖν, §1). For a long time κωδός was misunderstood as meaning 'toothless'—an interpretation that is inappropriate here (Aesop's physical deformities are listed in the sentence before). But what has often been overlooked in connection with this passage

46. Of course, one can say that the process began with Mark Antony, who had himself represented as Dionysus-Osiris together with Cleopatra as Selene-Isis (Dio 50.5.3). This was at one level consonant with Antony's efforts elsewhere to identify himself with Dionysus (see P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* [Ann Arbor, 1988], 57–65). But he was surely also aware that in Egypt the ruler and his queen were regularly identified with Osiris/Horus and Isis.

That Augustus would follow Ptolemaic precedent may seem to be contradicted by this story and the famous episode recorded by both Suetonius (*Aug.* 18.1) and Dio (51.16.5) in which he avoided seeing the corpses of the Ptolemies, preferring to behold the true monarch, Alexander. However, a text such as the monumental Isiac hymn at Philae, in which Augustus is recognized as pharaoh in much the same fashion as Ptolemy XII, shows that in Egypt he followed well established precedent: see Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 71, and cf. the reference in the next note.

47. Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 67.

48. See Tac. *Hist.* 4.82–84: Vespasian's interest in Sarapis is connected to the Ptolemaic origins of the deity's worship. Cf. A. Henrichs, "Vespasian's Visit to Alexandria," *ZPE* 3 (1968): 51–80, esp. 71.

49. Suet. *Tit.* 5.3: "postquam Alexandriam petens in consecrando apud Memphim bove Apide diadema gestavit, de more quidem ritumque priscae religionis; sed non deerant qui sequius interpretarentur."

50. SHA *M.Ant.* 9.10; see Merkelbach, *Isis regina-Zeus Sarapis*, 140–41 for Caligula.

51. M. L. West, *Hesiod "Works and Days"* (Oxford, 1978), ad 1.79 (p. 163) cites the scholia to *Iliad* 19.407, as well as Galen 16.204 K. and *CMG* 5.10.2(1).172 = *SVF* 2.44. A passage such as Isoc. *De Pace* 8.3 is illustrative in this regard. He writes, ὅρω δ' ὑμᾶς οὐκ ἐξ ἴσου τῶν λεγόντων τὴν ἀκρόασιν ποιουμένων, ἀλλὰ τοῖς μὲν προσέχοντας τὸν νοῦν, τῶν δ' οὐδὲ τὴν φωνὴν ἀνεχομένων. Not only do the Athenians not pay attention, they do not even hear the voice of the speaker, that is, as a mere sound.

is that the word had two distinct meanings. It is true that several ancient authors do know the meaning 'toothless'.⁵² However, another was derived not from the etymology $\nu\eta + \acute{\omicron}\delta\acute{\omicron}\upsilon\varsigma$, but $\nu\eta + \acute{\alpha}\upsilon\delta$ -, or 'voiceless'.⁵³

But still the phrase that I have translated "mute and unable to speak" sounds oddly redundant. Given the focus of this early portion of Aesop's story on his acquisition of a voice (from Isis) and the clever manipulation of speech (from the Heliconian Muses), the phrase might be better rendered "inarticulate and unable to speak": Aesop's "voicelessness" consists not only in an inability to speak, but also an inability to speak *well*. The apparent redundancy is removed, explained by the narrative involving the gifts of both Isis and the Muses. In this connection it is important to remember that the *Vita Lolliana*, which also notes Aesop's muteness in the introduction, does so only in a simplified way (*inter haec omnia fuit mutus*); furthermore, while it does preserve a similar story of Aesop's acquisition of speech, it does not contain the priestess of Isis or the appearance of Isis and the Muses (their places are taken with rather anonymous references to *sacerdotes* and *deus*, §§4–8). Given their absence, there is no need, perhaps, in the introduction for the dual nature of Aesop's inability to speak.

4. CONCLUSIONS: JUSTICE AND POETIC INITIATION

The connection of language, Isis, and Justice that can be seen when that goddess is seen in her guise as leader of the Muses resonates powerfully with the story of Aesop's own acquisition of speech, for all three concepts are found in this introductory episode as well. Isis' appearance with the Muses has been characterized as "quite gratuitous"; her function in the text is, however, meaningful and apt. Aesop is a figure who suffers injustice because he cannot speak. His wits save him from punishment, but his true reward comes when the goddess Isis gives him speech, and enjoins her attendant Muses to grant him artful composition—benefactions they bestow because they are gods who are associated with language.

