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INDICE

Note

Review article

About a Wrong Etymology of Latin *merŭla* 'blackbird', with a Plausible Alternative Etymological Hypothesis, and Other Topics in the Naming of Thrushes

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Riassunto:

L'ornitonimo latino *merŭla* 'merlo' di una specie di *tordo* (*Turdus merula*) è plausibilmente motivata semanticamente dal piumaggio nero del merlo (o marrone, nelle femmine e nei non-adulti), in considerazione del Proto-Indo-Europeo *mer- 'scuro, sporco'. Theo Vennemann ha sostenuto un presunto etimo fenicio per l'ornitonimo latino *merŭla* 'blackbird'. Tale ipotesi è erronea, dato che considera un nome composto ebraico moderno, documentato dal 1866, di una specie di tordo, come se fosse un ornitonimo antico. Descriviamo lo sviluppo storico degli ornitonimi dell'ebraico moderno, ed anche il prestito lessicale greco *kichlē* 'tordo' nella letteratura rabbinica antica. In questo studio, sono altresí considerate le *Etimologie* di Isidoro di Siviglia, l'esistenza dichiarata da Isidoro, Aristotele, ed altri autori classici, di merli bianchi (gli esemplari albini di questa specie sono relativamente meno rari di quelli di altri uccelli europei), ed un'illustrazione ornitologica risalente alla prima età moderna, "L'Oyseau blanc" di Pierre Vase, che potrebbe rappresentare un merlo albino. Avendo considerato come motivazione semantica del latino *merŭla* il piumaggio (quindi, la morfologia esterna del corpo), piuttosto che il comportamento (il canto, secondo Vennemann, ed anche secondo una delle etimologie riporate da Isidoro), esaminiamo un comportamento differente, l'irascibilità e l'esteriorizzazione dell'ira, motivante dei nomi ebraici moderni di uccelli della famiglia dei Paridi. Inoltre, si esemplifica come uccelli neri, ed in particolare i merli, appaiano nella metafora lessicalizzata (nell'uso italiano) e nell'allegoria (in un aviario medievale).

Parole chiave: semitico di Nordovest - fenicio - ornitonimi - uccelli neri e merli nell'allegoria medievale - senso figurato di *merlo* in italiano

Abstract:

The Latin bird-name *merŭla* 'blackbird' of a species of thrush (*Turdus merula*) is arguably semantically motivated by the black colour of that bird's plumage (or brown, in females or juveniles): cf. Proto-Indo-European *mer- 'dark, dirty'. Theo Vennemann has claimed a supposed Phoenician etymon for the Latin bird-name *merŭla* 'blackbird'. His error was to consider a Modern Hebrew compound name for a thrush species, dating from 1866, as though it was an ancient bird-name. The historical development of Modern Hebrew bird-names is described here, as is Greek *kichlē* 'thrush' as occurring in early rabbinic literature. This study also considers Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies,* his and Aristotle's claims (also found elsewhere in the classics) about the existence of white blackbirds (albino blackbirds are relatively not rare, in comparison to albinos of other European birds), and an early modern bird illustration by Pierre Vase, "L'Oyseau blanc", which may be an albino blackbird. As we consider the semantic motivation for Latin

merŭla to have been plumage (thus, outer morphology of the body), rather than behaviour (singing, for Vennemann, as well as for one of Isidore's etymologies), we turn to examine another behaviour, namely, irascibility or angry displays, as motivating Modern Hebrew names for *Paridae* birds. We also illustrate blackbirds and black birds in lexicalised metaphor (in Italian usage) and allegory (in a medieval Aviary).

1. *Introduction*

The original motivation for writing the present study was so that I may respond to the etymology of the Latin bird-name *měrŭla* (stressed on the antepenult; 'blackbird, merle, *Turdus merula*') as given by Theo Vennemann [2012b], and which is wrong because he misconstrued a Hebrew name for a species of thrush that actually first appeared as a neologism in 1866, as though it was an ancient Hebrew and Phoenician name for 'thrush', or for 'blackbird' in particular. I have had the opportunity elsewhere to discuss etymological fallacies (Nissan [2012; 2014]). With that original motivation for the present study in mind, this paper may be taken to supplement my 278-page study (Nissan [2017-2018] in response to Vennemann's book [2012a] in which Vennemann [2012b] appeared.

It must be said however that the present writing-project unfolded as a fuller study, and as such it is part of my numerous publications about zoonymy, and about bird-names in particular. Among the other things, I propose here what I believe to be a plausible etymology of the Latin bird-name *merŭla,* of which the grammatically masculine form *merŭlus* is a synonym. Sections in the present article include: 3, "A precursor Vennemann acknowledged", in which I comment on some etymologies by Gerald Cohen; 4, "Isidore of Seville's etymologies of Latin *merŭla* 'blackbird, merle', Aristotle's and Isidore's mention of white blackbirds, and an interpretation of a sixteenth-century bird illustration, Pierre Vase's 'L'Oyseau blanc'", which may have been an albino blackbird (these are not very rare); 5, "A likely etymology of Latin *merŭla* 'blackbird': PIE **mer*- 'dark'", in which, with no need for and no commitment to the Nostratic hypothesis, I also point out non-Indo-European lexical data that Aharon Dolgopolsky (2008) related to that Proto-Indo-European root; 6, "A fatally flawed etymology proposed by Vennemann for *merŭla*", presenting a refutation that motivates the inclusion of the next cluster of three sections: 7, "The actual Hebrew terminology for 'thrush' and 'blackbird'"; 8, "On the evolution of Modern Hebrew bird-names", a fascinating topic that has been inaccessible other that in the Hebrew scholarly literature; 9, "Greek *Kichlē* 'thrush',

its Late Antique occurrence in early rabbinic literature, and some modern developments in Greek and Hebrew". Also see Nissan [2019], on the etymologies of Latin.

The latter leads to Section 10, "Geoffrey Arnott's invoking onomatopoeia for Modern Greek *Tsichla* 'Thrush'" (an unwarranted practice); and to the thematically akin Section 11, "On the popularity of ascriptions to ideophonia of names for thrushes". We then continue with an interesting etymological hypothesis we signal and approve of, in Section 12, "Fanciullo's Hypothesis on the Maghrebine Arabic Bird-Name *ḏorḏus* < TURDUS", African Latin being part of the *Romania submersa;* and then, we expand something we mention in that section, in the following Section 13, "On a penchant of historical folk-taxonomies to consider black birds to be related". Next, Section 14 is "When it is etymologies <u>from</u> Latin *merula* that are problematic" (signalling an example recently pointed out by David Trotter); and then, having mentioned an Albanian lexical item, Section 15 is "A behavioural pattern as semantic motivation for a bird-name: the case of 'anger'. Modern Hebrew names for *Paridae* bird taxa". Vennemann had found in behaviour (namely, singing) the semantic motivation for Latin *merŭla,* whereas in Section 5, I claim that dark plumage was the semantic motivation. The last two sections before the conclusions are 16, "Other acceptations of Classical Latin *merŭla*", and 17, "Blackbirds and Black Birds in metaphor and allegory", which considers a medieval Aviary as well as Italian idiomatics and a couple of Luigi Clasio's fables in verse: these first appeared in 1795, and in their final version in 1807.

2. *General background*

In Nissan [2017-2018] I have subjected Theo Vennemann's book *Germania Semitica* [2012a] – a book bound to be controversial – to a long, indeed book-length discussion. Whereas I rejected his proposed framework for how Semitic (indeed, Northwest Semitic) loanwords apparently ended up in Proto-Germanic, I argued that in such cases where the lexical concepts do not appear to have reached along with their names the littoral with maritime trade after the onset of recorded history (namely, *Wanderwörter* with Phoenician or Punic traders, possibly through intermediate trade), and where agriculture or worldview is clearly involved, a more cogent context for arrival would have been the Neolithic spread of agriculture: I insisted on early farmers as being the conduit of Semitic loanwords in the semantic domain of agriculture or (partly) social organisation, but to Vennemann (in this respect in line with Colin Renfrew's view), the Indo-European spread was precisely of farmers. I instead agree with Mario Alinei [1996; 2000a; 2000b] that at the time of the arrival of agriculture, Proto-Celtic and Proto-Germanic speakers were already in place.

In fact, Alinei's Continuity Theory denies Indo-European arrival later than the Palaeolithic. I pointed out that an approach rather similar to, and compatible with, Alinei's is Agmon and Bloch's approach to Proto-Semitic and material cultures of the Mesolithic and Neolithic (Agmon [2010]; Agmon - Bloch [2013]), and it, too, adopts a chronology going back to the Palaeolithic.

3. *A precursor Vennemann acknowledged*

On p. 54 (in Ch. 4 in the book under review), Vennemann cites admiringly a precursor, Gerald Cohen (1976), who even though he had no theory, published an article entitled *On the possibility of lexical borrowing from Semitic into Proto-Germanic*. Cohen (1976) signalled these parallels: (A) Germanic **kas* 'vessel, bowl', Semitic *kās* 'bowl, cup'; (B) Proto-Germanic **par-* 'bull, calf', Semitic *par* 'bull, young bull'; (C) Germanic *ram* 'male sheep', Semitic *rēm, rim-* 'wild ox, oryx'; (D) Gothic *abr-* 'strong, violent', Akkadian *abar-u* 'strength' (but Vennemann prefers a connection to Hebrew *'abīr* 'strong, valiant', a term applied to an animal);[1] (E) Proto-Germanic **gamal-* 'old', Hebrew *gāmal-* 'became ripe'.

I find (A), (B), (C) plausible, and the proper context should be the Neolithic spread of agriculture. If so, perhaps (E), too, is more than a coincidence, and perhaps (D), too, is not to be ruled out. Perhaps Biblical Hebrew *gāmal* for 'to become ripe' and for 'to wean' is in some relation to Arabic *kámala* 'to become complete'.

