6

Who was Corax?

THOMAS COLE

Posed a thousand or so years ago, the question would have seemed easy, almost insultingly so. Corax—as any Byzantine schoolboy could have told you—was a Sicilian from Syracuse, the inventor of rhetoric (defined by him as the art of persuasion). He taught his discovery to another Sicilian, Tisias; and their doctrines (or textbooks) were later taken to Athens, perhaps through the activity of a fellow countryman, Gorgias of Leontini, during the course of a famous embassy there on behalf of his native city. The original discovery was a response to the challenges of democratic politics after the popular revolution which deposed the last of the Syracusan tyrants, Hieron's brother Thrasybulus. Corax's notion of persuasion as an art, capable of being taught, and the mixture of fact, argumentation and appeals to audience sensibilities allowed by the different parts in the canonical order of presentation which he first devised (proem, demonstration [or narrative followed by demonstration], epilogue), helped make public speaking an indispensable tool in the process of guiding and controlling popular deliberative bodies. (Guiding and controlling were Corax's specialities, since before the revolution he had been a counsellor and close associate of Hieron's.) The tool, however, like all tools, was subject to misuse—as Corax found out to his own cost. When he brought suit against Tisias for refusal to pay the prearranged fee for instruction in the new art, the latter impudently claimed that even if he lost the case he could not be held liable: Losing the case would mean that he had failed to persuade the jury—hence had not been taught the art of persuasion as per agreement. Corax responded by turning the argument around against his opponent: Even an unsuccessful prosecution would require payment, since it would show that the defendant had in fact been taught the art, just as per agreement. At this point there were cries of "Bad crow [*corax*], bad egg," on the part of jury and/or bystanders and the case had to be dropped.

The story with minor variations appears in six texts dating from the 5th century A.D. (Troilus' *Prolegomena to the Rhetoric of Hermogenes*) to the 13th or 14th (the *Prolegomena* of Maximus Planudes).[1] Since there is no

---

[1] Most fully in the Prolegomena printed as numbers 4 (anonymous) and 17 (Marcellinus?) in H. Rabe's *Prolegomenon Sylloge* (Leipzig 1931) and in C. Walz, *Rhetores Graeci* (Stuttgart and Tübingen 1833–35) VI 4–30 and IV 1–38. The best survey

strikingly different rival account from those ten centuries we may conveniently call the one just presented the Byzantine answer to our initial question about Corax.

Most modern answers reveal in varying degrees the influence of this Byzantine prototype, but the question itself has come to seem much more problematic. If one looks for clear traces of the story in the millennium (roughly) between the time of Corax himself and that of his earliest biographers, the results[2] are disappointingly meagre. Plato (*Phdr.* 273c) is the first writer to mention Tisias by name; Aristotle the first to know of Corax himself (*Rhet.* 2. 24, 1401a17); and Theophrastus the first to attribute to him the discovery of a new art (Radermacher 18, A. V. 17). Dionysius of Halicarnassus is the first to connect him, via Tisias, with a prominent representative of the Athenian rhetorical tradition (Isocrates: cf. Radermacher 29, B. II. 4). Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. Math.* 2. 96) or, conceivably, Cicero,[3] is the earliest source for the lawsuit over Corax's fee. The only notice, outside the Prolegomena and one late commentary,[4] that identifies Corax and Tisias as master and student, is from the fifth-century Platonist Hermias (*ad Phaed.* 273c = p. 251. 8–9 Couvreur, though there it is Tisias who is the master and Corax the student).[5] Ammianus Marcellinus (30. 4. 3) is the first to attribute a definition of rhetoric ("the artificer of persuasion") to Corax or Tisias.[6] Preoccupation with the politics of

---

of the tradition is that of S. Wilcox, "Corax and the 'Prolegomena'," *AJP* 64 (1943) 2 ff. (cited hereafter by author, as are the editions of Rabe and Walz; P. Hamberger, *Die rednerische Disposition in der alten* τέχνη ῥητορική = *Rhetorische Studien* II [Paderborn 1914]; G. Kowalski, *De artis rhetoricae originibus* [Lwow 1933] and *De arte rhetorica* [Lwow 1937]; W. Stegemann, "Teisias," *RE* V A 1 [1934] 140–46; D. A. G. Hinks, "Tisias and Corax and the Invention of Rhetoric," *CQ* 34 (1940) 61–69; and L. Radermacher, *Artium scriptores* [Vienna 1951]). For the versions of Troilus and Planudes see, respectively, Rabe 5 = VI 52–54 Walz and Rabe 7 = V 212–21 Walz. (The six texts referred to here do not include Rabe 6a = II 682–83 Walz, or the one from which it is abridged, V 5–8 Walz, a portion of Sopater's commentary to Hermogenes that contains the Corax–Tisias story but nothing about the content of Corax's teaching or the nature of his pre- and post-revolutionary political activities.)

[2] Well summarized in Rabe viii–xi.

[3] *De or.* 3. 81 (*Coracem ... patiamur ... pullos suos excludere in nido, qui evolent clamatores odiosi et molesti*) is generally taken as an allusion to the "Bad crow, bad egg" phrase, but Cicero did not need to be familiar with the Tisias story to apply the proverb in this context (cf. Radermacher 29, ad B. II. 6). Corax's chicks and the bad eggs that hatched them could be any or all of those speakers who claimed to owe something to the tradition of formal instruction in rhetoric thought to derive from him.

[4] That of Sopater (above, note 1) on Hermogenes, usually dated, like Troilus, to the fifth century A.D.

[5] Spengel's καθηγητὴς Τισίου for the transmitted μαθητὴς Τισίου will "correct" the text at this point—but need we assume that it was a copyist rather than Hermias himself who was unfamiliar with the details of the story in its Byzantine version?

[6] Several Prolegomena (Radermacher 30, B. II. 13) offer the same formulation but attribute it to οἱ περὶ Τισίαν καὶ Κόρακα, by which they may be referring in a vague way to the whole tradition which Corax and Tisias were thought to have founded. "The

fledgling Syracusan democracy and the proper order of presentation (*dispositio*, τάξις) in an oration only comes in the *Prolegomenon* of Troilus and the later works already mentioned.

Piecemeal attestation of the Byzantine tradition in earlier sources need not mean piecemeal origin over the course of the preceding millennium, but the possibility must obviously be reckoned with. And possibility begins to become probability once two further phenomena are taken into consideration—the frequency with which certain components of the traditional account are associated with figures other than Corax, and the contradiction between parts of the tradition and what is known from other— and often better—sources about early writers on rhetoric. The dispute over payment of a fee—minus, obviously, the concluding dictum on crows and their eggs—appears first (Apuleius, *Flor.* 18 = p. 30 K., Aulus Gellius 5. 10) in connection with Protagoras and his student Euathlus[7] and may even have been familiar to Plato in a Protagorean context.[8] "Artificer of persuasion" is a definition of rhetoric attributed by Plato (*Gorg.* 453a) to Gorgias and considered by many[9] to be original with Plato himself; and the quadripartite oratorical *divisio* (proem, narrative [*diēgēsis*], argument [*agōnes*], epilogue) attributed to Corax in three Prolegomena[10] is associated alternatively with "Isocrates and his followers" (Radermacher 160, B. XXIV. 29) or his (and Aristotle's) friend Theodectes (Aristotle, fr. 133 Rose).

