# Allusions and Reflections

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*Greek and Roman Mythology in Renaissance Europe*

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## TRICKSTER-BIOGRAPHIES

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In his study *Die Bezähmung der Zunge* (*The Taming of the Tongue*) Ralf Georg Bogner draws our attention to the importance of the *Vita Aesopi* in the early modern era.[1] According to his reading, the biography of Aesop has played a major part in disciplining the use of speech in premodern culture since the publication of Rinuccio da Castiglione's (Milan 1474) and Heinrich Steinhöwel's Latin and German translations of the *Vita* (Ulm 1476/77),[2] followed up in the German tradition by additional revisions (Sebastian Brant, Basel 1501) and adaptations (Erasmus Alberus, Frankfurt 1550). Among other things the collection of stories, centered around the ancient inventor of the fable, contains the following *exemplum* which carries, as Bogner argues, the nucleus of a whole discourse on the ethics and practices of language: Asked by the philosopher Xanthus to serve his pupils one day the best, the other day the worst, Aesop, his slave, offers the same meal on both days: ox tongue. By doing so, he turns an ethical argument—i.e. that *lingua*, the tongue and its product, language, is able to achieve both the worst and the worthiest—into a quick-witted chreia. For Bogner this practice of speech has to be strictly separated from more abstract disciplinary contexts, such as rhetoric, logic, let alone theological and philosophical theories on language, because the mode of exemplary demonstration focuses entirely on the congruence between the doings and sayings of the sage, as he speaks and acts. Along the line of the ongoing process of civilization (Norbert Elias) Bogner follows the traces of the Aesopian argument through different literary genres from the 16th century up to its variations in baroque literature (most prominently in Gryphius's mourning play *Leo Armenius*).

But where would we be led by *re*tracing the *Vita Aesopi* back to its original ancient context in the first century, when the life of Aesop was put down into writing for the first time, or even further on to its much older oral traditions partly reaching back to oriental sources?[3] Which consequences can we draw from shifting our focus backwards in order to find out more about this particular discourse, that encompasses not only the example of the tongue, but also the literary form that constitutes the *Vita Aesopi* as a trickster-biography? By saying "trickster-biography" I do not simply refer to an early form or precursor of the picaresque novel, but rather to a genre in its own right: an encyclopedic collection of narrative, proverbial or otherwise exemplary schemes (such as apothegms, riddles, anecdotes, tales, and miracles), focused on a demonic character, half god, half animal, who behaves like a rogue or a jokester among his fellow people.[4] Depending on its cultural and historical background the physiognomy of the trickster changes, yet his task remains the same throughout: to observe and negotiate human communication, operating between the state of nature and the sphere of transcendence both of which are either lost or inaccessible to mankind. As for the German-speaking countries, the most famous trickster in the 16th century is Till Ulenspiegel/Owlglass, a villain moving from town to town and thereby crossing worldly and sacred spaces alike. Yet, already in the 13th century Âmis, the parson, travels a similar route of trickery, as he is designed by the Stricker as the first man who invented fraud and cheating (*der erste man . . ./ der liegen triegen aneviench*, verses 40–41).[5]

The lives of Âmis, the medieval trickster, and of Owlglass, his early modern companion, share important features with the *Vita Aesopi* in terms of content and structure.[6] This is particularly evident from the stories dealing with the introduction of the trickster into this world and with his life's end. Although Aesop is not part of the Greek myth and its genealogical network, his story can only be told with reference to two major goddesses and the sacred and ritual sphere connected with them: Isis and Apollo. Both help to characterize Aesop as the maker of λόγοι, the prototypical λογοποιός, by focusing the etiology and teleology of his discourse. In the beginning, Aesop lacks the natural faculty of speech, since an innate impediment of his tongue forces him to stay mute, which, after all, excludes him—in conjunction with his distorted and subhuman shape—from every activity within the Greek city-state (the most distinguished occupation of which is to participate in public speech among free citizens). Not until he meets a priestess of Isis and assists her in finding her way to the city is he granted the gift of language and a properly working tongue by the goddess of nature in reward for his piety and