As for (D), if you allow metathesis (i.e., if we are willing to consider the Semitic root *ʔ-b-r* to be a metathetical alloroot of *b-r-ʔ*), note for the sake of completeness the data listed by Dolgopolsky (2008, p. 324) s.v. ***baʕʔ∇**, where the archisememe of the supposed Nostratic root is defined as «big, much, thick». Dolgopolsky claimed there: The CS [i.e., Central Semitic] adj. (< pp.) **baʔrīʔ-* 'fat, stout' (of animals and humans), 'healthy' (> BHb [i.e., Biblical Hebrew] בָּרִיא *bāʔrī* adj. 'fat', f. bərīʔ-ā id., MHb [i.e., Medieval Hebrew] בָּרִיא *bāʔrī* 'healthy, strong, fat', JA [i.e., Jewish Middle Aramaic] bərī ⏚ *bāʔrī* id., Ar[abic] bariʔa 'was\became fat') is likely to go back to a merger of several N[ostratic] etymons (becoming homonymous in S[emitic]), among them the etymon in question». Dolgopolsky's symbol ⏚ stands for «dialectal variants» (Dolgopolsky [2008: 2719]). Dolgopolsky (*ibidem*: 324) claimed that a reflex

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[1] Cf. Vennemann [2001], reprinted in Vennemann [2012a], and see e.g. in the latter, in Sec. 4.3 (pp. 51-52) his etymology of *Abraham*. I do not find it appealing. As for Cohen [1976], he derived Akkadic *abāru* «from *ḤBR* (= tie) with the loss of initial *Ḥ-* as occurs frequently in Accadian, […] Semantically we deal here with 'tie > bind firmly > firm > strong'». I do not find this really convincing, either.

of the Nostratic root *baŕʔ∇ is non-Anatolian Proto-Indo-European *bʰer- 'good, big'. He also claimed there is a reflex in Altaic, such as Turkic *baŕik 'thick' (with ŕ becoming [z] in extant derivatives).

4. *Isidore of Seville's etymologies of Latin* merŭla *'blackbird, merle', Aristotle's and Isidore's mention of white blackbirds, and an interpretation of a sixteenth-century bird illustration, Pierre Vase's "L'Oyseau blanc"*

Isidore of Seville's very influential *Etymologies,* an encyclopedia arranged by subject matter, was compiled by that clergyman, saint, and Doctor of the Church between c. 615 and the early 630s. There exists a critical edition by Wallace Martin Lindsay of Isidore's Latin text (Lindsay [1911]). Barney et al. [2006 (2008)] is the first complete translation into English of Isidore's *Etymologies*. Isidore stated some etymologies of Latin *merula* (*Etymologies* XII.vii.69):

> The merle (*merula*) was called *medula* in ancient times, because it 'makes music' (*modulare*). Others say the merle is so named because it flies alone, as if the term were *mera volans* ('flying alone'). Although this is a black bird everywhere, it is white in Achaea (trans. Barney et al. [2006] 2008, p. 268).

The etymology from *mera volans* had been claimed in Varro 5.76: «Merula quod mera, id est sola, uolitat», and in Quintilian 1.6.38: «ut merula, quia sola volat, quasi mera volans nominaretur». It stands to reason that *mera volans* is a folk-etymology. Does *medula* also deserve to be dismissed as a folk-etymology, or could it still be retained as a possibility? Isidore also wrote concerning the white merles of Achaea (in particular, of Arcadia) in *Etymologies* XIV.iv.15: «Arcadia contains the great river Erimanthus. It possesses the stone *asbestos,* which, once set on fire, is never extinguished. Dazzling white merles are also born there» (trans. Barney *et al*. [2006 (2008): 291]).

In an entry for ancient Greek names for the blackbird, Geoffrey Arnott [2007, s.v. *Kopsichos,* pp. 107-109] pointed out on p. 108 that Aristotle in *Historia animalium = HA* 617a11-18

> claims two sorts of Blackbird: the black one found everywhere, and one similar in size and voice but pure white with an orange beak allegedly found only around Mount Cyllene in Arcadia (cf. e.g. [Aristotle] *Mirabilia* 831b14-17, Pausanias 8.17.3, Aelian[2] *NH* 2.47, 5.27 [citing Sostratus], Antoninus Liberalis 5, Priscian *Periegesis* 415, Stephanus of Byzantium s.v. Κυλλήνη, Eustatius 300.37-39 on *Iliad* 2.603, Pliny *HN* 10.87). Although the identification of the latter bird is disputed, it must have been an albino Blackbird; Blackbirds have more albinos than any other European species and wholly white forms are not rare – Indeed, they were attested also in Italy, being caught and shown there as exhibits (Varro *De Re Rustica* 3.9.17) (Arnott's own brackets.

[2] Claudius Aelian, ca. 170-235 C.E., was a Roman sophist and polygrapher.

NH may stand for Aelian's *Natural History*, but presumably Arnott intended *NA = De natura animalium. HN* stands for Pliny the Elder's *Historia naturalis*).

In *The Discovery of a Cache of Over 200 Sixteenth-Century Avian Water-colors* by Roberta Olson and Alexandra Mazitelli [2007], they signalled on p. 477 that at the New-York Historical Society, a bird illustration (cat. No. 2.48) is "L'Oyseau blanc" ("The White Bird"), attributed to Pierre Vase. This was «the French print maker, embroiderer, painter, and designer known as Pierre Vase, Cruche, or Eskrich (1518/20 - after 1590)» (*ibidem*: 435).

Many of the key collaborators on these two projects [of bird illustration] were French Protestants, including the peripatetic Vase and his family, who fled Catholic Lyon after the Edict of Châteaubriant[3] (27 June 1551) and emigrated to Geneva, the home of John Calvin (1509-1564) and one of the most important centers of Reformist thought and scholarship (*ibidem*: 436)[4]. The

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[3] «By 1548 Vase was working as a book illustrator for Guillaume Rouille in Lyon, a city long renowned for its religious tolerance and open-mindedness. After Calvin's return to Geneva in 1541, however, the strong stance taken by that city's government alarmed French authorities, and they responded with the Edict of Châteaubriant, which, among other things, prohibited the sale, importation, or printing of any unapproved book under pain of punishment and confiscation of property and forbade subjects from corresponding with, sending money to, or otherwise favoring persons who had left to reside in Geneva. Soon thereafter, Vase emigrated to that nearby city, where he baptized a son in 1552» (Olson - Mazitelli [2007: 515]). He seems to have been rather nomadic. As an artist, Geneva both denied and offered him opportunities: «By 1560 illustrations in scriptural books were completely prohibited, which may have forced Vase to ask for public assistance in 1562. After he was refused alms, he was imprisoned and fined. During the Reformation age in Geneva, Vase was involved with the largest satirical image published in the sixteenth century – the *Mappe-monde nouvelle papistique*» (he and others used pseudonyms), but this resulted in litigation for Pierre Vase, over a deadline and payment" (*ibidem*). «From 1564 to 1568 Vase shuttled back and forth between Lyon and Geneva, applying for residence in the French city in 1564 and finally settling there permanently in 1568. On his return to Lyon, he seems to have publically espoused Catholicism, not an uncommon practice for artists in that city» (*ibidem*). He eventually painted and embroidered at the service of Lyon's "king's governor, who was also involved in the persecution and massacre of Huguenots" (*ibidem*: 516). «Although his last request to return to Geneva in 1578 was denied, he remained active in Protestant circles and stayed in contact with individuals in that reformist's haven. […] Vase was recorded as living in Lyon as late as 1590» (*ibidem*).

[4] «Of the main trio of artists, Pierre Vase (or Eskrich) – whose authorship is recorded ten times as *Pierre Vase, alias Cruche,* which is why we have opted for that form of the name – is the finest and also the best documented […]. Born in Paris, the young artist fled the relatively constrained life of Paris and the court in the late 1540s. By 1548 he had established himself in Lyon, where he worked as a book illustrator with the publisher Guillaume Rouille, before departing for Geneva in 1551 or 1552. Until now, his known oeuvre consisted solely of prints, such as his Map of Paris (1575). An unsigned print representing Noah's Ark, with its parade of pairs of animals and beautifully exe cuted birds, was attributed to him by the famous French connoisseur and collector Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694-1774). The [New-York Historical] Society's watercolors are the first drawings or paintings that can be securely attributed to him» (Olson - Mazitelli [2007: 456]). «Vase clearly associated with contemporary figures in the scientific and printing world of the day» (*ibidem*: 457).

Appendix of Olson and Mazitelli 2007: 515-516) is entitled "Further Biographical Notes on Pierre Vase[5].

Olson and Mazitelli reproduced Vase's image of the white bird, and explained [2007: 476-477]): «This spirit of intellectual freedom may also have encouraged Vase in novel artistic experimentation. A case in point is the sketch in which he used a black background to set in relief the white plumage of an unidentified bird (cat. no. 2.48; Fig. 65), an approach that would be adopted by Audubon for his first watercolor of the Great Egret in 1821».

"L'Oyseau blanc", white with an orange beak, yellow-brownish circle around the eye, and pink legs, attributed to Pierre Vase (Figure 65 on p. 477 in Olson - Mazitelli [2007]).

[5] «Pierre Vase or Pierre Cruche, as he was most commonly known, employed many names in an age before the codification of surnames. He signed five of his works, two later examples with the French *Cruche* and three earlier ones more formally with Latin variants — *Petrus Escricheus, Eskrichius, or Ekricheus*. The ex-libris of a book that he owned late in life, in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, is inscribed, *P. Escriche, dit Cruche*. He was also referred to in documents as Escript, Eskrich, and d'Estrique, among other variations. After Natalis Rondot's 1898 publication of the documents concerning his life, he has most often been identified in the literature as Pierre Eskrich, a name that derives from his Latin signatures on prints. He was the son of Jacob Krug, a German engraver originally from Freiburg im Breisgau who worked in Paris during the first quarter of the sixteenth century (in 1519 for the comtesse de Nevers). Their German surname was corrupted or translated variously, for instance as Kriche, Eccriche, Escriche, Cruche, or Vase» (Olson - Mazitelli [2007: 515]). «[I]n 1573, when the artist lodged in a house in the rue de la Vieille-Monnaie in Lyon, he gave his name in the lease as 'Pierre du Vase dit Cruche' and also baptized most of his children in Geneva with the surname of Vase» (*ibidem*).