The last-named bit of rhetorical doctrine is not only credited to figures other than the "Byzantine" Corax but also—fairly clearly—much more plausibly credited to them. It is judicial oratory, not the political persuasion with which Corax is associated in the Byzantine tradition that requires the Theodectean–Isocratean tetrad. *Diēgēsis*, the straightforward presentation of the speaker's view of what has happened, is, as theoreticians from Aristotle (*Rhet.* 3. 12, 1414a36–38) on down are in the habit of pointing out, likely

---

power of persuasion" appears as Corax's definition in Athanasius' *Prolegomenon* to Hermogenes (p. 171. 19 Rabe = Radermacher 30, B. II. 14).

[7] Already known to Aristotle (fr. 67 Rose) as someone involved in a prosecution of Protogoras; but it need not follow, as Rademacher assumes ("Studien zur Geschichte der griechischen Rhetorik 1: Timaeus und die Ueberlieferung über den Ursprung der Rhetorik," *Rh. Mus.* 52 [1897] 413), that the case involved payment of a fee (see Rabe xi).

[8] Protagoras' statement, at the end of the long speech ascribed to him in the *Protagoras* (324b–c), that any student who feels the fee charged for his course of instruction to have been excessive can go to a temple and, upon swearing an oath, pay no more than what he declares the instruction to have been worth, suggests the possibility that disagreement over the payment and proper amount of fees was either a subject considered by Protagoras himself or one that provided the content of stories told about him—as would be natural in the case of the man who either was, or was thought to be (Diog. Laert. 9. 52), the first person to teach in return for pay.

[9] See H. Mutschmann, "Die älteste Definition der Rhetorik," *Hermes* 53 (1918) 440–43, who cites the parallel Platonic formulations at *Charm.* 174e (medicine as ὑγιείας δημιουργός) and *Symp.* 188d (prophecy as φιλίας θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων δημιουργός).

[10] Rabe 7, p. 67. 6–7 = V 215. 22–23 Walz; Rabe 9, p. 126. 5–15 = II 119. 10–26 Walz; Rabe 13, p. 189. 16–17 = VII 6. 9–10 Walz.

to be unnecessary in a political case, where the audience is assumed to be well aware of the facts of the situation.[11] The one author (Rabe 4, pp. 25. 17–26. 6 = VI 13. 1–11 Walz) who does attribute to Corax a *divisio* (proem, argument, epilogue) suited to political oratory writes as if he had begun with the judicial tetrad and then combined its second and third members into what counts as a single section dedicated to *agōnes*, but whose purpose is narrative as well: περὶ ὧν ἔδει συμβουλεύειν τῷ δήμῳ λέγειν ὡς ἐν διηγήσει.[12]

The same incompatibility exists between the Byzantine version of Corax's activity and Cicero's summary report (*Brut.* 46–48 = Radermacher 13–14, A. V. 9) of what he claims[13] to have been the account of Corax and Tisias that appeared in Aristotle's famous compendium—the *Synagōgē Technōn*—of early writings on rhetoric. There the new art is linked in a totally different way to conditions at Syracuse following the fall of the tyrants. Is is not the requirements of democratic debate that inspire Corax and Tisias, but lawsuits over property, once the original owners began to claim land confiscated by the tyrants and then given or sold by them to others (*cum sublatis . . . tyrannis res privatae longo intervallo iudiciis repeterentur*). This account—whether or not it corresponds to anything in Syracusan history—certainly accords better than the Byzantine one with the testimony of Isocrates, Plato, and Aristotle, who complain consistently that writers on public speaking concentrate on dicanic oratory to the total or nearly total exclusion of political oratory.[14] And the one Byzantine account of Corax (V 5–8 Walz, from Sopater's Hermogenes commentary) that fails to assign him any role in politics[15] is also the only one that contains a passage (V 6. 20–24) close enough in phraseology and organization of material to *Brut.* 46 to suggest the possibility of derivation from a common, Aristotelian source:

---

[11] When narrative is included in the *divisio* of political orations (see, for example, Anaximenes (?), *Rhet. ad Alex.* 30–31 and Syrianus, *in Hermogenem* II 170. 14–19 Rabe), it tends to be conceived as limited in scope (as in Anaximenes' rules for reporting an embassy) or tendentious in character (the *katastasis* of imperial rhetoricians—see below, note 43).

[12] That tripartition in this passage derives in some sense from an original quadripartion is very likely even if, as Wilcox argues (15–16), its author here preserves the Byzantine tradition in its original form. In replacing the triad with a tetrad or some other scheme suitable only to judicial oratory, later writers would have been simply spelling out what was implicit in their model.

[13] On the general accuracy of the claim, see—against the doubts of Solmsen (*Gnomon* 26 [1954] 218)—A. E. Douglas, "The Aristotelian *Synagōgē Technōn* after Cicero *Brutus* 46–48," *Latomus* 14 (1955) 536–39.

[14] See Hamberger 12–16, with the concurring judgments of Hinks 62–63 and Stegemann 143–44.

[15] Corax's political role is also missing from Rabe 6a = II 682–83 Walz, but that text is simply an abridgement of Sopater.

tum primum [after the fall of the Sicilian tyrants] ... artem et praecepta Siculos Coracem et Tisiam conscripsisse: nam antea neminem solitum via nec arte, sed accurate tamen et de scripto plerosque dicere

μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα [the age of the tyrants] Κόραξ πρῶτον ἁπάντων συνεστήσατο διδασκαλίαν περὶ ῥητορικῆς. οἱ γὰρ πρὸ αὐτοῦ ἐπιτηδεύοντες τὴν τέχνην ὡς ἐμπειρίᾳ τινὶ καὶ ἐπιμελείᾳ χρώμενοι ἐπετήδευον, καὶ οὕτως[16] μὲν οὐ μετὰ λόγου καὶ αἰτίας οὐδὲ τέχνης τινός[17]

—as do the similar lists of fifth- and fourth-century rhetoricians that follow, both in this account and in Cicero:

scriptasque fuisse et paratas a Protagora ... disputationes qui nunc communes appellantur loci; quod idem fecisse Gorgias ... huic Antiphontem Rhamnusium similia quaedam habuisse conscripta quo neminem umquam melius oravisse capitis causam ... scripsit Thucydides; nam Lysiam primo profiteri solitum artem esse dicendi, deinde ... artem removisse; similiter Isocrates ... se ad artes componendas transtulisse.

Brutus 47–48

τούτου δὲ τοῦ Κόρακος Τίσιας γέγονε μαθητής ... καὶ Γοργίας ὁ Λεοντῖνος κατὰ πρεσβείαν ἐλθὼν Ἀθήνησι τὴν τέχνην συγγραφεῖσαν παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐκόμισεν καὶ αὐτὸς ἑτέραν προσέθηκε καὶ μετ' αὐτὸν Ἀντιφῶν ὁ Ῥαμνούσιος, ὁ Θουκυδίδου διδάσκαλος λέγεται τέχνην γράψαι· μετὰ ταῦτα δὲ Ἰσοκράτης ὁ ῥήτωρ ...