philanthropy. He starts using his new skill at once by naming everything around him according to the rule of nature and, moreover, by blaming Zenas, the slaveholder, for mistreating one of his fellow-slaves. His language, in other words, is meant to do justice to things and creatures, as well. By its simple frankness and truthfulness the *λόγος* of the fable presents itself here, as though it were articulating mother nature's own voice. At the same time, Aesop draws a clear distinction between his way of telling animal lore and the sublime speech of the heroic epos and its mythic memory. In his first attempt to produce actual truth Aesop subverts the topos of the stream of inspiration, flowing out of the epic poet, as Mnemosyne and the Muses speak through his mouth. While he is still mute, Aesop's fellows accuse him of having stolen his master's figs. He proves his innocence by drinking warm water and emptying out his stomach, producing nothing else than the clear water of truth—as does the voice of the fable. Now, his eloquent opponents are forced to produce evidence in the same way and finally puke out the stolen figs, showing that their flux of eloquence contains nothing else than lies—as does the flood of words of the epic poem.[7]

The death of Aesop, however, takes place in the realm of the Delphic Apollo. Throughout his life, the sage keeps provoking the god, as he claims time and again to be the companion, if not the only legitimate leader of the Muses: the true Musagetes.[8] Moreover, he threatens the Apollonian priests who finally accuse him wrongfully of having sacked Apollo's temple and sentence him to death for having committed a sacrilege that he is entirely innocent of. Yet, the execution doesn't simply kill Apollo's foe, it rather sacrifices him to the god, which means that in the end Aesop completely merges into the Apollonian sphere. As a consequence, the citizens of Delphi fall prey to Apollo's revenge for the unjustified murder of his pious worshipper, whereas Aesop himself becomes an object of worship, after a statue has been dedicated to him at Delphi.[9] In this way, the unsurpassable naturalness of Aesopian speech in the name of Isis is juxtaposed by its unrivaled affinity to the divine in the name of Apollo. For the *λόγος* of Aesop touches on both the sphere of nature and the sphere of the sacred, though nothing else could be less compatible with the human tongue, which is, by the same token, the only means to relate to and to communicate with the natural and the transcendental order.

The aporia of the Aesopian *λόγος,* that is: to communicate topics, which language can only refer to as non-topics, characterizes a range of other trickster-figures and their practices of language in the Greek tradition. They all act upon systems of nescience (or learned ignorance).

Homer's Odysseus can be considered their forefather, as his travels lead
him along and across the threshold between life and death, while he is
taking his way through all parts of the mythical world: the realm of Zeus
(aether/air), Poseidon (water), Hades (earth) and Helios (fire), whose
territories no mortal being is able to enter and to exit again except for the
"man of twists and turns" (Robert Fagles), the polytropic hero. During the
5th and the 4th century the motif of his sea voyage is recoined and reused
as a metaphor of the philosopher's journey through the city-state. In this
context, three new tricksters enter the picture: Socrates, Diogenes, and
Menippos, each of them with a specific fashion of his life's journey
(πλάνη). In the case of Plato's Socrates his wanderings are motivated by an
Apollonian oracle that dubs Socrates the wisest of all mortals. From this
enigmatic assertion Socrates derives his mission to refute the truth of the
divine word by moving from place to place in order to explore the
knowledge of his fellow citizens.[10] Turning to every expert in the city and
asking questions about the good, the true, and the beautiful, Socrates
figures out, that the empirical knowledge of his respondents does not
suffice to answer these most elementary questions. They all get tangled up
in their own contradictory assumptions (δόξαι). Therefore, Socrates infers,
the oracle can only be understood in the sense that it is coined towards the
philosopher who knows nothing special, but one thing for certain: that he
knows nothing at all. By way of this search (ζήτησις) the Socratic λόγος
becomes the blueprint of a both political and philosophical play of
negations, focused on the soul and its faculty to search for true knowledge
(ἐπιστήμη) in order to live a virtuous and pious life on the ground of
constant self-scrutiny.[11]