Coßyphus ou Cottyphus melas en Grec, Merula nigra en Latin, Merle noir en Françoys.

A woodcut showing a blackbird ("Merula nigra en Latin, Merle noir en François"), by an anonymous artist (perhaps emulating Pierre Gourdelle), from Pierre Belon, *L'Histoire de la nature des oyseaux* (Paris, 1555), p. 320. Figure 15 on p. 445 in Mazitelli [2007]. «However, the black-and-white medium cannot replicate the colorful plumage of some of the [newly researched] watercolors, and even the black birds (e.g., Fig. 15) lack the subtle modeling of their counterparts in the [New-York Historical] Society's watercolors» (*ibidem*), which the Society had acquired in 1889.

I propose that whereas it is possible that Vase actually observed a white bird and represented it visually in a faithful manner – perhaps this bird was an albino individual – this bird looks suspiciously similar to an Old World blackbird (a merle, *Turdus merula*), perhaps with the exception of the very long, raised claw on its back finger. It has an orange beak. Was that an observed albino merle? Or was it perhaps an image inspired by Aristotle's and Isidore's claim that white merles did exist? Upon being faced with an albino blackbird, Vase was perhaps thinking about ancient textual evidence concerning the occurrence of such white birds. But did he ever saw one, or figured out how a white blackbird would look? I propend for the hypothesis that he actually saw such a bird, and that moreover, he may have been aware of mentions of such birds in the classics.

5. *A likely etymology of Latin* merŭla *'blackbird': PIE* *mer- *'dark'*

The Latin bird-name *merŭla* 'blackbird' of a species of thrush (*Turdus merula*)[6] is arguably semantically motivated by the black colour of that bird's plumage: cf. Proto-Indo-European *mer- 'dark, dirty'. Geoffrey Arnott [2007: s.v. *Kopsichos,* 107-109] remarked on p. 108 that Aristotle in *Historia animalium = HA* 632b14-18 that

> Blackbirds with brown plumage were seasonal variations of those with black (cf. Aelian *NA* 12.28, Pliny *HN* 10.80; Dionysius *On Birds* 1.27 says they are two different species). This partly misinterprets reality: adult male Blackbirds are black, adult females are dark umber brown, but young males have dusky brown plumage resembling that of adult females up to their first autumnal moult, and they do not become totally black until their third moult (*NA* stands for Aelian's *De natura animalium*. *HN* stands for Pliny the Elder's *Historia naturalis*).

In his *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the Other Italic Languages,* Michiel de Vaan (2008) has an entry for *merula* on pp. 375-376. After listing Indo-European cognates, he derives latin *merula* and Proto-Italic *mesVlā- from *mesVl- (this also being the etymon of Welsh and Breton names for the same bird):

merula 'blackbird' [f. *ā*] (Naev.+)
  Derivatives: *meruleus* 'coloured like a blackbird' (Pl.).
  PIt. *mesVlā- 'blackbird'.
  IE cognates: W. *mwyalch* 'blackbird', Bret. *moualc'h* < PBrit. *mijalx < *me/isal-(s)kā; OIr. *stmolach*, EMoIr. *smólach*, MoIr. *smól* 'blackbird', MoIr. *smaol* 'thrush' < OIr. *smóelach, gen. *smólchae*, < *(s)moilax borrowed from Old British *moialx; OHG *amsla*, *ama/i/usla*, OE *ōsle* 'blackbird' < WGm. *amslōn-, *ama/e/uslōn-. Maybe OHG *meisa*, OS *mēsa*, OE *māse* < PGm. *maisōn- 'tit' is also cognate.
  The British and Latin forms go back to *mesVl-, the Gm. forms to *amsl-, *amsVl-. Schrijver 1997a argues that this points to a loanword from a non-IE substratum language in Europe.
  Bibl.: WH II: 77f., EM 400, IEW 35f., Lloyd-Springer 1988: 211, Schrijver 1997a: 307-311.

WH II is Vol. 2 of Walde and Hoffmann [1930, 1954]; EM is Ernout and Meillet [1979]; IEW is Pokorny [1959]. "Schrijver 1997a" is a paper by Peter Schrijver ([1997] in our bibliography).

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[6] Another form of the same bird-name is (in the masculine morphological gender) *merulus,* which is recorded in post-classical Latin, namely, in Auctor Carm. Philom. 13. The *Carmen Philomela* is replete with bird-names.

I do not commit to the Nostratic hypothesis (not do I reject it out of hand), but let us consider, because of the convenience of finding some collected lexical data, how Aharon Dolgopolsky *Nostratic Dictionary* [2008] dealt on pp. 1392-1393 with the supposed Nostratic root 1471, *märiq▽ 'spot, stain, (?) dirt'. ▽ stands for an unspecified vowel. Actually (both because this is what is relevant here, and because we are not committing to the Nostratic hypothesis), we are only interested here in the Indo-European reflexes of the non-Anatolian Proto-Indo-European lexical root which Dolgopolsky considers to be a reflex of the Nostratic root, namely (bear in mind that Dolgopolsky was using the symbols ⌐ and ⌐ as uncertainty brackets): «*mer ⌐ə⌐ -/*mor(u)- 'dirty, dark' > Gk μορυχ-* v. 'soil, defile' (attested: prtc. pf. μεμορυχμένος 'soiled, blackened'), μορυχώτερον adv. cmpr. 'more obscurely'». Dolgopolsky then listed Lithuanian *moraĩ* (plural) for 'mould', and the Slavic conjectured root *marati 'to soil, to stain' (with a list of derivatives in Slavonic languages). An Armenian term listed is Մռայլ *mṙayl* 'mist, darkness, obscurity'.

Within Indo-European, the relevant plausible cognates share the semantic trait of darkness. This befits the black plumage of adult male blackbirds (*Turdus merula*), even though Dolgopolsky did not include the bird-name. (By the way, Vennemann [2012b: 47, n. 3]) pointed out: «Das Adjektiv *meruleus* bedeutet 'schwarz wie eine Amsel'».

Dolgopolsky [2008: root 1471] claimed for the same Nostratic root 1471, *märiq▽, as far as lexical data are from outside Indo-European, senses revolving around 'spotted'. Incidentally, note that unlike adult starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*), the plumage of blackbirds is not spotted. At any rate, we need not also consider, in order to etymologise *merŭla,* Dolgopolsky's [2008] non-Indo-European lexical data for root 1471.

Within Hamito-Semitic, Dolgopolsky [2008: root 1471] was only able to point out, as a claimed derivative, Arabic *ʔamraχu,* whose definition he quoted in French as being «bigarré, tacheté de taches rouges et blanches». But in the same entry for the particular Nostratic root, he also listed Altaic lexical data, derived from the Tungusic root *mer- defined as '(be) motley, spotted', as well as Mongolic *meriyen, hence Written Mongolian *meriyen* 'bunt, scheckig, Schecke', and Ordos Mongolian *erēn merēn* (the sense being the same), but here Dolgopolsky added a parenthesised remark: «unless a secondary M[ongolic] *m rdp. [reduplication] of *eriyen 'motley, variegated'». Doldopolsky also listed lexical data from Dravidian, derived from a conjectural Dravidian root *maʟ- defined as 'dirty spot, stain', whence Tamil *maṟu* 'stain, blot, spot (esp[ecially] on the moon), stigma', Malayalam *maṟu* 'sport, freckle', Telugu *maṟaka* 'stain, blot, spot', and Gondi *marro* (a dialectal variant being *marror*) denoting 'black mole'.

6. *A fatally flawed etymology proposed by Vennemann for* merŭla

Vennemann's article [2012b] *Amsel und Merula*, published as Chapter 3 in his book *Germania Semitica* (Vennemann [2012a]), unlike by far most of the chapters in that book had never been published before (*ibidem,* p. 47, endnote *: "Erstveröffentlichung", i.e., "First publication"). Perhaps theses circumstances have explicative power for why the error in which Vennemann incurred was not detected by referees.

Much of the paper *Amsel und Merula*, is based on a major misunderstanding, in that it assumes that the Modern Hebrew name of the blackbird (the thrush species whose scientific name is *Turdus merula*), namely, the compound *kikhlí mezammér,* is ancient (whereas it is a neologism first published in 1866), and then posits that it was *mezamer* in Phoenician (whereas /mzammer/ is a Hebrew masculine singular active participle for 'singing, that sings'), and then contrives to claim that Latin made that supposed loanword feminine (**mezamera*), with a diminutive (**mezamerola*), subjected it to rhotacism (**meramerola*) and then haplology (**merola*), whence Latin (*merula*). [See that development summarised on p. 44 in English in the book; cf. in German on pp. 46-47] This is a grotesquely tragic error of epic proportions. It is a pity Vennemann relied on a dictionary that did not make the historical strata of the Hebrew entries clear, and apparently did not consult, for that particular paper, a Hebraist.

It must be said that Vennemann [2012b: 44] was aware indeed that ‹mzmr› /mzammer/ is a participle of the root *zmr* 'to sing' meaning 'singing'. Indeed the thrush, and the blackbird in particular, is an exceptionally forceful singer». But his claim (*ibidem,* p. 46) that «hebräisch *mezamer* 'singing, thrush'» is plainly wrong: there is no evidence of /mzammer/ for 'thrush' in Hebrew in antiquity, whereas – which is something that Vennemann acknowledged in note 6 on p. 47, citing Baltsan (1992, s.v. *nightingale*) – Biblical Hebrew ‹zmyr› *zāmīr* denotes (like in Modern Hebrew [za'mir]) the nightingale instead.