V 6. 24–7. 14 Walz

(Note that both lists end, as one would expect in Aristotle, with Isocrates—not, as in the Prolegomena [Rabe 17, p. 273. 18–22 = IV 15. 17–20 Walz; Rabe 4, p. 28. 12–16 = VI 15. 19–16. 2 Walz], with the Hellenistic canon of Attic orators.[18])

[16] οὕτως (Radermacher) or οὗτοι (Gercke) seems a necessary emendation for the transmitted οὗτος, which would make οὐ μετὰ τέχνης a description of Corax's own method and leave the nature of the contrast with earlier "empirical" rhetoricians completely unclear.

[17] The parallel (first pointed out by A. Gercke, "Die alte Τέχνη ῥητορική und ihre Gegner," *Hermes* 32 [1897] 344–45) would, of course, be more compelling were it possible to get any sense out of *de scripto* (often emended, not very satisfactorily, to *descripte*) in Cicero's text or from the equally puzzling καὶ αἰτίας in Sopater. In general, however, scholars have given it less attention than it deserves.

[18] The value of the parallels is not lessened by the illegitimate conclusions which Hamberger sought to draw from them (below, note 40). It would certainly be less if, as is

The difficulty of accommodating the "non-Sopatran," political Corax
within either his immediate (textual) or larger (historical) context poses the
problems raised thus far in their acutest form.   One has the choice of
radically recasting his role, or largely rejecting the entire Prolegomena
tradition. Scholars in this century have opted, by and large, for the first
alternative. There is widespread agreement on jettisoning everything we are
told about the biography of Corax: both his preoccupation, before and after
the revolution, with political manipulation and persuasion (incompatible
with the *divisio* he is said to have devised and with fourth-century testimony
about the overwhelmingly dicanic orientation of early writing on rhetoric)[19]
and his lawsuit with Tisias (a floating story of indeterminate origin
eventually attached to Corax because "Bad crow, bad egg" provided such an
effective piece of closure).[20] The relationship between Corax and Tisias
thereby becomes the purely generic one between two collaborators. The
former is to be credited with a discussion of persuasive techniques organized
and presented in the order in which they would appear in a "normal" dicanic
speech of four (or more—see below) parts; the latter with expanding and
improving the collection, or perhaps, in the event Corax's teaching was
purely oral, with setting it down for the first time in writing. The second
hypothesis has the advantage of explaining a further inconsistency between
the Byzantine Corax and his predecessors. There is no hint, at any point
before Hermias and the Prolegomena, of contrasting characters or separate

generally assumed (cf., for example, Wilcox 9–10), the lines (V 7. 15–18 Walz)
immediately following in Sopater maintained—against Aristotle and all other fourth-
century sources—that the rhetorical works of Corax, Tisias and their immediate successors
were exclusively concerned with political oratory. But what the lines in fact say is that
these works were δημαγωγικαὶ τέχναι, devoting no space to *stasis* theory and
preoccupied with πιθανότητος ... τινος, πῶς δεῖ δῆμον ὑπαγαγέσθαι. Since there
is, so far as I know, no parallel for *dēmagōgikos* as a synonym for *dēmēgorikos* or
symbouleutikos, the normal adjectives used in reference to political oratory, it is perfectly
possible that the word means nothing more here than "popular" or "calculated to appeal to
a large audience" (ὑπαγώγιμος τοῦ δήμου, as the phrase immediately following might
suggest) whether in a popular law court or a popular assembly. If so, there is a possible
parallel—and a further argument for derivation from the *Synagōgē*—to the contrast drawn in
Aristotle's *Rhetoric* between the author's own conception of the discipline and that of his
predecessors. Aristotelian rhetoric is centered around the study of the enthymeme; that of
his predecessors is directed at the *akroatēs* and framed with his shortcomings (*mochthēria,
phortikotēs, phaulotēs*) in mind (*Rhet.* 2. 21, 1395b1–2; 3. 1, 1404a8; 3. 14, 1415b5; 3.
18, 1419a18). What appears in Sopater may be nothing more than a "Hermogenized" and
simplified version of this contrast. Enthymeme study is Hermogenized into *stasis* theory
(compare *Rhet.* 1. 1, 1354a14–15 περὶ ... ἐνθυμημάτων οὐδὲν λέγουσι with
Sopater's οὐδὲν περὶ στάσεων ἔχουσαι κεφάλαιον, both in reference to the same body
of texts); and Aristotle's intellectually limited audience (*akroatai phauloi*) is presented,
more simply, as a lower-class one (*dēmos*).

[19] G. Kennedy is virtually alone among contemporary writers in his inclination to
make Corax "a political speaker" and attribute to him "a division of speech suitable to
deliberative oratory" (*The Art of Persuasion in Ancient Greece* [Princeton 1963] 60–61).

[20] Cf. Kowalski 1937, 47.

achievements for Corax and Tisias. We are always told what Tisias did (and taught),[21] or what Corax did,[22] or (beginning with Cicero in the *De oratore*)[23] what Tisias and Corax did—never what Corax, unlike Tisias, did, or the different things which each of them did.[24] The two figures seem to have been interchangeable—so much so that, as pointed out earlier, they are in fact interchanged in Hermias' text, the only one (outside the Prolegomena) which refers to them explicitly as master and student. This suggests that the ultimate source of all our information was a single report or a single set of documents in which the contributions of the two men were not clearly distinguished from each other.

So far the new consensus. A minority of scholars, however, among them the one to whose memory this collection of essays is dedicated, has explored, at least tentatively, the first, more radical alternative suggested above. In 1934 Friedrich Solmsen drew attention[25] to a "wichtiges, nicht genug ausgewertetes Zeugnis" of Aristotle concerning the character of "the art [of rhetoric] before Theodorus." According to *Rhet.* 2. 24, 1400b15–16, a certain type of argument from probability constituted "the entirety" of this art (πᾶσα ἡ πρότερον τοῦ Θεοδώρου τέχνη). Since Theodorus was the second after Tisias in the canonical succession of early writers on rhetoric, the statement, if true, makes it highly unlikely that Corax or Tisias dealt with anything but the proofs section of the four-part oration. Any kind of argumentation from probability (*eikos*) is largely excluded from the narrative

---

[21] Plato, *Phdr.* 267a, 273c, Aristotle, *Soph. El.* 32, 183b29, Theophrastus (*ap.* Radermacher 18, A. V. 17).

[22] Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2. 24, 1402a17, "Aristotle" in the anonymous preface to the spurious *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, Cicero, *De inv.* 2. 2. 6.

[23] 1. 91; cf. *Brut.* 46.