    The account of the death of Socrates is designed by Plato in analogy to
the death of Aesop. Like his role model, Socrates is excluded from the
community of the city-state and sentenced to death by the Athenians based
on the ill constructed accusation of ἀσέβεια (the breaking of the divine
law). In his dialogue *Phaidon* Plato describes the last days of the convicted
philosopher in prison up to the point where Socrates takes the cup of
poison. Moreover, he depicts the circumstances which permit Socrates to
hold his last conversation among his friends and followers on the
immortality of the soul. This is made possible by a double intervention of
Apollo:[12] First, the conversation takes place under the auspices of a law
that forbids executions while the Athenian ship is on its annual mission to
Delos, Apollo's birthplace, in order to send thank offerings to him for his
support of Theseus in his defeat of the Minotaur. No blood shall be shed
before the ship returns to Athens because the city must remain pure during
the period of the ship's absence, which means, that for the time being

Socrates's life is sacrosanct in the name of Apollo. His second intervention takes on the form of a vision. In his dream Socrates is advised by the god to devote his life to the art of the Muses: *μουσικὴ ποιεῖ καὶ ἐργάζου.*[13] He follows the command by starting off writing poetry: first, he composes a hymn to Apollo, then he turns to the fables of Aesop, transmitting them in verse. In short, as Socrates's Muses are not different from those of Aesop, their practices of speech are closely related to each other.

The figure of Diogenes, the cynic, is another representative of the urban trickster. His vita ties in with and intensifies basic patterns of the Socratic way of life. In fact, his biographer Diogenes Laertius addresses him as a "Socrates, gone mad" (*Σωκράτης μαινόμενος*),[14] since he approaches his fellow-citizens in an extremely aggressive and offensive manner. Like Socrates he follows the call of Apollo who places his life under the motto *παραχαράξαι τὸ νόμισμα.* In Diogenes's interpretation the oracle seems to call upon him to adulterate the coinage of his city. Accordingly, the son of a banker starts his career as a forger, who not only turns over the economy of the state, but also inverts and perverts all kinds of traditional values fostered by his contemporaries.[15] Even in his conversations with philosophers and potentates he performs the transvaluation of all values. The figure of Menippos, on the other hand, acts like another Aesop, or, more precisely, he is another "Aesop, going insane."[16] Born as a slave, he manages to collect as much money as it takes to buy one's way out of his bondage. He succeeds in becoming a free citizen of Thebes—not due to his wisdom or piety, but rather due to his importunate manner of bagging. After having accumulated a large fortune by making loans to his fellow-citizens, he finally loses everything, as he falls victim to a plot and is robbed of all he possesses. He ends his life in total despair by hanging himself. Thus, Menippos surpasses the cynic *παραχαράξαι τὸ νόμισμα* by redirecting the metaphor and shifting it from valuta to existence: *τὸν βίον μεταλλάξαι.*[17] After having replaced *φιλοσοφία*—the love of wisdom—by *φιλαργυρία*—the love of money, he falls prey to his own practice: Instead of chosing *λόγος* to rescue his soul he prefers and is killed by *βρόχος* (sling). In the end, he finds himself tangled up in the loops of his language, being duped by just another (fatal) paronomasia. In that sense, he reinforces the insanity of his predecessor Diogenes to the point, where language turns against its user. In the life of Menippos, as one might conclude, the word itself becomes the trickster. Hence, a whole literary genre is named after him: the Menippean satire.

Even though Diogenes Laertius commented upon the work of Menippos in the sense that he never had produced anything serious (*Φέρει μὲν οὖν σπουδαίον οὐδέν*),[18] we are not entitled to reduce his practice of

speech to the comical effect. Neither shall we see in Aesop's vomiting-scene a mere parody of Homer, nor in Socrates, outwitting the sophists, sheer irony, nor in Diogenes, attacking his adversaries, a case of straightforward aggressiveness. We rather have to take into account that all these different ways and intensities of a trickster's use of his tongue are rooted in the characteristic seriocomic mode of the Menippea: the σπουδ[αι]ογέλοιον. This blatant contradiction, combining sternness and playfulness in one single oxymoronic concept, is—despite of the detailed and complex classifications of the genre (since Bakhtin, Frye, and Kristeva)[19]—the essential quality of the Menippean satire. Moreover, it seems to be crucial for the classification of trickster-biographies to consider the fact that the Menippean mode of σπουδαιογέλοιον is the defining moment of the utopian discourse since antiquity—commencing with Plato's tale of Atlantis which is, in fact, presented to Socrates by Kritias as an April fool's trick, told by Kritias, the grandfather aged 90, to his grandson, the ten-year-old Kritias, at the feast of the ἀπατουρίαι.[20] In this regard, utopian writing operates—as the word that has become trickster—at the blind spot of human knowledge and its topical organization. At this spot, knowledge is not simply negated, but observed, checked and revised through the negation of unquestioned assertions.