7. *The actual Hebrew terminology for 'thrush' and 'blackbird'*

The participle /mzammer/ was added in the 1860s to the Greek and Hebrew name of the thrush in order to distinguish the blackbird (as a species)[7] from the thrush (as a genus). Whereas blackbirds are known for their song, in English *song thrush* is rather the name of the species *Turdus philomelos.* Actually it is this species that Israeli zoologists call *kikhlí ronén* or *kikhlí mezammér* (also /ronen/ is a participle for 'singing'). Israeli zoologists call the species *Turdus merula,* i.e., the blackbird, /šaḥrur/ [ʃax'rur] or /kikli haššaḥrur/, where /šaḥrur/ is a noun neologised

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[7] Vennemann [2012b: 44] wrongly claimed that «the blackbird is a sub-species of the thrush».

as a reduplicative of the adjective /šaḥor/ 'black'. Moreover, Israeli zoologists call the species *Turdus musicus* = *Turdus iliacus* (i.e., the redwing) by the name *kikhlí lven-gabbá,* literally 'thrush with a white eyebrow'. (This is not the bird called redwing in North America, i.e., the red-winged blackbird, which is an icterid, the species *Agelaius phoeniceius,* just as in North America *blackbird* does not denote the Old World blackbird, but rather any of 26 species of icterid birds with black feathers.)[8] The ancient Greek *kichlē* (Arnott [2007: q.v].) for 'thrush' belongs to both early rabbinic and modern Hebrew.

The evolution of coined Hebrew modern ornithology (as early as the late 18th century) is a confusingly complex subject (Fischler [1990a, 1990b, 1991]) – The turning point in the 19th century came with the Hebrew lexicon of birds by Shalom Yaʿakov Abramowitsch, [1866], who was to become the famous Yiddish and Hebrew novelist Mendele Mokher Sfarim – but Vennemann was unsuspecting of its basics. The first thing to know about zoonymy as found in 20th-century Hebrew is that only part of it also belongs in Biblical Hebrew (e.g., /zamir/ 'nightingale', a co-derivative of the participle /mzammer/ 'singing, the participle' that Vennemann misunderstood as though it was an ancient name for 'blackbird'). Many bird names in Israeli Hebrew are first found in the Hebrew Bible. A few Israeli Hebrew bird names were coined after similar bird names found in the talmudic literature while not in the Bible. And finally, many Israeli Hebrew bird names are modern coinages.

8. *On the evolution of Modern Hebrew bird-names*

Israel Aharoni (1880-1946), a zoologist rather than a linguist, was quite influential in how Hebrew bird names came to be eventually standardised. With him, Hebrew zoonymy began to look close to what it is at present. In the second quarter of the 20th century, Aharoni yielded great influence on the evolution of which denotation was ascribed in Israeli Hebrew to Biblical Hebrew zoonyms, but unfortunately not infrequently got it wrong in terms of identifying the ancient denotation. For example, ancient Greek *aëtos* generally denotes any of the larger birds of prey. David Talshir [2012: Ch. B.5: 47-64] discusses how in the first half of the 20th century, because of a lexicographical misconception of the zoologist Israel Aharoni, the traditional denotations of the Biblical Hebrew daily raptor names *néšer* and *ʿáyiṭ* – respectively: 'eagle (*Aquila*)', and a generic collective name – were confusingly replaced in Israeli Hebrew with the word senses 'vulture' and 'eagle' in that order. Talshir remarks (*ibidem,* p. 61) that Aharoni's only (and fallacious) reason for ascribing to *ʿáyiṭ* the sense 'eagle (*Aquila*)' was that he perceived it as sounding similarly to Greek ἀετός (Aëtos).

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[8] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_World_blackbird

There is no historical etymological relation between the Hebrew and Greek terms, as the Greek term has an accepted Proto-Indo-European etymology (*ibidem*: 60).

Then, in the third quarter of the 20th century, the writer Avraham Shlonsky influenced Hebrew bird names importantly in his translations from Russian. While revising bird names for the 1972 edition of a previous work, Shlonsky made them conform to the intervening decisions made by the Academy of the Hebrew Language, but he sometimes maintained his independence, as Bracha Fischler [1990b] has pointed out.

The taxa denoted sometimes changed more than once during the 19th and 20th centuries before they became standardised, and it sometimes even happened that sets of names migrated among taxa, even circularly. While tracing the history of Modern Hebrew bird-names, Fischler [1991: 22, §3] has listed the Hebrew neologisms proposed for the various bird kinds or taxa up to Mendele (i.e., Abramowitsch) in his already mentioned Hebrew reference book in the natural sciences, published in Žitomir in 1866. Bracha Fishler compares Mendele's coinages with the attempts at neologisation made by Barukh Linda (1759-1848) in 1788 (Linda 1788-1810), and by Joseph Schönhak (1812-1870, Yosef ben Binyamin Dov Sheinhak) in 1841 (Schönhak [1841-1859]). Fischler's companion paper [1990b] discusses terminological developments from Mendele to the early 1970s (cf. Fischler [1990a]). From Fischler's tables, an amazingly complex tangle emerges. She arranges terms in columns for Mendele, then for the zoologist Aharoni, then – covering a period from 1932 to 1963 – Shlonsky (an intensively neologising[9] writer, poet, and translator, who as mentioned earlier, coined bird names especially when translating from the Russian); then the decisions of the Academy of the Hebrew Language and other terminologists (1964-1972), and finally Shlonsky's revision of 1972 (i.e., the publication date of a final edition in which he had replaced bird names he had used earlier, a revision he did in the main in order to comply with the Academy's terminology approved in the intervening years), with a smattering of other authors or dictionaires as well. Fischler provides eloquent examples of bird-names having shifted chainwise, in the evolution of Modern Hebrew terminology.

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[9] Neologising while writing a literary work or when translating one, in Modern and then Israeli Hebrew, gradually went out of fashion between the 1960s and early 1970s (with the coming of *ha-tqufá ha-razá,* "the slim period"). Shlonsky died in 1973, when he was 73, and his fortunes fell soon afterwards, both because his method went out of fashion, and, apparently, because as a powerful literary editor he was resented. The latter was claimed by Aryeh Aharoni, the editor of Ya'akov Kna'ani's (Bessarabia, 1894 - Jerusalem, 1978) posthumous *Dictionary of Shlonsky's Neologisms* (Kna'ani 1989), in an interview (*You said Shlonsky*, *Amartem Shlonsky*) published in the weekend *Sofshavúa'* סופשבוע supplement of the Tel-Aviv daily *Ma'arív* (before the festival of Hanukkah 5750 = 1989/90; the dictionary itself appeared nearly three months earlier, around the festival of Rosh HaShanah, the autumn Jewish New Year's Day of that year).

9. *Greek* kichlē *'thrush', its late antique occurrence in early rabbinic literature, and some modern developments in Greek and Hebrew*

The ancient Greek *Kichlē* (Arnott [2007: q.v.]) for 'Thrush' belongs to both early rabbinic and modern Hebrew. Modern Greek has *Tsichla* 'Thrush'. The Hebrew name is now pronounced *kikhlí* (קִיכְלִי). It was reintroduced into Hebrew by Mendele[10], then replaced by the zoologist Israel Aharoni with *ṭéred* (טֶרֶד) based on Latin and Arabic (but by adopting a widespread Hebrew word-form, △é△e△, where each △ represents a radical slot), and later reinstated by others[11]. The species *Turdus philomelos* was named *ṭéred mezammér* (which as mentioned, is not the way it is called by Israeli zoologists at present). That קיכלי (*pace* its variants) is the Greek for 'Thrush' was recognised in the 17th century by Benjamin Mussafia in his *Mussaf he-ʿArukh*.[12]

Variants and context made Marcus Jastrow in his dictionary [1903] read the early rabbinic bird-name as though it was *qiḇlay* (קִיבְלִי), which he defined: «a species of quails [...], partridge». But Geoffrey Arnott [2007], too, goes wrong for once, I am afraid, invoking onomatopoeia for Modern Greek *Tsichla*. Arnott [2007: s.v. *Kichlē*], notes that the Modern Greek name[13] for the Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos:* itself dealt with, in Arnott [2007: s.v. *Trichas,* 246]) is *Tsichla,* and he suggests that this was derived from its «short, high-pitched

[10] I am referring to the important Hebrew popular zoology work by Shalom Ya'akov Abramowitsch, i.e., the famous writer Mendele Mokher Sfarim (ca. 1837-1917). An innovator in Hebrew zoonymy, he «spent more years on *Natural History* than on any of his novels» (Aberbach 1993, p. 79). In the main – as explained by Mordechai Zalkin [2005: 266-267] – Mendele reworked in Hebrew various works on natural sciences by Harald Othmar Lenz [1842], Alfred Edmund Brehm, Philip Jacob Beumer, and Christoph Gottfried Andres Giebel, into the Hebrew-language, three-volume set of his natural history (Abramowitsch 1862-1872). Alfred Edmund Brehm (1829-1884) published his bulky *Das Leben der Vögel* (650 pages in octavo, apart from the front matter and the 24 colour plates) in Glogau in 1861, and a second edition appeared there in 1867. An English translation appeared in London in 1874. The multivolume work by Christoph Giebel (1820-1881), *Die drei Reiche der Natur: Erste Abtheilung: Die Naturgeschichte des Thierreichs, Amphibien, Fische,* was published in Leipzig (with Otto Wigand's publishing house) in the years 1859-1864.

[11] See Fischler [1990b: 16-17].

[12] Dr. Benjamin Mussafia, a physician and erudite, was appointed physician to the royal family of Denmark in 1646. He was buried in Hamburg's oldest Jewish cemetery. His fame rests on his having authored, which was aptly for his family name, a well-known supplement (in Hebrew: *mussaf*) to a medieval glossary of the talmudic literature, the *Arukh,* by Nathan ben Yechiel of Rome (1031-1106). The supplement was titled *Mussaf he-Arukh* indeed. Mussafia was certainly aware of the pun on his own family name, and in fact alluding to one's name in the title of one's own work was a well-established pattern in rabbinic scholarship.