[24] Τεισίας μετὰ τοὺς πρώτους heads Aristotle's list of contributors to the development of rhetoric at *Soph. El.* 32, 183b29 ff., and Corax is sometimes assumed (e.g., by Hinks 65–66) to be included among, or identified with, the πρώτους. If so, Aristotle may be implying some sort of contrast between Corax's achievements and the more solid or clearly identifiable ones of his successor. But it is much more likely that the πρῶτοι are Empedocles (called the inventor of the discipline in Aristotle's *Sophist* [fr. 65 Rose = Radermacher 28, B. I. 1] and/or the divine patrons or mythical masters of effective speech—Hermes, Nestor, Odysseus—with whom the Prolegomena regularly begin and who probably played some role even in fourth-century accounts (Wilcox 8, with note 10) of the pre-history of the discipline: cf. *Crat.* 407e (Hermes), 398d (Greek ἥρωες so called because they were ῥήτορές τινες καὶ ἐρωτητικοί, *Phdr.* 261b (Nestor, Odysseus, Palamedes), and for what may be a distant echo of one of Aristotle's own formulations, Quintilian 3. 1. 8: *primus post eos quos poetae tradiderunt movisse aliqua circa rhetoricen dicitur Empedocles.* G. Kennedy ("The Ancient Dispute over Rhetoric in Homer," *AJP* 78 [1957] 23 ff.) regards the last passage quoted as Quintilian's own attempt to strike a compromise between those who categorically affirmed, and those who categorically denied, the existence of rhetoric in the age of the heroes; but this sort of compromise is typically Aristotelian. If primitive maxims and proverbs can count as philosophy (fr. 13 Rose = *De philos.* fr. 8 Ross), one would expect primitive eloquence and figures of speech to count as rhetoric.

[25] "Theodorus," *RE* V A 2 (1934) 1842–44; cf. Hinks 68–69.

of a speech, and rarely if ever forms part of a proem or epilogue.[26] This, combined with Tisias' general addiction, well attested in Plato (*Phdr.* 267a, 272e, 273c–d) to *Eikostechnik*, and Theodorus' equally well attested (*Phdr.* 266d; Arist. *Rhet.* 3. 13, 1414b13–15) obsession with subdividing oratorical structures into their component parts (narrative, preparatory narrative, supplementary narrative, proof, supplementary proof, supplementary refutation, etc.) naturally points to the strong possibility that the entire topic of oratorical *divisio* was Theodorus' innovation.[27]

Solmsen's general doubts about the modern consensus—though not his views on Theodorus—were seconded several years later by Kroll,[28] and they have been carried a step further in two works completed in 1990—E. Schiappa's "The Beginnings of Greek Rhetorical Theory"[29] and my own *The Origins of Rhetoric in Ancient Greece*.[30] The starting point for both investigations is the contention—advanced as a surmise by me,[31] proved in so far as such things can ever be proved by Schiappa[32]—that the word "rhetoric" (first attested in the *Gorgias*) is Plato's own term, coined sometime in the 380s, for a set of techniques not thitherto seen as constituting a separate, definable discipline. Schiappa argues the unlikelihood of Tisias' having come up with anything like the systematic presentation of rhetorical techniques or theories which the notion of a definite art of *rhētorikē* suggests, and is inclined to doubt the tradition which

[26] Solmsen's own conclusion is more cautious, allowing for the possibility that there were pre-Theodoran discussions of other parts of the speech but that Aristotle chose to ignore them here because he is using *technē* to mean "der eigentliche Inhalt der τέχνης"— i.e., enthymeme or *Argumentationstechnik*. But he cites no parallel for this use of *technē* when what is meant is merely τὸ ἔντεχνον τῆς τέχνης.

[27] Solmsen's conclusion follows for Corax and Tisias even if, as I think rather more likely, ἡ πρότερον τοῦ Θεοδώρου τέχνη is a reference, not to "the art of rhetoric before Theodorus," but to "the earlier art of Theodorus," i.e., an earlier work of Theodorus written before the interest in *divisio* for which he was famous became apparent (cf. the variant reading προτέρα, which would, of course, require that the phrase be so translated). This interpretation, unlike Solmsen's, does not eliminate the possibility that *divisio* was already a concern of Thrasymachus, Tisias' immediate follower in the sequence of early writers on rhetoric; but whatever the situation was with him, such concern is excluded for Corax by Aristotle's further observation (*Rhet.* 2. 24, 1402a17) a propos of another type of argument from probability, that it was "what the art of Corax is composed of" (*synkeimenē*).

[28] In "Rhetorik," *RE* Suppl. 7 (1940) 1046. The general difficulty of reconciling Corax's *Eikostechnik* and his supposed preoccupation with *dispositio* was first pointed out, to my knowledge, by W. Süss, *Ethos: Studien zur älteren griechischen Rhetorik* (Leipzig and Berlin 1910) 74.

[29] To appear in D. Zarefsky (ed.), *Rhetorical Movement: Essays in Honor of Leland M. Griffin* (Evanston 1992).

[30] Baltimore 1991. See, especially, Chapter 5, with the works of the earlier scholars (Gercke, Radermacher, Lesky, Barwick, Koch, Havelock) cited in nn. 11–12. To that list (on pp. 168–69), add Kowalski 1933, 37–38 and 44; Kowalski 1937, 85; and Solmsen's review of Radermacher (above, note 13) 214–15.

[31] *Origins* (previous note) 2 and 98–99.

[32] "Did Plato Coin *Rhētorikē*?" *AJP* 120 (1989) 460–73.

credits him with a written rhetorical handbook. My own reconstruction accepts the existence of the handbook but posits a collection of model pieces, analogous to those found in the *Tetralogies* of Antiphon and based on the principle of *eikos*: pleadings pro and con (or, more likely, compressed summary versions of such pleadings) on topics likely to come up in court cases—not an analytic set of precepts. The famous pair of arguments (associated with Tisias at *Phaedrus* 273b3–c4 and Corax at Arist. *Rhet.* 2. 24, 1402a18–21), in which a defendant's superior strength is adduced to establish first the likelihood and then the unlikelihood of his being guilty of having assaulted the plaintiff as charged, will have come from this collection—and perhaps the debate over non-payment of a teacher's fee as well.[33] Though not based on probability, the latter illustrates a similar process of turning an argument around against its original propounder.

My own reconstruction is less radical than Schiappa's and, unlike Schiappa or the Byzantine tradition or the modified version of it which constitutes the modern "consensus," it is compatible with all the fifth- and fourth-century evidence.[34] But neither reconstruction addresses itself to the problem of how and why the Byzantine tradition came into being in the first place. A partial explanation has been suggested by some of the architects of the modern consensus, but their arguments must be carried further if the de-Byzantinization process under way here is really to work.

It is generally agreed that the transfer of the activity of Corax from the dicanic to the political sphere is a post-Aristotelian development in the tradition, and it is fairly easy to see why the transfer took place. Political rhetoric, in the view of Isocrates (*Antid.* 46, *Paneg.* 4), followed here by Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1. 1, 1354b17 ff.), is a higher, more significant form than dicanic; that it should replace dicanic rhetoric in the discipline's foundation myth was almost inevitable once the view of Isocrates became authoritative, and once rhetoric itself had ceased to be, as it often was for Plato and Aristotle, a suspect discipline whose claims were to be disputed or curtailed, and had become, along with philosophy, the central ingredient in higher education. Its finest achievements were expected, quite naturally, to be

---

[33] *Poterat in arte sua ... Tisias ... ingenii ostendandi causa* μελέτας *componere in quibus talia perlustrarent unde ad ipsum auctorem fabula translata videatur* (L. Spengel, *Artium scriptores* [Stuttgart 1828] 33–34). Cf. Kowalski 1933, 43.