Seen against this background, ancient, medieval, and early modern trickster-biographies have three aspects in common:

1. the encyclopedic intention to collect examples—as many as possible—of every practice of speech that assists the trickster in penetrating and running through the spaces of knowledge making up our moral, economic, political, and religious world, until he has completed his course (of life);

2. the cunning intelligence, by which the trickster is able to escape the aporia (of being tangled up in words, or in mere assumptions about the world) switching from one space to the other in order to deconstruct every kind of positive knowledge (up to his own grave, which is not able to keep the trickster's corpse in a horizontal position);

3. the importance of oracles/riddles (as modes of political and religious communication) and of money (as a mode of circulating values within the social order of men).[21]

This last aspect significantly shapes the basic structure of every trickster-biography, which usually unfolds in form of a double-stranded career. After the exposition of the trickster's way of thought and speech he first enters the "small economy" of the οἶκος ("myn hus," as Steinhöwel puts it

in his *Esopus* several times).[22] On the inside this space includes everything concerning the family, its subsistence and reproduction; on the outside it is closely related to the adjacent socio-political sphere of Samos. Aesop has not passed this complex successfully until he is rewarded with the Samian citizenship for having predicted correctly an imminent attack of the Persians, and, moreover, is appointed to the office of the treasurer of Samos. The same is true for Âmis who at the end of the first part of his curriculum is appointed custodian of a cloister's treasure. In *Ulenspiegel* the aspect of economy and politics applies to all sorts of professions, especially to crafts- and tradesmen, whose businesses are systematically worked through by the trickster. One of the characteristic patterns of Ulenspiegel's actions consists in the way he usually finishes *his* business at the workshops: by defecating in his host's room, after he has dispossessed him of everything valuable.

After his taking control over the treasure of the community he lives in, the trickster is ready for superior tasks. Thus, Aesop seems to be predisposed for entering the "great world" and participating in the *arcana imperii*, the secrets of political power.[23] These secrets are represented by the fact that the great rulers of the world use to communicate by exchanging riddles, in order to outwit each other in the art of posing and solving them. Here, again, Aesop celebrates his triumphs, as he turns out to be the real master of the enigmatic discourse, while he serves the Persian king Lycurgus and the Egyptian pharaoh Nectanabus as their counselor. During his courtly career he adopts a son named Enus, who denounces him for having plotted against the king. To substantiate his allegations Enus presents faked documents which are supposed to prove his father's collaboration with rivaling kings in order to turn his cunning against Lycurgus and, moreover, to play all kings off against each other. As a result of this accusation Aesop is sentenced to death. He can escape his execution only thanks to his influential friend Hermippus, who helps him disappear by burying him alive. When the Persian king regrets his decision to have Aesop killed, since he is unable to solve Nectanabus's latest riddles by himself, the trickster resurrects from his grave and unravels the machinations made up by his son. Yet, instead of punishing him for his treason Aesop presents his collected words of wisdom to Enus with the irritating effect, that his son casts himself down the "high gates" of the palace and breaks his neck. This scene clearly alludes to the death of the Sphinx, who throws herself into the abyss after Oedipus has solved her riddle, the enigma of human life. Precisely this mythological parallel offers the key to the whole episode. The name "Enus" is taken from the Greek $\tau\grave{o}$ αἶνος, meaning "riddle," which leads to the conclusion that the