[13] That Arnott, relying on recent ornithological literature from Greek, mentions on occasion the demotic names is useful and wise. Nevertheless, he also remarks, s.v. *Tagēn* (Arnott [2007: 235]), that the Black Francolin (*Francolinus francolinus*) has been called for centuries in Modern Greek, and still at present, *tagēnari,* «although ornithologists now prefer *phrankolinos*».

alarm call». For this species, Jørgensen's [1958] *Nomina Avium Europaearum* gives the ornithologists' Modern Greek name Κίχλη ἡ κοινή.

In the introduction to his volume on birds, Abramowitsch [1866] explained quite clearly in his introduction that he preferred to avoid recycling old bird-names, because he did not want to cause such confusion that would make people wrongly assume that a bird that is not kosher, is kosher instead (or vice versa) because an old name was given a new denotation[14].

It must be said that Mendele's laudable intention and consequent practice was not emulated by the makers of Hebrew bird names in the 20th century. Even Abramowitsch himself [1866] recycled on occasion Talmudic bird-names. Such is the case of הַקִּיכְלִי *haqqikhli* (*qikhlí,* for *Turdus* 'thrush', still in use in Israeli Hebrew; Abramowitsch [1866: 106], and of הַשִּׁכְלִי *hassikhli* (*sikhlí,* for *Turdus pilaris,* not in use now in Israeli Hebrew; Abramowitsch [1866: 108]. The current Israeli Hebrew name for *Turdus pilaris* is *qikhlí afór,* i.e., literally, 'grey thrush'. Its English name is *fieldfare*[15].

10. *Geoffrey Arnott's invoking onomatopoeia for Modern Greek* Tsichla *'thrush'*

Geoffrey Arnott was a British classicist, as well as very knowledgeable about birds. He was the University of Leeds Professor of Greek, and former president of the Leeds Birdwatchers' Club. Arnott [2007] invokes onomatopoeia for Modern Greek *Tsichla* 'Thrush'. Concerning the Song Thrush, in the *Collins Field Guide,* we are told (Peterson *et al.* [1993: 184, s.v. *Song Thrush*]): «Voice: Song loud and musical, with short, varied phrases repeated 2-4 times,

[14] In a paper proposing an identification for the two Talmudic *andrafta* species (one of them kosher, and the other one not kosher), Nissan remarked [2011: 447–448] about the point that Abramowitsch was making, when refraining from recycling and giving a new denotation to bird names found in the Talmud: «In the introduction to the second volume of his *Natural History* (*Toldot Hateba*), in which he introduced many Modern Hebrew zoonyms, Shalom Ya'akov Abramowitsch, later to become the famous writer Mendele Mokher Sfarim, rejected criticism that had been levelled by the scholar Fürst in a review of the first volume because the author had not tried to reapply zoonyms from ancient Jewish literature. Abramowitsch [1866: vi-vii] points out that he had refrained from applying bird-names found in the Talmud, because their identification was uncertain. This would have run the risk that unkosher birds would be taken to be kosher. In particular, he adduces as an example the talmudic bird-name שבור אנדרפתא ‹šbwr 'ndrpt'›, remarking that had he identified that bird with *ha-papagayyim tovei ha-mezeg* ([…] 'the tame parrots'), he would have implied that they are kosher (whereas they are not), because the Babylonian Talmud (*Ḥullin* 62), states that שבור אנדרפתא ‹šbwr 'ndrpt'› is kosher», Zohar Amar [2002] discussed the non-kosher status of the parrot.

[15] The species *Turdus pilaris* is called *fieldfare* in English, *Wacholderdrossel* in German (literally, 'juniper's thrush'), *grive litorne* in French, *cesena* in Italian, *zorzal real* in Spanish, *tordo zornal* in Portuguese, and *kramsvogel* in Dutch (Jørgensen [1958: 74, §429], where names in further European languages are also listed).

between brief pauses. Calls include loud tchuck, or tchick, repeated rapidly as alarm; flight-call as soft sip (shorter than Redwing's call)». Arnott [2007: s.v. *Kichlē*] notes that the Modern Greek name for the Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos:* itself dealt with, in Arnott [2007: s.v. *Trichas,* 246]) is *Tsichla,* and he suggests that this was derived from its «short, high-pitched alarm call». I would like to quote from Alinei [1983: 242-243] a relevant remark, concerning other bird names and over-reliance on onomatopoeia, in etymologising a bird-name:

Il tipo lessicale *zizí,* adoperato per animali, viene in genere considerato onomatopeico, specie se si tratta di uccelli. Tuttavia, *zizí* è anche comunissimo allocutivo per lo zio (e la zia), e il suo modulo construttivo è esattamente lo stesso che sta alla base di *papà* e *mammà.* [...] Inoltre, le onomatopee etimologiche sono talvolta incredibili, e ci si può domandare se qualche etimologo non adoperi troppo sbrigativamente questa etichetta. Un esempio che [...] serve ad illustrare l'arbitrarietà di certe attribuzioni: l'uccello che si chiama *chiff-chaff* in Inglese, ha un nome simile in Olandese *-tjiftjaf-,* e il suo canto è caratterizzato appunto dalla ripetizione ritmata di due note, di cui la prima è leggermente più della seconda. Ora, se il nome italiano dell'uccello, *luí,* è anche onomatopeico, come si sostiene [cf. Moltoni [1946: 145]: «per il suo richiamo (*Luì-luì,* ovvero *uìt-uìt*)»] tanto vale dire che *miao* è onomatopeico del gatto, e *baubau* del cane, o *leone* del leone.

[The lexical type *zizí,* as used for naming animals, is usually considered to be onomatopoeic, especially if it's birds that are concerned. However, *zizí* is also a very frequent term of address for one's uncle (or aunt), and its word-formation pattern is precisely the same as for *papà* and *mammà.* [...] Moreover, some instances of etymological onomatopoeia are just incredible, and it may well be the case that some etymologists is too quick when resorting to this label. An example that [...] is useful in that it typifies how arbitrary certain ascriptions are, is the following. The song of the bird called *chiff-chaff* in English and *-tjiftjaf-* in Dutch, is actually typified by the rhythmic repetition of two notes, the pitch of the former being higher than the latter's. Now, if the Italian name of this bird, *luí,* is also onomatopoeic, as maintained by some [cf. Moltoni 1946, p. 145], then we might as well claim that the cat's *mew* is onomatopoeic, the same for the dog's *bow-wow,* or then, for that matter, *lion* for a lion.]

11. *On the popularity of ascriptions to ideophonia of names for thrushes*

The caveat, a justified *cri de coeur,* quoted at the end of the previous section about the abuse of resorting to ideophonia when etymologising bird-names, had to be made precisely because of it is often being the case that ideophonia is invoked indeed. Ideophonia in the background of names for thrushes has been rather popular. In his dissertation about Old English bird-names, Lacey points out [2013: 68, n. 161]:

André, *Les Noms d'Oiseaux en Latin*, s.v.v. 'turela, -ae' and 'turdus' [*recte*: s.vv. 'turdela, ae' and 'turdus'][16], endorses the possibility that these names are ideophonic in origin, though it is not clear how far back he thinks these origins are, or if they were understood to be ideophonic;

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[16] The Latin bird-name *turdēla* occurs in Varro.

his explanation, s.v. 'turdus', suggests the latter. Malory [*recte* Mallory][17] and Adams, *The Oxford Introduction to Proto-Indo-European and the Proto-Indo-European World,* p. 145, like Lockwood, *Oxford Book of British Bird Names*, s.v.v. 'throstle' and 'thrush', and Suolahti, *Die Deutschen Vogelnamen*, p. 53, consider the Indo-European ideophonic origins without remarking on the possibility of contemporary speakers recognising the names as such.

Lacey himself endorses ideophony [2013: 67-69]:

The second reason that *þrostle* may gloss *turdella* at the expense of *þrysce* glossing *turdus* is that the first pair are closely ideophonic, evoking a similar sound in a way that the second pair does not. Both *turdella* and *þrostle* are commonly acknowledged to be ideophonic in origin, though some commentators remark on this quality only with respect to its Indo-European ideophonic roots. I argue that both terms were still perceived as ideophonic in the Anglo-Saxon period: *þrostle* suggests a /θrʌstəla/, *turdella* suggests the very similar /tɜrdəla/. Bearing in mind the imprecise nature of transliteration, the sound evoked by both *þrostle* and *turdella* seems a good match for the trisyllabic beginning of the Mistle Thrush's most characteristic cry, which is today often transliterated as 'truitrüvu'.

Similarly, both *turdus* and *þrysce* were understood to be ideophonic too. However, in this case, the sounds suggested by the names are much less alike: *turdus* evokes the part of the Song Thrush's song often transliterated as 'trrü-trrü-trrü', whereas *þrysce* suggests a screechier sound like /θruːʃə/ or, into the tenth century, /θrɪːskə/. The sound suggested by /θruːʃə/ might explain why it only glosses garbled derivatives of *turdus*: *sturtius*, *trutius*, and *truitius*, which all possess an initial dental, medial back vowel and final lingual consonant possibly redolent of the sound of *þrysce*. A combination of poor transmission and an expectation of ideophonia may lie behind the entry *Strutio þryssce* (1.48) in the Brussels glossary, and also the gloss *Structio scric* if the Latin were understood to be ideophonic (i.e. on the basis of /struːtɪjəʊ/ and /θruːʃə/, and /struːktɪjəʊ/ and /skriːtʃ/). Presumably a gloss such as **turdus. þrysce* is at the root of all these corrupted forms, and such a gloss could well have been based on parallelism between *þrysce*/*þrostle*, and *turdus*/*turdella*. The corruption of the lemma, however, could suggest that such linguistically oriented understanding was not widespread.