[34] For those portions of the evidence that are usually taken (erroneously, I believe) to point to the existence of organized collections of rhetorical precepts before the handbook of Theodectes and the earliest version of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, see *Origins* (above, note 30) 130–33. One possible testimony not discussed there is *POxy* 410 (= Radermacher 231–32, D) an analysis, in Doric, of stylistic *megaloprepeia*, which its first editor believed to be "considerably influenced by Tisias' τέχνη" or even taken from a summary of the "productions of Tisias and his school" (cf. W. Rhys Roberts, "The New Rhetorical Fragment in Relation to the Sicilian Rhetoric of Corax and Tisias," *CR* 18 [1904] 18–21). But with the exception of Drerup (cf. Stegemann 142), Roberts' view has found no followers.

present, at least *in nucleo*, in the work of its *prōtos heuretēs*; and it is even possible that Corax's role in controlling and directing the passions of the Syracusan populace has arisen, ultimately, through a transfer into a particular historical situation of the civilizing, organizing role in the pre-history of the human race which certain laudatory texts assign either to eloquence (Isocrates 3. 6–9) or the first person to master it (Cicero, *De inv.* 1. 2. 2, *De or.* 1. 30 ff.).

A similar tendency to attribute everything that was basic in the discipline to its founder will explain why Corax came to be credited with the—ultimately—canonical Gorgianic or Platonic definition of rhetoric as the power or artificer of persuasion. Having invented for the benefit of his contemporaries the art of rhetoric, it was inevitable that Corax should have told them in briefest possible compass what it was.

It is impossible to pinpoint the period(s) or author(s) in which Corax began undergoing this metamorphosis, though Timaeus of Tauromenium—our earliest authority (cf. D. H. *De Lys.* 1, p. 11. 3 Us.-Rad.) for Gorgias' embassy to Athens—has often been suggested as its ultimate source.[35] The shifts involved, whether of scope (from minor achievement to major), venue (from courtroom to popular assembly) or narrative mode (from history to fiction) certainly point to the work of someone who, like Timaeus, was simultaneously Sicilian patriot, Sicilian "democrat"[36] and, if Polybius is to be believed, congenital liar.

On the other hand, neither patriotism nor republicanism nor general mendacity will explain Timaeus' concern with the technicalities of *divisio*, and he does not in fact figure in the modern consensus in this connection. The assumption is, rather, that one at least of the various *divisiones* (four in all) attributed to the Byzantine Corax must be an isolated remnant of the real Corax, faithfully recorded in Aristotle *Synagōgē*, but later transferred inappropriately from its original dicanic context into a political one.

There is little justification, however, for the separation thus posited between one aspect of Corax's traditional role as a *prōtos heuretēs* and all the others. Like all the others, this aspect is missing from the one Byzantine text (above, pp. 68–69) which shows a close verbal parallel to Cicero's summary of the *Synagōgē*. More important, the tetradic *divisio* encountered in three Prolegomena (above, pp. 67–68) is so canonical a feature of ancient rhetoric as a whole that it can, when linked to a listing of the presumed

---

[35] Radermacher (above, note 7) 412–19, followed by Hamberger 12–18 and Wilcox 20–23. Rabe ix and Schiappa (above, note 29) n. 51 remain unconvinced, perhaps with good reason: see text, p. 70.

[36] I.e., anti-monarchist, as may be inferred from his hatred of Agathocles. Wilcox (21–22) draws attention to the close parallels between Rabe 4, p. 25. 3–8 = VI 12. 6–10 Walz (the vowing of a cult in honor of *Zeus eleutherios* to be instituted once the dynasty of Hieron is expelled from Syracuse) and Diodorus' account, in a passage often thought to derive from Timaeus, of the actual institution of the cult after the expulsion had taken place (11. 72–73).

tasks (*erga*) or purposes of each of its four parts, function as a kind of alternative or supplementary definition. Rhetoric is the artificer of persuasion and, more particularly, the art of "proemizing" for good will and attentiveness, narrating for clarity and believability, arguing for proof and refutation, and "epilogizing" for summary and reminder (or perorating for pathos). To say that Corax invented rhetoric was tantamount to saying that he invented this four-fold way of conceiving his task and implementing its operation. The ease with which definition can become foundation myth is particularly clear in Rabe 9, pp. 125. 22–126. 18 = II 119. 18–29 Walz, which first describes how Corax produced his rhetorical inventions:

> ... φασιν εὑρετὴν πρῶτον γενέσθαι τὸν Κόρακα ... τὸν δῆμον ... συγκεχυμένον εὑρόντα καὶ ἵνα μὲν τὸ θορυβοῦν παύσῃ καὶ πείσῃ <u>προσέχειν</u> [1] τοὺς τῶν προοιμίων τόπους ἐπινοήσαντα· ἵνα δὲ καὶ περὶ τοῦ πράγματος <u>σαφῶς</u> διδάξῃ καὶ πιθανῶς [2] ... τὴν διήγησιν ἐπικατανοήσαντα· ἵνα δὲ καὶ ... <u>πείσῃ</u> καὶ ἀποτρέψῃ [3] τοῖς ἀγῶσι χρησάμενον· ἵνα δὲ ... <u>ἀναμνήσῃ</u> πληρώσῃ δὲ καὶ τοῦ πάθους [4] ... καὶ τοὺς ἐπιλόγους καταστησάμενον,

and then goes on to add

> τινὲς δέ φασιν ἔργα τῆς ῥητορικῆς εἶναι τὸ προοιμιάσασθαι πρὸς εὔνοιαν ἢ <u>προσοχὴν</u> ἢ εὑμάθειαν [1], τὸ διηγήσασθαι πρὸς <u>σαφήνειαν</u> [2], τὸ πρὸς <u>πίστιν</u> ἀγωνίσασθαι [3], τὸ πρὸς <u>ἀνάμνησιν</u> ἐπιλογίσασθαι [4],

which is practically identical with the same author's formulation (Rabe 4, p. 32. 6–9 = VI 19. 5–8 Walz) of the Theodectean (above, p. 67) tetrad:

> προοιμιάσασθαι πρὸς εὔνοιαν [1], διηγήσασθαι πρὸς πιθανότητα [2], ἀγωνίσασθαι πρὸς ἀπόδειξιν [3], ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι πρὸς ἀνάμνησιν [4].[37]

It is just conceivable that the reverse process has occurred, and the definition has been generated from a genuine tradition about Corax's *divisio*. But this is highly improbable, given the fact that, though the *divisio* is basic to the organization of the third book of his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle never suggests that it is the work of any one writer from an earlier generation.

---

[37] = Aristotle, fr. 133 Rose. Cf. the alternative formulation in Rabe 13, p. 216. 1–4 = VII 33. 5–7 Walz: προοιμιάσασθαι πρὸς εὔνοιαν [1], διηγήσασθαι πρὸς πιθανότητα [2], πιστώσασθαι πρὸς πειθώ [3], ἐπιλογίσασθαι πρὸς ὀργὴν ἢ ἔλεον [4]. The same definitional tetrad may be used equally well to produce an anti-foundation myth—cf. Cicero's contention (ascribed to the Academic Charmadas at *De or.* 1. 90) that it is ridiculous to posit a *prōtos heuretēs* for rhetoric, since it was perfectly within the capacity of anyone of us, as normal human beings, to *blandire* [1] *et rem gestam exponere* [2] *et id quod intenderemus confirmare et quod contra diceretur refellere* [3], *ad extremum deprecari et conqueri* [4], *quibus in rebus omnis oratorum versaretur facultas.* Quintilian makes the same point more briefly at 2. 17. 6.