death of Enus fulfills and affirms what he was actually blaming his father for: Like Oedipus, who becomes the legitimate ruler of Thebes by solving the riddle of the Sphinx, Aesop now positively seizes power over all the kings, since he has been able to crack and overthrow their arcane discourse, figured in the name and in the fatal downfall of Enus. From now on only one space is still left for the trickster's intrusion: the mysteries of the sacred sphere. To achieve this Aesop returns to Greece and travels straight to Delphi—with the familiar outcome of his being sacrificed to Apollo. Again, the analogies to the medieval and early modern trickster-biographies are striking: After the beginning of the second part of his vita, clearly flagged by a second prologue, Stricker's *Pfaffe Âmis* keeps accumulating money, but is now presented as a master of manipulating basic speech-acts. Even though the 96 stories that make up the life of Ulenspiegel tend to register his tricks in a serial manner, the interest in economic exchange, in proverbs, and in plays on words is still a predominant feature. His visits to the court of the French king (history 27), and to the Pope's Lateran church (history 34) confirm that Ulenspiegel, as well, is related both to the *arcana imperii* and to the *mysteria caelorum*, even if these episodes are merely integrated into the general catalogue of professions.

The trickster-biographies, discussed in this paper, participate in a discourse centered on the problem of human knowledge. They all focus on its spatial i.e. topical order, observing and transforming it from the utopian point of view of a learned ignorance skilled in practical and philosophical dialectics. This meets with the quadripartite disposition of the vita (following the *Vita Aesopi* as its literary model), which allows the *curriculum vitae* of the trickster/sage for crossing every single space of the world, be it profane or sacred. It also matches the cunning use of language and the seriocomic mode of the Menippea. In this framework the trickster resides, watching everything that concerns the notion of νόμισμα: the value of coins, the constitution of the state, the validity of knowledge, and the liability of words which are capable of binding and dissolving human obligations to nature and transcendence. In this field of discourse he lurks around equipped with Socratic ignorance, cynic aggression, Menippean self-entanglement and the storytelling skills of Aesop, the prudent master of λόγος.

# Notes

[1] Cf. Ralf Georg Bogner, *Die Bezähmung der Zunge: Literatur und Disziplinierung der Alltagskommunikation in der frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1997).

[2] *Steinhöwels Äsop*, ed. Hermann Oesterley (Tübingen: Fues, 1873). Rinuccio's Latin translation corresponds to the ancient version that later became known as the *Vita Westermanniana* (cf. Ben Edwin Perry, "The Greek Source of Renuccio's Aesop," *Classical Philology* 29 [1934]), whereas Steinhöwel's German translation is based on the *Vita Planudea*.

[3] For centuries the *Life of Aesop* was considered an essential part of the *corpus Aesopicum*. Jean de La Fontaine did still not publish his collection of fables without introducing it by his adaptation of the Planudean text of the *Vita* (*La vie d'Esope le Phrygien*). The bonds between the ancient body of fables and the biography of their first inventor began to come undone since the mid-17th century (cf. Mahlon Ellwood Smith, "Aesop, a Decayed Celebrity: Changing Concecption as to Aesop's Personality in English Writers before Gay," *PMLA* 46, no. 1 [1931]). But they were not cut until philological critique was established in the 19th century and started to look upon the *Vita* as a mere compilation and concoction of anecdotes and proverbs. Even after the edition of the *Aesopica: A Series of Texts Relating to Aesop or Ascribed to Him or Closely Connected with the Literary Tradition that Bears His Name* by Ben Edwin Perry had been published in 1952 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), it took another four decades until Niklas Holzberg's collection of studies *Der Äsop-Roman: Motivgeschichte und Erzählstruktur* (Tübingen: Narr, 1992) made a first effort to show that the *Life of Aesop* was a well structured and thoroughly composed work of art. Fundamental to the current reappraisal of the ancient text is Leslie Kurke's *Aesopic Conversations: Popular Tradition, Cultural Dialogue, and the Invention of Greek Prose* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2011). In the context of early modern studies in German literature Michael Schilling's essay "Macht und Ohnmacht der Sprache: Die *Vita Aesopi* als Anleitung zum Gebrauch der Fabel bei Steinhöwel," in *Europäische Fabeln des 18. Jahrhunderts zwischen Pragmatik und Autonomisierung: Traditionen, Formen, Perspektiven*, ed. Dirk Rose (Bucha: Quartus-Verlag, 2010) delivers a reading of the *Vita Esopi* as an introduction and preparatory hermeneutical tool for a subsequent reading of the whole body of the Aesopic fables.