The glossing of *turdus* by *scric* and *stær*, as Kitson has remarked, could imply a regional variation in the identification of these birds. I take issue, however, with his subsequent remark that Ælfric, in particular, 'did not care very much about the names of small birds', and that this contributed to the use of *scric* and *stær* to gloss *turdus*. […]

12. *Fanciullo's hypothesis on the Maghrebine Arabic bird-name*
   ḍorḍus < *TURDUS*

There exist early rabbinic discussions about the bird which in Hebrew is called *zarzir,* but we cannot just assume that it denoted the starling. At present in Hebrew the starling is called *zarzir* (e.g., Dor [1965: s.v.]). Actually Rashi (1040-1105), commenting on the Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Bava Qamma,* 92b, rendered *zarzir* into Old French as אשטורוני"ל (*estournel*), thus identifying

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[17] Also Mario Alinei's dissent from Mallory's views concerning Indo-European origins is quite warranted.

it with the starling. This is not necessarily the same bird that was called *zarzir* in the talmudic literature. See Nissan [2011].

In Spanish, *zorzal* is a bird name denoting 'thrush', and also used for 'intelligent person'. The etymology is from Andalusian Arabic *zurzal*, from Arabic *zurzur*, a cognate of the Hebrew bird name *zarzir*. There appears to be no non-Semitic interference. Nor is it a corradical of a Maghrebine Arabic name for 'starling', which Fanciullo ascribed to borrowing from African Latin (an extinct, little known Maghrebine vernacular of the *Romania submersa*).

In Maghrebine Arabic, one finds the bird-name *ḍorḍus*. Franco Fanciullo [1992: 175] took the etymology to be *ḍorḍus* < TURDUS, that he ascribed – because the final *s* is maintained – to the now extinct Afro-Romance vernacular (rather than to some other Romance vernacular, or to Latin). According to Fanciullo, the final *s* is more likely to have been retained from the formation of the plural with *s* in Afro-Romance, than from the Latin nominative case (*ibidem*: 175-176).

An exception, in early rabbinic times, to the avoidance of the meat of the *zarzir* was in that the inhabitants of Kefar Temarta in Judaea used to consider the *zarzir* to be kosher, based on an anatomical criterion, namely, this bird kind having a crop – but such a crop that it is possible to peel off by hand. Dor [1997: 244] points out that the peeling by hand of the crop (in such birds for whose crop this is possible) reflects the internal stratum wearing off and being replaced in the bird while alive: the wearing off is because of the efforts at digesting cellulose.

13. *On a penchant of historical folk-taxonomies*
    to consider black birds to be related

One comes across, in early rabbinic literature, a proverb stating a kinship of the starling and the raven (if one was to assume that the *zarzirim* of the Talmud are actually the starlings)[18]. This was in all likelihood motivated by their black colour. There exist early rabbinic discussions about the bird called *zarzir,* but we cannot just assume that it denoted the starling. As mentioned, at present in Hebrew the starling is called *zarzir*. We also remarked that Rashi (1040-1105), commenting on the Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Bava Qamma,* 92b, rendered

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[18] Yaron Serri – in a dissertation about the interpretation given by Rav Sa'adyah Ga'on (892-942) of the names of unkosher birds as listed in the Pentateuch: his thesis was published inside a book by Zohar Amar [2004] on the kosher status of birds – cites (Serri [2004: 278]) a medieval Arabic encyclopedia, the one by al-Nuwairī (1278-1332), to the effect that in Arabic, the bird *ghudāf,* and possibly also *zāgh,* are also known by the name *zarzūr.* I suspect that *ghuddāf* is merely a voiced variant of the unvoiced *khuṭṭāf,* the Arabic name for the swallow. Serri devoted a section to Sa'adyah Ga'on's identification of the *khuṭṭāf* with one of the birds in the biblical lists of unclean birds (Serri [2004: 283-285]).

zarzir into Old French as אשטורוני"ל (*estournel*), thus identifying it with the starling. This is not necessarily the same bird that was called *zarzir* in the talmudic literature.

For example it was stated there (in both tractate *Bava Qamma,* 92b, and tractate *Ḥullin,* 65a) that because of the observed frequentation of the crow on the part of the *zarzir,* the latter is to be considered as being related to the crow, and therefore unkosher as per the biblical prohibition of "the crow and its species". That frequentation is expressed as "going to", but eventually Ravad's *responsa* (at 14, s.v. *hilkhot ʿofot*) stated explicitly that this is sexual intercourse:

כן ראה ר' [אליעזר זרזירים] אלו שוכבים עם העורב זה עם זה וחשב כי הן ממין עורב.

Let us go back to what we said in the previous section, about the inhabitants of Kefar Temarta in Judaea who used to consider the *zarzir* to be kosher, because this bird has a crop that it is possible to peel off by hand.

They did, on the evidence of *Tosefta,* ed. Zuckermandel, at *Ḥullin,* 3:23; e.g., see on this in the medieval *novellae* of Ramban, i.e., Nachmanides, to the talmudic *locus* at *Ḥullin,* 62b. Nachmanides refers to the frequentation of the crow by the *zarzir* by "dwelt with him" (ושכן עמו). Among early rabbinic sources, also the *Sifra,* at *Shemini,* pericope 3, s.v. *pereq he,* stated that the biblical text specified after "the crow", "as per its species", in order to include the *zarzirim.*

Just as a Talmudic proverb asserts the kinship of two kinds of black birds, one also comes across such grouping in terminology from the British Isles in the early medieval period; in his University College London doctoral dissertation entitled *Birds and Bird-lore in the Literature of Anglo-Saxon England,* in a passage concerned with Old English bird-names that are the etyma of English *raven, rook,* and *crow,* Mohamed Eric Rahman Lacey states [2013: 44-45]

Hrefn is one of the most frequently attested individual bird names in Old English, occurring in 11 poetic texts and 19 prose texts. Both *hroc* and *crawe* are much less common, the former appearing only once in prose and the latter never outside glosses and placenames. Historically there has always been some degree of semantic overlap with the words for these species (especially so with the crow and raven): Latin *cornix, corvus* and other words could mean 'crow' as well as related species; Old Irish *bodb* could refer to a conspiracy [sic!] of creatures ranging from the raven and its relatives to the blackbird [Lacey cites for this Tymoczko (1990)]; and in Welsh the three birds are encompassed by *brân.* Because of the attestations of the etyma of modern English 'raven', 'rook', and 'crow' in OE, it is very tempting to link them. As we shall see, however, there are reasons to be suspicious of this meticulous separation of these three *Corvidae,* not least because these species look, sound and behave very similarly. Out of the 64 occurrences of *hrefn* (not including its occurrences in formations glossing *nocticorax*), 17 are poetic, 31 are in prose and 17 are in glossaries. Neither *hroc* nor *crawe* occurs in a poetic context, however. This suggests a hierarchy of register associated with each of these terms which problematises any notion of clear-cut distinctions between them.

While discussing Old English names, *þrysce* and *þrostle*, for «the strikingly similar Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) and Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*)», Lacey [2013: 65] found that «there is little to disagree with in Kitson's analysis of these names and their semantic ranges» (*ibidem*), namely, Lacey disagreed to the effect that "they overlap with each other and also, with the Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and Blackbird (*Turdus merula*). See Kitson, 'Old English Bird-Names (I)', 484-5" (Lacey [2013: 65, n. 144], citing Kitson [1997]).

14. *When it is etymologies <u>from</u> Latin* merula *that are problematic*

Sometimes, it is etymologies <u>from</u> Latin *merula* that are problematic. David Trotter of Aberystwyth University in Wales began an article about medieval Anglo-Norman bird names as follows (Trotter [2013: 125]); pay attention in particular to the bird-name *merlîn* in the medieval German verse he quotes:

Les oiseaux jouent un rôle important dans la littérature du Moyen Âge. Les faucons permettent des comparaisons de vitesse, l'alouette réjouit les amants, et le chant du rossignol accompagne leurs ébats ou les réveille à l'aube. Dans un passage justement célèbre d'un poète strasbourgeois, Tristan et Iseut, dans la grotte d'amour, bénéficient de la musique des chants d'oiseaux:

> ir dienest was der vogele schal:
> diu kleine reine nahtegal,   16892
> diu troschel unde daz merlîn
> und ander waltvogelîn;
> diu zîse und der galander
> die dienden wider ein ander
> enwette unde enwiderstrît.
> daz gesinde diende z'aller zìt   16898
> ir ôren unde ir sinne.
> (Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan und Isolt*: Ganz [1978])

In a footnote to the word *merlîn,* Trotter remarked: «Problématique. Les éditeurs de Gottfried comprennent < MERULA, mais le mot ressemble au *SMIRIL proposé (FEW 17, 157a) comme étymon de l'*esmerillon* en afr. [= ancien français], ancêtre (linguistique) de l'émerillon (*Falco columbarius*). Une certaine confusion entre ces deux noms d'oiseaux est visible en latin et en afr.: voir *infra*». And indeed, on pp. 126-127 Trotter élabora as follows:

Le dictionnaire du latin médiéval britannique présente la même difficulté dans l'article *merula*:

merula, -us [CL] *1* dark-coloured bird: *a* blackbird, merle, osel (*Turdus merula*). *b* throstle-cock, thrush (*Turdus musicus*) *c* merlin, falcon (*Falco aesalon* or *lithofalco*) *d* (her.) martlet *2* dark-coloured fish or mollusc *3* fish soup (DMLBS 1777a; cf. André 1967: 103).