What applies to the "historicization" of the Theodectean tetrad will also apply to the triadic *divisio* attributed to Corax in one of the Prolegomena. The latter, as was pointed out (above, p. 68), seems to have arisen through the minimal change necessary to accommodate the tetrad to a political context. The same cannot be said, however, for the pentadic and heptadic *divisiones* found in two of the Prolegomena: proem, narrative, *agōnes*, *parekbasis* (digression)[38] and epilogue (Rabe 17 [Marcellinus?], pp. 270. 22–271. 20 = IV 12. 17–13. 19 Walz), or the same, with narrative called *katastasis* instead of *diēgēsis*, and with the insertion of *proparaskeuē* (preliminary presentation) and *prokatastasis* (preliminary narrative) between it and the proem (Rabe 5 [Troilus], p. 52. 8–20 = VI 49. 1–20 Walz). It is clear that both Troilus' heptad and Marcellinus' pentad result from insertions into a tradition that elsewhere derives from the same source as do the Prolegomena with a briefer *divisio*. The extra parts required to produce them are simply named and defined, with no effort, as there is for the four parts shared with the other *divisio*, to indicate the purpose which they serve in the process of political persuasion (digression and *proparaskeuē* are assigned a purely dicanic function [see below], and *prokatastasis* has the merely formal one of preparing the way for the *katastasis* itself). But what is to guarantee that this different source is a later source? The tetradic *divisio* itself may be an insertion into a tradition that originally contained the triadic adaptation of it found in one text (above, p. 68, with note 12); only its widespread use elsewhere and the existence of independent testimony linking it to Theodectes prevents us from seriously entertaining the possibility that its ultimate source is Corax himself. Since the pentad and heptad are so rarely encountered,[39] the most economical explanation for their presence in the Prolegomena is that one or the other of them derives from a genuine report or memory of the actual content of Corax's text.[40]

[38] The reading in all but one of the passages where this section is mentioned and presumably to be read there (p. 52. 14–15 Rabe = VI 49. 8 Walz) in place of the transmitted *parekthesin*.

[39] The heptad only in Troilus and the set of *confuse annexae … definitiones, divisiones, interpretationes* (Rabe lxiii) adjoined in one set of manuscripts (cf. p. 212. 17–19 Rabe = VII 25. 8–10 Walz) to what now appears as Rabe 13. For the pentad, see text, p. 79.

[40] The seven parts of Troilus, in particular, "are to a certain degree recommended by their singularity," whereas "the four canonical … *partes orationis* we suspect just because we should expect to find them referred back to the inventor of the Art" (Hinks 68). Hinks, like several others, seems unable either to accept, or find decisive considerations against, the authenticity (argued at length in Hamburger, 31–38) of Troilus' heptad. Cf. Radermacher 34, ad B. II. 23 (*ea … fortasse ex Aristotele provenit memoria, scimus autem in terminis technicis inveniendis primos auctores quasi delirasse*) and Stegemann 146. Hamberger has, however, found no followers (cf. Hinks 68) in his attempt (7–8 and 31 ff.) to establish an Aristotelian origin for the *context* within which the heptad appears. (The argument rests on supposed parallels with the remarks on the beginnings of rhetoric in Sopater's scholia to Hermogenes [V 5–8 ff. Walz], the only late rhetorical text which has been thought [see text, pp. 68–69] to contain close echoes of the *Synagōgē Technōn*.)

Though the possibility can obviously not be excluded, it seems to me to be, on balance, a fairly unlikely one. There is no reason to disbelieve Cicero when he says (*De inv.* 2. 2. 6) that Aristotle's *Synagōgē* drove all the works it summarized out of circulation. Authentic notice of a five- or seven-part system of Corax would have had to be taken directly from some Aristotelian *Mittelquelle*, and then reinserted by Troilus and Marcellinus into an account derived indirectly—via Timaeus or whoever—from the same Aristotelian source. And it is hard to see any reason either for the original division of the two transmissions—direct and indirect—or their later reunification.

There are, moreover, clear difficulties in both the pentadic and heptadic *divisiones* which make it unlikely that either could ever have been intended as the basic organizing system for a course of practical instruction in public speaking. Digression (*parekbasis*) as defined by both Troilus and Marcellinus is an excursus on the prior life of the accused (ἀπόδειξιν ... τοῦ κρινομένου βίου [Troilus] ≈ τὴν προτέραν τοῦ ἐναγομένου διαγωγήν [Marcellinus]) designed to ensure conviction even if the case immediately at hand fails to do so. As such it is relevant to only half the judicial cases—those for the prosecution—with which the student is likely to be confronted. As if to correct this fault the longer *divisio* of Troilus balances *parekbasis* with an exact counterpart: the *proparaskeuē*, dedicated to removing a (presumably) preexisting charge that is doing the speaker harm (αἰτίαν λυποῦσαν αὐτόν). The result, however, is a model oration plan which by virtue of including both *proparaskeuē* and *parekbasis* presupposes a speech that is simultaneously for the prosecution and for the defense. We seem to be dealing with a tradition that is Byzantine in more ways than one.[41]

Comparable difficulties attend the *katastasis* and *prokatastasis* in the heptadic *divisio*. Both terms are well attested in the imperial rhetoricians, but Troilus' definition of the former (ψιλὴν τῶν πραχθέντων ἔκθεσιν) makes it exactly what the imperial *katastasis* is not. Bare narrative is regularly *diēgēsis*, *katastasis* being the term used when some sort of slanting, or coloring, or skewing is called for.[42] Troilus' point of departure may have been the tradition, attested in a single source (Syrianus *in Hermogenem* 2, p. 127. 4 Rabe = Radermacher 35, B. II. 24) that *katastasis*

---

[41] A section, toward the beginning of a speech for the defense, countering *aitiai* of the sort Troilus refers to is frequent enough, both in fourth-century oratory and fourth-century rhetoric: cf. the suggestions for dealing with *diabolai* in Arist. *Rhet.* 3. 15 and Anaximenes (?), *Rhet. ad Alex.* 29, pp. 61. 11–64. 23 Fuhrmann. But Hamberger's attempt (105 ff.) to detect its presence in the three earliest surviving pieces of fifth-century oratory (Antiphon 1, 5 and 6) seems to me to involve an artificial *Gliederung* which isolates from their surroundings sections that in two cases are better taken with the introduction, and in the third with the narrative.