One is left to wonder, however, whether something more than these connections may explain the presence of Isis and the Muses in the G version of the *Life*. Recall that at the end of Aesop's conversation with himself, upon discovering that he has been endowed with speech after his slumber in the fields, he observes, "And so it is good to be pious! I expect then to receive good hopes from the gods."⁵⁴ The phrase "good hopes" ($\chi\rho\eta\sigma\tau\alpha\iota \acute{\epsilon}\lambda\pi\acute{\iota}\delta\epsilon\varsigma$) is very important, for it is prominent in the Eleusinian Mysteries, and has been seen as one of the many features of Greco-Roman Isiac worship that connect Demeter to Isis; indeed Merkelbach has recently proposed that the

52. LSJ 9th ed. rev., s.v. $\nu\omega\delta\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$, lists several instances from Old Comedy, including *Ar. Ach.* 714 and *Plut.* 266, as well as Arist. *Metaph.* 1068a.

53. J.-Th. Papademetriou, "Η ΜΥΘΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΙΣΩΠΟΥ. ΠΡΟΒΛΗΜΑΤΑ ΜΕΘΟΔΟΥ, ΚΡΙΤΙΚΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΡΜΗΝΕΙΑΣ," *ΑΡΧΑΙΟΓΝΩΣΙΑ* 7 (1993): 166–67, citing B. E. Perry, "Some Addenda to Liddell and Scott," *AJP* 60 (1939): 29–40. I should note that the alternative meaning for $\nu\omega\delta\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ = 'without voice' has not been incorporated in the Revised Supplement (1996) of LSJ.

54. ὥστε καλὸν ἔστιν εὐσεβεῖν. προσδέχομαι οὖν ἀπὸ θεῶν λήψεσθαι χρῆστας ἐλπίδας.

syncretism of Demeter and Isis is precisely manifest in this very passage from the *Life*.⁵⁵

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.⁵⁶ 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* (λόγων εὔρεμα καὶ μύθων Ἑλληνικῶν πλοκὴν καὶ ποιήσεις, §7). This phrase aligns Aesop's new skill with the craft of poetry.

The most famous cases of poetic initiation are (appropriately) Hesiod's account of his own initiation at the hands of the same Heliconian Muses (*Theogony* 22–34; cf. 75–84), and the narrative detailing Archilochus' encounter as a boy with the Muses on a moonlit night, preserved on an inscription from Paros (*SEG* 15.517 = Tarditi E₁ col. II 22–40).⁵⁷ As a quasi poet who has been initiated into the mysteries of the Muses, Aesop invokes their name when he first realizes he can speak (μὰ τὰς Μούσας, §8). In a sense he becomes a rival to Apollo, who of course is the figure normally recognized as the Musegetes.⁵⁸ Thus, as we have seen, Aesop dedicates a statue to the Muses and Mnemosyne, and Lycurgus one to the Muses and Aesop himself! For Aesop's omission of Apollo we are told that the god became angry with Aesop (§100), and his anger is clearly recalled when the residents of Delphi engineer Aesop's death (§127):⁵⁹ they plant a golden cup in Aesop's

55. Merkelbach, *Isis regina-Zeus Sarapis*, p. 62 and nn. 2 and 3, and pp. 222–23. Cf. N. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford, 1974), 312, who notes, in commenting on *Isoc. Paneg.* 4.28, ἡδῖους τὰς ἑλπίδας, that "ἑλπίς ἀγαθὴ etc. is a formula, used especially in connection with the Mysteries [of Eleusis]"; he cites in support C. A. Lobeck, *Aglaophamus* vol. I (Königsberg, 1829), 69, and F. Cumont, *Lux Perpetua* (Paris, 1949), 401. It must be admitted, however, that the phrase "good hopes" is fairly common: cf. Xenophon *Hell.* 3.4.18 = *Ages.* 1.27.

A. D. Nock, "Greco-Egyptian Propaganda," in *Essays on Religion in the Ancient World*, ed. Z. Stewart (Oxford, 1972), 2:706, notes that the claims that Isis discovered cereal agriculture, and that she is responsible for the harvest—items typical of the aretalogies—are not really features of native Egyptian texts: there she is said to be, or be responsible for, the "greenness" of the earth; and, as Nock sagely observes, "that is different." V. Vanderlip, *The Four Greek Hymns of Isidorus and the Cult of Isis* (Toronto, 1972), 75–76, 93–94.