En laissant de côté les sens ichtyologiques et gastronomiques, l'on constate que même parmi les oiseaux, il y a apparemment polysémie du nom. Le sens *c* 'merlin, falcon' est sans doute par confusion avec *merilio < esmerillon* (< bas-francique *SMIRIL, FEW 17,157a) mais il y a aussi deux possibilités quand même assez distinctes, le merle noir et la grive (musicienne ?). Cela pourrait s'expliquer par le fait que la femelle du *merle noir* n'est pas noire du tout, et ressemble un peu aux grives. Le *merle* est d'ailleurs un membre du genre des *turdi*. Voici de nouveau la difficulté déjà visible dans le *Tristan* de Gottfried.

En réalité, la situation même dans les langues modernes (censées être relativement systématiques et claires) n'est pas sans poser de problèmes. Souvent, la nomenclature moderne des langues standard ne correspond pas à la taxinomie scientifique (essentiellement linnéenne). Les différents membres de la famille des turdidés, par exemple, sont appelés *grive* en français, sauf pour le *merle noir*. En anglais, s'il y a deux fois des *thrushes*, les autres espèces ont des noms tout à fait différents. L'élément *-fare* de *fieldfare* (*grive litorne*), qui remonte à l'idée d'un voyageur (*gefara* ags.) est inconnu ailleurs dans la nomenclature ornithologique anglaise. Même constat chez les fringillidés, où si les deux *bouvreuils* correspondent aux *pyrrhulae*, les *cardueles* (*carduelis carduelis* et *carduelis spinus*) ont en français comme d'ailleurs en anglais, deux noms entièrement différents. Le mot *siskin* anglais (< *sisschen*, forme dialectale de l'Allemand, cf. OED) ou le *tarin* du français n'ont rien à voir avec *finch*, *pinson* ou *bouvreuil*, mais l'oiseau fait visiblement partie de la même famille.

15. *A behavioural pattern as semantic motivation for a bird-name: the case of 'anger'. Modern Hebrew names for* Paridae *bird taxa*

We have seen that Vennemann wrongly relied on a Hebrew participle for 'singing' in order to etymologise Latin *merŭla* 'blackbird'. He took a behavioural trait of the bird as being the semantic motivation, whereas I argued that the latter rather was the blackbird's black plumage, thus its body's outer morphology. Neither Vennemann, nor I claim for bird-names we have been concerned with, here, a relation to Albanian *zëmëronem* 'anger': *zëmëre*. And yet, consider that the lexical concept 'anger' as being a semantic motivation for a particular bird-name is not unheard of. When introducing his neologism (which is still in use in Israeli Hebrew) הַיַרְגָזִי *yargazí* for 'titmouse' (the bird genus *Parus*), Abramowitsch [1866: 150] explained that he called that bird that way because it is רגזן *ragzan,* 'irascible'. In a footnote (Abramowitsch [1866: 150]), the Spanish name *Guerrero* (literally 'warrior') of one species of *Parus* is mentioned (spelling it in the Roman alphabet). That same footnote goes on to praise that semantic motivation of the Spanish name as being apt for all species of the genus *Parus.* Arguably the occurrence of [g] and [r] in *guerrero* corroborated Mendele's choice of the neologism *yargazí,* which contains [rg] indeed. In the same note, Abramowitsch justified his choice of derivational pattern, pointing out that it occurs in Biblical Hebrew in a bird-name indeed, namely, in the name

for 'owl'. He began that footnote by explaining that he coined *yargazí* by analogy with the (long extant) bird name יַנְשׁוּף *yanšuf* 'owl' from the root נשפ √*nšp,* but he did not clarify whether he intended semantic motivation of *yanšuf* 'owl' from the Biblical Hebrew noun נֶשֶׁף *néšef* 'dusk', 'twilight' (in Israeli Hebrew it denotes 'reception in the evening', 'ball in the evening', instead: Cinderella goes to the *néšef*), or the verb יַנְשׁוּף *našáf* 'to blow' (because the owl expels pellets of bones and feathers from its mouth?). Whether or not there is any truth to such etymologies, they have been voiced from time to time.

Abramowitsch [1866: 338] called the ruff (i.e., the species *Philomachus pugnax,* whose female is called *reeve* in British English) by the novel compound name חַרְטוּמָן רַגְזָנִי *khartuman ragzani* (literally, 'irascible [big]-nosed-one'), by adding a transcription (קאמפפהאהן) of the German name *Kampfhahn* (literally, 'war hen', instead of -*huhn*). The current standard German name for that species is *Kampfläufer.* Jørgensen's *Nomina Avium Europaearum* [1958: 42, §239] also lists such names semantically motivated by 'fighter' as French *chevalier combatant,* Italian *combattente,* Spanish *combatiente,* Portuguese *cavaleiro combatente,* Dutch *kemhaan,* and Polish *battalion.* The current Israeli name is לוֹחֵם *lokhém,* literally 'fighter'. The evolution of Hebrew names for that species since Abramowitsch [1966] was briefly outlined by Fischler [1990b: 24-25, no. 71; cf. p. 27].

The penduline tit is called *rémiz* in French, Polish and Russian. Abramowitsch [1866] however had called it יַרְגָּזִי הַכִּיס *yargazi hakkis,* literally, 'tit (='irascible [bird]') of the pouch' (because of the shape of its nest). The Academy of the Hebrew Language applied the deminine suffix -*it* and gave the name רָמִית *ramít* to the bird *Remiz pendulinus* 'penduline tit' (cf. in the Academy's published protocols, *Zikhronot Haakademya Lalashon Haivrit* 10-11, 1963-1964: 23b).

16. *Other acceptations of Classical Latin* merŭla

Already in Classical Latin, metaphor was behind semantic shift of *merŭla* from its acceptation as a bird-name, to two other acceptations. Vitruvius 10.12 mentions the *merula,* this being – according to the English definition provided s.v. *merŭla* on p. 1137 in Short and Lewis's Latin dictionary (1879) – «A kind of hydraulic machine that produced a sound like the note of the blackbird». Another acceptation was (*ibidem*) «A fish, the sea-carp», as when Ovid wrote *merulae virentes* (*Halieuticon* 114); cf. Pliny the Elder, 32.11.53, §149. Moreover, *Merŭla* was the surname of a family belonging to ancient Rome's *gens Cornelia.* That surname was borne by Cnaeus Cornelius Merula (Livy 33.55), as well as by a flamen Dialis, Lucius Cornelius Merula (mentioned by Velleius

Paterculus 2.20; Valerius Maximus 9.12.5; and Tacitus, *Annales,* 3.58.2). Besides, *Měrŭla* was (according to Pliny the Elder, 3.5.7, §48) the name of a river of Liguria, later known by the name *Arosia*.

17. *Blackbirds and black birds in metaphor and allegory*

It is worthwhile to mention that black birds, and the blackbird in particular, received attention in the Middle Ages as moral allegories[19]. However, zoological accuracy, in these, could be sacrificed for the sake of symbolism; for example, as the Deluge had done away with a sinful humankind and Noah sent out a dove from an Ark, Hugh of Fouilloy's *De avibus* associated a black dove with Noah, where blackness represented relinquished past sins[20]. At any rate, metaphorical usage of *merlo* in Italian ('blackbird' for 'fool') is so well-established,

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[19] The blackbird is the subject of Ch. 48 in the allegorical Aviary of Hugh of Fouilloy. Willene Clark [1982] wrote: «Hugh of Fouilloy's *De avibus,* written sometime after 1152, is a teaching text for monastic lay-brothers, using birds as the subjects of moral allegory. Copies were usually illustrated, and a standard program of miniatures can be followed, all or in part, through some forty-six of the seventy-eight extant manuscripts, produced mainly in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In England, the text was often incorporated directly into the Bestiary, with or without the typical Aviary illustrations. The Aviary's formal parallels to the Bestiary, and its similar patronage and currency, suggest that the Bestiary, too, may have been used as a teaching text for lay-brothers» (*ibidem*: 63). «Migne's *Patrologia latina* gives only fifty-six chapters for the Aviary, but the usual division in the manuscripts is into sixty chapters. The sixty chapters can be divided into two parts. The first part, consisting of thirty-six chapters, is the more original, and contains the most unusual pictures. The second part, with a picture and chapter for each bird, more closely resembles the typical Bestiary. Hugh's text follows Bestiary tradition by drawing on the *Physiologus,* St. Isidore's *Etymologies,* and Hrabanus Maurus, *De universo.* He also quotes St. Gregory's *Moralia in Job* at length, as well as the Bible. The lessons provided in the Aviary are longer than those of the Bestiary, in many cases much longer, reflecting Hugh's rich imagination. The Biblical passages quoted are often those which mention birds, although others are also used, and passages relating to two trees, the palm and the cedar. Hugh weaves his borrowings and his own ideas into a colorful fabric of allegory and commentary» (Clark [1982: 64]). The table of contents of the Aviary is as follows (*ibidem*, p. 72, note 18): «Prologues I and II; (Part I:) Chs. 1-11, Silvered Dove; Chs. 12-15, North and South Winds; Chs. 16-22, Falcon; Ch. 23, Preface to Sparrow and Turtledove; Chs. 24-27, Palm; Chs. 28–29, Turtledove; Chs. 30-31, Cedar; Chs. 32-37, Sparrow. (Part II:) Ch. 38, Pelican; Ch. 39, Night Heron; Ch. 40, Raven; Ch. 41, Cock; Ch. 42, Ostrich; Ch. 43, Vulture; Ch. 44, Crane; Ch. 45, Kite; Ch. 46, Swallow; Ch. 47, Stork; Ch. 48, Blackbird; Ch. 49, Owl; Ch. 50, Jackdaw; Ch. 51, Goose; Ch. 52, Heron; Ch. 53, Caladrius; Ch. 54, Phoenix; Ch. 55, Partridge; Ch. 56, Quail; Ch. 57, Hoopoe; Ch. 58, Swan; Ch. 59, Peacock; Ch. 60, Eagle (the addition of the ibex and coot in a few manuscripts, and in Migne, *PL* [= *Patrologia Latina*], is not authentic)».