[42] See D. A. Russell, *Greek Declamation* (Cambridge 1983) 88, with n. 6, and Kowalski 1933, 45–50.

was Corax's word for "proem." He reconciles this with the usage with which he was more familiar by assuming that Corax must have recognized two subspecies: a "proemic" or "pro-"*katastasis* (cf. his definition: εἰσβολὴν καὶ ἀρχὴν καὶ προοίμιον ... ἐπὶ τὴν κατάστασιν) and a "diegetic" *katastasis*, which he inaccurately identifies with what went by that name among his own contemporaries. Whether the tradition about Corax that inspired this subdivision was correct or not, Troilus' use of it tells us nothing about the original organization of Corax's text.[43]

Even granting, however, that the *divisiones* including *prokatastasis*, *parekbasis* and *proparaskeuē* are unlikely to be much older than the texts in which they are attested, one may still wonder what impelled their authors to seek out a five- or seven-part system in the first place. A possibility worth considering is that Troilus and Marcellinus were influenced here by another multi-partite classification which they share, and which appears nowhere else in the Prolegomena. Both authors present their account of Corax's invention of rhetoric as an illustration of the way any act of creation can be described and accounted for in terms of the particular "determining circumstances" *(peristatika)* that accompany it. These are five in number: the where, when, who, why and how of its coming into being. In the case of rhetoric the "where" is Sicily, the "when" the period following the fall of the tyrants, the "who" Corax, the "why" the desire to control the process of popular decision-making, the "how" the five or seven parts of an oration. It is conceivable, therefore, that the number of subdivisions in the "how" was regulated at some point in the development of the tradition in such a way as to make it equal to the number of *peristatika*. The suggestion is supported by the fact that Troilus actually mentions—though he does not accept—a variant list of seven *peristatika* (pp. 51. 26–52. 2 Rabe = VI 48. 22–25 Walz) which would match his own heptadic *divisio*, and refrains—as if

---

[43] If *katastasis* was in fact the word Corax used for the first part of a speech, it may have been used, along with *agōnes* (the only other piece of terminology in the passages on *divisio* under examination here that has a fifth-century ring about it), to refer to the essential recurring components of the sort of collection of model pieces which, it was suggested in the text (p. 73), Corax produced. Arguments pro and con (*agōnes*) would have to be preceded in every instance by a "setting up" (*katastasis*) of the basic facts of the situation which the arguments presupposed (cf., in the most famous collection of model rhetorical pieces surviving from antiquity, the two- or three-line settings of the stage which introduce individual items in the *Controversiae* of Seneca, and—for the fifth-century texts which support this meaning of *katastasis*—*Origins* [above, note 30] 83, with n. 14). Later usage may derive from the meaning suggested here, normally identifying *katastasis* (as what precedes the arguments section of a speech) with the *diēgēsis*, but occasionally (as what begins a speech) with the proem (cf. *Rhet. ad Alex.* 29, pp. 64. 24 and 65. 9 Fuhrmann). Like Troilus, the author of Rabe 15, p. 247. 21–22 = VII 43. 1–2 Walz (τὰ ... προοίμια καταστατικὰ τοῦ ἀγῶνος λαμβάνομεν) may be attempting to reconcile the two senses, but through elimination of the *diēgēsis* rather than addition of a proemic *katastasis*.

seeking to avoid a clash with the five *peristatika* he does accept—from ever explicitly mentioning the number of parts in that *divisio*.[44]

The longer list of *peristatika* is derived from the shorter (by including, illogically, raw material [*hylē*] and product [*pragma*] among the *peristatika* that attend the conversion of the one into the other); and the same may hold true, as was suggested earlier, for the longer list of speech parts: *Proparaskeuē* is a *parekbasis* for the defense, and *prokatastasis* is produced by mating the *katastasis* attributed to Corax with its imperial counterpart. As for the shorter list, *parekbasis* would have been a natural candidate for inclusion once the original decision to convert the standard tetradic *divisio* into a pentad had been made. It is the extra ingredient—a *digressio* comprising an *orationem a causa atque iudicationem remotam* introduced between argument and conclusion[45]—in the five-part system best known to Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic writers, that of Hermagoras (F 22a–d Matthes); and it might have been considered a speech part with which Corax had a special affinity. Small wonder—so the reasoning would have gone— if the creator of a tradition stigmatized by Aristotle for dwelling on *ta exō tou pragmatos*[46] decided, once he had devised the four-part system, that there was still need for a special spot in each speech set aside exclusively for such irrelevancies.[47]

Other reconstructions are obviously possible, but their possibility does not in itself justify tracing the five- and seven-part oratorical models found in the Prolegomena to anything but some sort of later variant on the four-part form that characterizes most of the tradition. The modern consensus that strips Corax of all but the authorship of a handbook defining rhetoric and analyzing the form of the juridicial oration on the one hand and, on the other, some sort of preoccupation with arguments based on probability

---

[44] Contrast the concluding reference to the "how" in Marcellinus (τὰ μέρη πέντε τοῦ λόγου, echoing πέντε δέ εἰσί τινα περιστατικά five lines earlier [p. 271. 21–26 Rabe = IV 13. 19–25 Walz]) with its counterpart in Troilus (διὰ τῶν ἐπινοηθέντων αὐτῶν μερῶν τοῦ λόγου taking up the earlier διὰ τῶν πέντε περιστατικῶν [p. 52. 20–27 Rabe = VI 49. 15–20 Walz]). Note also that Troilus does not mention the six-part "how" known to Syrianus (*ad Hermogenem* 2, p. 39. 17–19 Rabe)—perhaps because it has no parallel in either of the *divisiones* found in the branch of the Prolegomena tradition to which he and Marcellinus belong.

[45] Cic. *De inv.* 1. 51. 97; cf. Radermacher (above, note 7) 414 n. 2.

[46] *Rhet.* 1. 1, 1354a12 and b23. Cf. in Marcellinus (p. 271. 2–3 Rabe = IV 13. 1–2 Walz) the unintelligible phrase καὶ τὸ τοῦ πράγματος διηγεῖται (a definition of what the *parekbasis* does). Here the simplest emendation is an inserted πρό (Rabe) or (more in line with the meaning of *parekbasis*) ἔξω or ἐκτός. Either of the latter would result in a duplication (τὰ (ἔξω) τοῦ πράγματος) or approximation of Aristotle's own phrase.

[47] That either Hermagoras or Marcellinus took his pentad from the *Rhet. ad Alex.*—or earlier texts drawn on by its author—is unlikely, given the different terminology used there for the five parts (proem, *diēgēsis*, *bebaiōsis*, *ta pros tous antidikous*, and *palillogia*) and the fundamentally different character of the section corresponding to *parekbasis*: an anticipation of one's opponent's arguments, not a digression into ad hominem irrelevance.

should be revised in favor of one which leaves him with nothing but the
latter. And Timaeus' role should be similarly reduced—to that of (at most)
replacing Aristotle's dicanic context for Corax's invention of rhetoric with a
political one: the situation following the fall of the Syracusan tyrants when
ἐπεπόλαζε ... δημαγωγῶν πλῆθος ... καὶ λόγου δεινότης ὑπὸ
τῶν νεωτέρων ἠσκεῖτο (Diodorus 11. 87. 5). Diodorus may well derive
at this point from a Timaean account in which Corax was named as one of
the *plēthos* or, more likely, as the first teacher of *logōn deinotēs* to the
young; but his political preeminence, before and after the revolution, and his
role as discoverer and definer of rhetoric and its basic parts, make far more
sense as inseparable components of a coherent foundation myth than either
does as the invention of a Sicilian historian.[48]