[4] Concerning the figure of the trickster cf. the seminal study by Paul Radin, Karl Kerényi and Carl Gustav Jung, *Der göttliche Schelm: Ein indianischer Mythen-Zyklus* (Zürich: Rhein-Verlag, 1954), and among the more recent publications on the topic the essay by Erhard Schüttpelz, "Der Trickster," in *Die Figur des Dritten: Ein kulturwissenschaftliches Paradigma*, ed. Eva Eßlinger et al. (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010). An interdisciplinary overview on the secondary literature is offered by Geider, "Trickster," in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens: Handwörterbuch zur historischen und vergleichenden Erzählforschung*, founded by Kurt Ranke, ed. Rolf Wilhelm Brednich (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), vol. 13, col. 913–24. The word "trickster-biography" is my own. It is meant to refer to the combination of cunning

intelligence, presented as a literary *exemplum*, and the scheme of a *vita* in terms of a legendary and hagiographical narrative.

[5] Quotations refer to following editions: Kin'ichi Kamihara, ed., Des Strickers *Pfaffe Amis* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1928) and Wolfgang Lindow, *Ein kurtzweilig Lesen von Dil Ulenspiegel*. Nach dem Druck von 1515 mit 87 Holzschnitten (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978). The translations of *Ulenspiegel* are taken from the contemporary 16th-century English prints of *Howleglas* by Jan van Doesborch and William Copland, edited by Hill-Zenk, *Der englische Eulenspiegel: Die Eulenspiegel-Rezeption als Beispiel des englisch-kontinentalen Buchhandels im 16. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010).

[6] For the connection between Ámis, Ulenspiegel, and Asesop, cf. Jörgen Schulz-Grobert, "Ulenspiegel und seine traurigen Brüder: Prototypische Figurenprofile bei Äsop und Niemand," *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 144 (1999).

[7] On the importance of the introductory *exemplum* with regard to the conception of speech in the Aesopian fable, cf. Louis Marin, "The Fabulous Animal," in *Food for Thought*, transl. Mette Hjort (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). Ulenspiegel's entry into the world of speech-acts seems to echo Aesop's pre-linguistic comment on the truth content of human language. In order to prepare him for his worldly life he is baptized no less than three times: once in the church with holy water, for the second time next to the ale-house with muddy water, for the third time in a bathhouse, sitting in a kettle of warm water, out of which he emerges "clen of the mudde" ("suber und schon," Lindow, *Ulenspiegel*, 9–11) as a reborn child.

[8] Leslie Kurke points out, that the special relation between Aesop and the Muses is subject to several changes during the process of textual transmission: "in fact each of the stages of Aesop's ascent of wisdom is flagged or articulated in *Vita G* by significant mention of the divine daughters of Mnemosyne or their Hesiodic home on Helicon. *Vita W*, by contrast, has entirely effaced all mention of the Muses from Aesop's story (together with excising every trace of Aesop's feud with Apollo)." Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations*, 162.

[9] Again one might think here of *Ulenspiegel*, whose coffin keeps standing upright at his burial: "Thus as Howleglass was deade, than they brought hym to be buryed. And as they would haue put the coffyn into the pytte wyth .ii. cordes, the corde at the fete brake, so that the fote of the coffin fel into the botome of the pyt, and the coffyn stode bolt vpright in the myddes of the graue. Than desyred the people that stode about the graue that tyme, to let the coffyn to stande vpryght. For in his lyfe tyme he was a very maruelous man, and he did many wonderfull thynges, and shall be buryed as meruelousli and in this manner they left Howleglas stand bolt vpryght in his graue" (Hill-Zenk, *Der englische Eulenspiegel*, 250)—"Bei Ulenspiegels Begräbtnis gieng es wunderlich zu. Wan als sie all stunden uff dem Kirchoff umb den Todtenboum da Ulenspiegel in lag, da legten sie ihn uff die beiden Seil und wollten ihn in daz Grab sencken. Da brach das Seil entzwei, das bei den Füßen was, unnd der Boum schoß inn das Grab, das Ulenspiegel kumbt uff die Füß z ston in dem Stock. Da sprachen sie alle, die dabeistunden: 'Lassen ihn ston, wan er ist wunderlich gewesen in seinem Leben, wunderlich wil er auch sein in seinem

Tod'" (Lindow, *Ulenspiegel*, 266). An analogous elevation, but more clearly directed to the salvation of the soul, happens to Âmis, who is said to have passed away as an abbot and is rewarded for his life's achievement with his immediate ascent to heaven: *do gedienet der phaffe Amis daz / daz im daz ewige leben / nach disem libe wart gegeben* (Kamihara, *Pfaffe Amis*, verses 2508–10).