[20] Willene Clark pointed out [1982: 64-65]: «Until now, no one has recognized the Aviary as a text-book for lay-brothers. In the first part, the teachings revolve around three principles laid down in Chapter 1: like Noah cease from sinning, be steadfast like David, seek salvation through Christ. The three personages are illustrated by three doves: a 'black but beautiful' (Song of Songs

that in a fable in verse by Luigi Clasio[21] about an *asinello* ('little donkey'), its stupidity is conveyed by describing it as a *merlotto* ('little blackbird'[22] for 'little fool'[23]). Another fable in verse by Clasio is about a young blackbird and its

I,4) dove for Noah, symbolizing the sinner saved; the silvered dove (in this chapter called 'variegated') for David, and labelled 'Sancta Ecclesia', referring to the Church's steadfastness; and a white dove, labelled 'Sanctus Spiritus', for Christ, at whose baptism a white dove appeared». As for the silvered dove, Clark explained (*ibidem*: 65-66) that in Hugh's Aviary, «Chapters 1 through 11 treat the dove of Psalm LXVII,14 and other Biblical passages. A diagram of the dove summarizes the lessons of these chapters, and is the illustration which is most uniform throughout the manuscripts (Fig. 2). The silvered dove of the psalm is the Church abiding within the 'lots' of the two Testaments. Its wings are the active life and contemplative life, which lift the bird to Heaven. The wings are also the love of God and one's neighbor. The gold of the dove's back is eternal blessedness, more precious even than silver, than the Church itself. The dove's eyes are the memory and the intellect, enabling one to see the future judgment and to remember his sins; they appear as gold dots at the top of the picture in Figure 2. The bird's red feet are the blood of the martyrs who wandered the earth. Hugh expands and multiplies the metaphors in terms of the daily experience of the religious. The applications are sometimes strained, but at their best are graceful and appealing: 'Silver is divine eloquence; the tinkling of silver like the sweetness of the Word'».

[21] In the *Favole e sonetti pastorali* by Luigi Clasio (1754-1825). His fables (*Favole*) first appeared in 1795, and in their final version in 1807. His real name was Luigi Fiacchi. He was born in Scarpería, in the Mugello rural region near Florence, Tuscany. In the 1886 edition, published by Casa Editrice Guigoni in Milan, of the *Favole e sonetti pastorali* by Luigi Clasio which begins with his *Lezione sopra l'apologo* he gave to the Società Colombaria in 1803, Fable VII, *L'asino che porta il concime, quindi i fiori* (The Donkey Who Carries Manure, Then Flowers), appears on pp. 29-31.

[22] This appears in the third stanza of the given poem (the first stanza on p. 30 in the Guigoni 1886 edition): «Era appunto sì vano e sì merlotto / Nella sua prima etade un Asinello / Cui per suoi fatti un giorno avea condotto / Alla città vicina un villanello: / Quivi sovra di lui per l'arenose / Terre ingrassar, soma di concio pose». Passers-by find the stench of the manure the donkey is carrying offensive, so they hold their nose and hurry, away, but the donkey believes they are making room as a mark of respect for himself: «Or mentre il passo ei rivolgea con questo / Putrido incarco alla magion natía, / Ciascun che rincontrava, a sì molesto / Fetor, chiudeasi il naso e si fuggía; / Intanto ei si credea che per omaggio / Ognun largo facesse al suo passaggio».

[23] Concerning the connotation of Italian *merlo* and *merlotto,* consider the following effect. *Mature Times* (www.maturetimes.co.uk) is a freely distributed British monthly tabloid paper, catering to people in late life. In the issue of November 2019, on p. 7 there is a full-page ad, with on top: «introductory offer for mature times readers / Revolutionary, Wholesome & / Tasty meals Delivered to You / for just £1$^{.99}$ a meal». On the right side of that promise, there is a photograph of a glass full of dark wine, with this inscription linked to that image by an arrow: «*Plus a / Lovely Glass / of Merlot!*» As an Italian-bred speaker of Italian, I was reminded of *merlotto* and made wary (because of the socio-cultural script by which when faced with a boastful ad, a *gullible* attitude is a risk). Not that I was a prospective customer (all their products were either meaty, or wine, and I am both kosher-keeping and teetotal). On p. 22 in that newspaper issue, tourism to Lake Garda, starting with the lakeside town of Limone, was promoted. The same effect as with *merlot* (wine) → *merlotto* ('one gullible') is not unlikely, this time for fluent English speakers, because of the idiomatic usage of *lemon* in English (originally American English), namely, in the sense 'disappointment', or 'something that dampens enthusiasm' (cf. Italian *doccia fredda*).

mother,[24] and in the very first verse the stupidity of this young blackbird is expressed by *tondo* ('round') rather than the *mot juste,* namely, *tonto* ('stupid'), for the sake of rhyme with *mondo* ('world')[25]. But quite possibly, it also suggests that a *merlo* (blackbird) is a *tordo* (*thrush*), which it taxonomically is. The mother of that young blackbird is wise, instead, and at any rate, the answer she gives her son has both a literal sense, and a metaphorical sense expressing social competence: not only birds, but also dead feathers, too, so fly if favoured by the wind.

The dove diagram from Hugh of Fouilloy's *De avibus,* folio 2r of MS lat. 2495 of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris. Figure 2 in Clark (1982, p. 65).

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[24] Fable LIII (*Il Merlo figlio e la Madre*) on pp. 95-96 in the Guigoni 1886 edition of Clasio's *Favole e sonetti pastorali.*

[25] «Un giovin Merlo, ch'era un po' tondo, / Né ancor sapeva gli usi del mondo, / Vide una piuma, che all'aure in seno / Andava a spasso pel ciel sereno. / – Oh! vedi, o Madre, quell'augelletto, / Disse, che mostra piccolo aspetto, / E in volar tiene foggia novella; / Dimmi, tra i boschi come s'appella? – / – Non è un augello, la Madre allora / Rispose, è piuma spinta dall'ora. – / – Ma come! il Figlio riprese, il volo / Gli augelli vivi non hanno solo? / Che altri pur voli credo a fatica. – / E a lui la Madre: – Se han l'aura amica / (Credi, del mondo questo è il costume) / Volano ancora le morte piume. –»

18. *Concluding remarks*

Ancient Roman ornithology has been the subject of such books as Filippo Capponi's *Ornithologia Latina* [1979] and, more concisely, Jacques André's *Les noms d'oiseaux en Latin* [1967]. Geoffrey Arnott's *Birds in the Ancient World from A to Z* [2007][26] considered both ancient Greek and ancient Rome's Latin literatures, but at the lexicological level, his focus was on ancient Greek bird-names, a subject for which, up to the appearance of Arnott [2007], the authority on ancient Greek bird-names used to be D'Arcy Thompson's *A Glossary of Greek Birds* (Thompson [1895, rev. 1936]). John Pollard's *Birds in Greek Life and Myth* [1977] is more discursive. The etymology of European (especially French) names for birds or mammals is the subject of a book by Desfayes [2000].

The present study has considered blackbirds (*Turdus merula*) or thrushes (*Turdus*) and their names under several respects. Whereas the original motivation was to refute an etymology of Latin *merŭla* as proposed by Vennemann [2012b], and to offer a plausible alternative, we have considered various other topics. The refutation of Vennemann's etymology provided an opportunity for describing how Modern Hebrew bird-names were neologised in the 19th and 20th centuries. Besides, having considered what Isidore of Seville and Aristotle wrote about blackbirds and what they claimed to be the existence of white blackbirds in Arcadia, we offered a novel interpretation of an early modern bird illustration, namely, Pierre Vase's "L'Oyseau blanc". Or then, we showed how in his fables in verse[27], Luigi Clasio used *merlo* or a derivative in two of those

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[26] I reviewed Arnott [2007] in Nissan [2010 (2011)].

[27] An antecedent of fables about animals in verse such as Clasio's is Medieval Latin beast poetry, for which see Ziolkowski [1993]. Something different is an enumeration of animal kinds making an utterance as a form of worship, which is the case for example of a Hebrew text in which animals are listed as uttering this or that verse from the Hebrew Bible, and which is the subject of my study «Animals Calling Out to Heaven: In Support of the Hypothesis of an Alexandrine Egyptian Precedent of the Animals Praising Heaven in *Pereq Shirah* (*A Chapter of Hymns*), Some Evidence from Egypt's Greek Magical Papyri» (Nissan [2014 (2016)]). Its Section 8 is entitled "The Phoenixes Giving Praise in *2 Enoch*", whereas its Section 9 is entitled "From Later Periods: Tibetan and Islamic Text about Mystical Talking Birds": Iranic Islamic culture produced the 12th-century mystical work *Mantiq al-ṭayr* (Persian: *The Conference of the Birds*), an allegorical tale in rhyming couplets in Persian but with an Arabic title, by Farīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿAṭṭār of Nishapur, whereas *Bya chos rin-chen ʿphreng-ba* is a Tibetan sacred text of teaching ascribed to birds, and calls of various bird species were interpreted as Tibetan utterances. For example, the Wagtail utters: "gTing-ring", i.e., "Very deep". The peacock utters: "Kog-go", i.e., "One is deprived". The red-beaked *ʾjol-mo* (either *Leiotrix lutea,* or *Hypsipetes madagascariensis,* both of them from the Himalayas) utters "bCud long" (pronounce: "Čü lon"), i.e., "Seize the essence". That book purportedly incorporates the teaching of Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Mercy, who had taken the form of a cuckoo and instructed the birds on the Himalayas in the Buddhist way of living and thinking.

poems, once, when stating that an *asinello,* a little donkey (the protagonist) was a *merlotto,* i.e., a little fool; and the other time while stating that another protagonist, a young blackbird, was rather *tondo* ('round') rather than *tonto* ('stupid'), for the sake of rhyme with *mondo* ('world'), but *tondo* also differs by one consonant from *tordo:* and a *merlo* (blackbird) is a tordo (*thrush*) indeed.

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