56. Thus, Apuleius' "Isis Book" begins with Lucius waking and having a vision (11.1); even more instructive is his narrative later (11.26), "Io! the great sun had now traversed through its zodiacal orb and had finished a year, when my sleep was again disturbed by the ever-watchful care of the kindly divinity, who warned me that I needed further initiation and further ritual" (*rursus teletae, rursus sacrorum*, trans. Griffiths). Cf. M. Beard, J. North, and S. Price, *Religions of Rome* (Cambridge, 1998), 1:287–88.

57. G. Tarditi, *Archilochus. Fragmenta edidit Veterum testimonia collegit* (Rome, 1968), 5.

58. It should be remembered in this connection that Callimachus clearly recounts a type of poetic initiation at the beginning of the *Aetia*. First, Lycian Apollo speaks directly to Callimachus (F 1.23–28 Pf.). Then, in a manner that is clearly meant to recall Hesiod's encounter with the Muses, Callimachus is transferred in a dream from Libya to Mt. Helicon (Florentine schol. to F 2.18 Pf., and Pfeiffer ad loc.); cf. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford, 1968), 124–25. For a late adaptation of both Hesiod's and Callimachus' "initiation" into poetry, see Quintus of Smyrna *Posthomerica* 12.308–13 (though the dream element is absent). Note *P. Oxy.* 3537. See also M. Dickie, "Poets as Initiates in the Mysteries: Euphronion, Philicus and Posidippus," *A&A* 45 (1998): 49–77.

59. καὶ τοῦ ἀπόλλωνος μηνύοντος διὰ τὴν ἐν Σάμφ ἀτιμίαν, ἐπεὶ σὺν ταῖς Μούσας αὐτὸν οὐ καθίδρυσεν . . .

belongings, and when he prepares to leave Delphi, accuse him of the sacrilege of stealing an item devoted to the god. We have come full circle: Aesop is again falsely accused of theft, just as he had been at the beginning of the *Life*. However, this time his wits cannot save him, and his close association with the Muses and Isis is of no avail. Aesop's admonitory parables, told in a fashion similar to the parables of the Gospels, do not sway the people of Delphi, and when they take him from the shrine of the Muses to which he flees (ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τῶν Μουσῶν, §135), and march him to a cliff to throw him off, Aesop curses them, calls upon the "warden of the Muses" (τὸν προστάτην τῶν Μουσῶν, §142) to witness what is happening, and himself jumps off the cliff.⁶⁰ Delphi is then beset with a plague (λοιμῶ), and the people of Greece, Babylon, and Samos punish the city.

The beginning and end of the *Life* are centered on Aesop as a devotee of the Muses and Isis. It is appropriate here to take up again Merkelbach's thesis that the surface of the narrative betrays a hidden cultic subtext, one that in some sense mirrors the progress of the initiate through the various stages of the (in this case) Isiac mysteries. Inasmuch as the *Life* does not really feature Isis and the Muses consistently throughout the narrative, but chiefly at the beginning and the end, I do not think that we can see in it a treatment of the initiate's life in the Mysteries. A telling contrast with the *Life* in this regard would be Book 11 of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*: there we are witness to no fewer than three initiations of Lucius into the religion of Isis.⁶¹ But what we do seem to have is a general exploitation of Isiac cult, mixed with a knowledgeable use of the Muses. While the *Life* may not be an "Aesop's Progress," I hope that this paper has shown that it is not a superficial engagement with the world of Isis and the Muses either. Rather, this world has been skillfully deployed to underscore the central features of the *Life*: Aesop's wits, his stature as an "everyman" endowed with a rare ability to tell stories, and finally the injustice he suffers at the hands of his archrival, Apollo. It is only when we situate the *Life* in the context of its origins in Greco-Roman Egypt that we see these features connected: it was in Egypt that Isis was first linked to Justice, and it was in Egypt that the attendants of Isis/Dike were the Muses. In the end it is precisely the presence of these deities that permits us to see Aesop as undergoing a form of initiation into the mysteries of poetry, becoming a sort of "folk poet" in opposition to Apollo.

Great caution is indeed called for when considering texts such as the *Life of Aesop* as systematic retellings in symbolic terms of the mystic world of Greco-Roman religion. But similarly we should not ignore or underestimate the connections to this world that are clearly operative in a narrative such as the *Life*. A more flexible model of the influence of mystery cult on the novel and related texts would seem to be needed.

University of Virginia

60. Αἰσώπος καταρασάμενος αὐτούς, καὶ τὸν προστάτην τῶν Μουσῶν μάρτυρα προσκαλούμενος, ὅπως ἐπακούσῃ αὐτοῦ ἀδίκως ἀπολλυμένου . . . (§142). Note the probable pun on Apollo's name in the final word.

61. Cf. Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 287–88.