[10] Cf. Plato *Apologia* 20c4–23c1.

[11] In Plato's dialogue *Hippias Minor* Socrates explicitly refers to the archetypical trickster-figure Odysseus in order to characterize his own philosophical practice. In this context, Hippias, the sophist, and Socrates meet in order to discuss the problem, whether Achilles or Odysseus is the greater hero, which amounts to the question, which epos is substantially more philosophical: either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. Hippias's answer sees Achilles in the privileged position. Achilles's virtue, he argues, consists in truthfulness, while Odysseus's strength lies in fallacy and deceitfulness. By equally declaring truthfulness and deceitfulness a virtue (ἀρετή), Socrates leads his opponent to an aporetic conclusion: Both virtues seem to resemble each other to the point, where they become undistinguishable. The only discernable difference lies in the fact, that Odysseus uses his ability intentionally, whereas Achilles does so without any further consideration. As a result, the ἀρετή of the former outstrips the ἀρετή of the latter, so that, in the end, the liar seems to be preferable to the righteous. The last word of the dialogue reads πλάνη (376c6) and addresses the turning of the Socratic discourse in the image of a ship in rough sea. Thus, Socrates finally finds himself in the position of a new Odysseus. The philosopher turns out to be a modernized urban trickster.

[12] Cf. Plato *Phaidon* 57c1–61c5.

[13] Ibid., 60e6–60e7.

[14] Cf. Diogenes Laertius VI.54.

[15] Ibid., VI.20–21. Cf. the groundbreaking work on the *Life of Diogenes* and the anecdotes of the cynics in Diogenes Laertius by Heinrich Niehues-Pröbsting, *Der Kynismus des Diogenes und der Begriff des Zynismus* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1988); for a premodern response to the ancient material see Niklaus Largier, *Diogenes der Kyniker: Exempel, Erzählung, Geschichte in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1997).

[16] Cf. Diogenes Laertius VI.99–101.

[17] Ibid., VI.100.

[18] Ibid., VI.99.

[19] Cf. Michail Bachtin, *Probleme der Poetik Dostoevskijs* (Frankfurt a. M.: Ullstein, 1985); Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957); Julia Kristeva, "Bachtin, das Wort, der Dialog und der Roman," in *Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik: Ergebnisse und Perspektiven*, vol. 3, Zur linguistischen Basis der Literaturwissenschaft II, ed. Jens Ihwe (Frankfurt a. M.: Athenäum Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1972). For a more recent discussion of the Menippean satire, see Werner von Koppenfels, *Der Andere Blick oder Das Vermächtnis des Menippos: Paradoxe Perspektiven in der europäischen Literatur* (München: Beck, 2007).

[20] On the Athenian "feast of betrayal" (ἀρετή), cf. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, "Der Schwarze Jäger oder der Ursprung der attischen Ephebie," in *Der Schwarze Jäger:*

*Denkformen und Gesellschaftsformen der griechischen Antike* by Pierre Vidal-Naquet (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 1989), 108–9.

[21] Cf. Christina von Braun, *Der Preis des Geldes: Eine Kulturgeschichte* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 2012).

[22] E.g. Xanthos in his speech to the Samians, as it has been suggested to him by Aesop: "Ir mann von Samia, ich bin nit ain wyssag noch vogeltichter oder ußleger verborgner ding, als ir wißen. Aber ich hab ain aygen knecht in mynem hus, der söliche ding sich bekennet wißend syn." Oesterley, *Steinhöwels Äsop*, 63.

[23] In Stricker's *Pfaffe Âmis* the trickster-protagonist leaves behind the occidental topography of his provenance in order to head for Constantinople, the political center of the eastern empire. Even though Âmis's performance does not rely on proverbs, he still operates on the basis of two different elementary types of assertion. By making use of (kataphatic) affirmations and (apophatic) negations he is able to turn falsehood into truth and truth into falsehood at his will.

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