As for Corax himself, or what is left of him, it is natural to wonder
whether continued existence in histories of ancient rhetoric is desirable at
all, stripped as he has been of most of the *chorēgia*—offices, political
status, pupils, progeny intellectual and literary—without which living, or at
any rate living well, is impossible. Antiquity records, to my knowledge,
only one other Corax from the historical period: the man who killed the
poet Archilochus in a battle fought on the island of Naxos at some point
toward the middle of the seventh century.[49] Plutarch, along with Aelian (fr.
80 Hercher) and, later, the Suda (*s.v.* Ἀρχίλοχος), says that Corax was an
epithet: The man's real name seems (ἔοικεν) to have been Calandes.[50] One
naturally wonders how Plutarch came to be informed so exactly on such a
matter—probably not through independent research into the prosopography
of seventh-century Naxos. Name as well as epithet may have been preserved
on some document kept in the Archilocheum on Paros and available for
consulation there. It is just as likely, however—since the real name merely
"seems" to have been Calandes—that Plutarch (or his source) found earlier
accounts in disagreement on this point[51] and simply assumed on the basis of

---

[48] Those inclined to go along with V. Farenga's deconstructionist reading of the myth
("Periphrasis on the Origin of Rhetoric," *Modern Language Notes* 94 [1979] 1033–53)
will have even less reason to attribute any of it to Sicilian invention. Essential to
Farenga's interpretation is the story—present in two Prolegomena (Rabe 4, pp. 24. 16–
25. 3 and 17, pp. 269. 25–270. 3 = VI 11. 12–12. 5 and IV 11. 18–24 Walz)—of how
Hieron's suppression of free speech forced his subjects to communicate through gestures
and dance steps; and this is surely too preposterous, even for Timaeus.

[49] Aristotle, fr. 611. 25 Rose = fr. viii (*FHG* II 214) in the collection of excerpts from
Aristotle's *Politeiai* erroneously transmitted under the name Heraclides Ponticus. The
phrase mentioning Corax is missing in some manuscripts, and Rose prints it in his
apparatus, evidently assuming that it has been added from elsewhere to fill a lacuna in the
text of "Heraclides" himself. Cf. Müller ad loc.

[50] *De sera num. vind.* 17, 325d–e.

[51] Eusebius (*Praep. Ev.* 5. 93. 9) gives a third variant, Archias (usually assumed to be a
corruption of Kalandas). In other passages mentioning the poet's death (listed in
Lasserre's edition, cvii–cviii) no name is given at all.

his own experience that Corax had to be the nickname: Greek parents were not in the habit of calling their children crows.

This rule may have admitted of exceptions in the Sicilian context with which we are concerned, but assuming an exception in the present case requires an additional, equally questionable assumption. Would any Greek named Crow—especially if he were a Siceliot (*acuta illa gens et controversa natura*)[52]—be ill-advised enough to try to make a living by teaching the art of public speaking? Even if it did not occur to his compatriots themselves to identify lessons in eloquence from the Crow with lessons in cawing and squawking they had only to recollect Pindar's famous lines, from a poem premiered at Agrigentum in 476 B.C., when Corax was a boy or young man, in which an unidentified group of lesson-takers—cacophonous rivals (or, perhaps, inept imitators and explicators) of the poet—are compared to a pair of crows who chatter fruitlessly against or about the eagle of Zeus (μαθόντες . . . κόρακες ὣς ἄκραντα γαρύετον Διὸς πρὸς ὄρνιχα, *Ol.* 2. 86–88).

That Pindar's simile is not irrelevant to the tradition about Corax was surmised over a century ago by Verrall.[53] Verrall's own version of the connection—that the two crows are literally the "two" Coraxes, Corax and his pupil Tisias—has the disadvantage of being incompatible, both with the Pindaric context of the passage[54] and the tradition, at least as old as Aristotle, which places Corax's activity as a teacher after the fall of Hieron and his dynasty (466/5). What the passage does show is how natural it would have been, in fifth-century Sicily, to associate loud and frequent, or inept and unwelcome, discourse with the chatter of crows; and so, as a consequence, how unlikely it is that Corax was anything but a name bestowed after—not before—its bearer had started to teach people how to speak.

The epithet may have been totally derisive and contemptuous, or derisive and affectionate at the same time. The question cannot be answered. But if one asks what Corax was called before he got his new name, the answer is almost inevitable: Tisias. Much that is puzzling in the earlier stages of the tradition is thereby explained—the inability on the part of any sources earlier than Sextus to distinguish the one figure from the other, the frequency with which the name Corax carries overtones of uncertainty or contempt (*Coracem istum veterem* [Cic. *De or.* 3. 81], *usque a Corace nescioquo* [ibid. 1. 91], τὴν τοῦ Τισίου τέχνην . . . τὸ δυσκόρακος ἔργον

---

[52] Cicero's own explanation (*Brut.* 46) for why rhetoric should have arisen in Sicily rather than somewhere else.

[53] "Korax and Tisias," *Journal of Philology* 9 (1880) 197 ff., developing a suggestion offered (p. 130) in an earlier article, "ΤΟΠΟΣ, ΤΟΠΗ (?), and ΤΟΠΑΩ," published in the same issue.

[54] Whatever the exact point being made, it is clear that the crows in some sense want their cawing to be attended to along with, or instead of, the eagle's flight; and it is hard to

[Lucian, *Pseudolog.* 30],[55] τί θαυμαστὸν εἰ Κόρακος ἐφευρόντος τὴν ῥητορικὴν οἱ ἀπ' ἐκείνου κόρακές εἰσιν;[56]) and—most tellingly perhaps—the peculiar language in the earliest surviving reference to either man:

δεινῶς γ' ἔοικεν ἀποκεκρυμμένην τέχνην εὑρεῖν ὁ Τεισίας ἢ
ἄλλος ὅστις δή ποτ' ὢν τυγχάνει καὶ ὁπόθεν χαίρει
ὀνομαζόμενος (Plato, *Phdr.* 273a).

In the light of the Byzantine tradition and its immediate forerunners, Socrates' reference at this point to "Tisias or someone else, whoever he is and whatever he likes to be called" is usually taken, following Hermias,[57] as a way of indicating that credit for the "art" of Tisias was disputed between him and another older, more obscure figure. But if the later tradition did not exist—and there is no independent evidence to suggest that it did exist in Plato's day—the most natural way of taking the passage would be as a reference to uncertainty about the identity of Tisias himself, not his collaborator: "Tisias or whoever else he [the man sometimes known as Tisias] happens to be and whatever the source of the name he prefers to go by." One would not necessarily suspect a further, malicious reference to the fact that anyone in his right mind would prefer *not* to have got a nickname in the way Tisias did; but if the nickname was Corax and Plato knew it, the reference is almost certain to be there. Onomastic precision is surely the last thing Socrates is aiming at in this passage.[58]

That "How to Speak as Taught by Tisias" (ἡ τοῦ Τισίου λόγων τέχνη) should become so widely known by the alternative title, "How to Speak as Taught by the Crow" (ἡ τοῦ κόρακος λόγων τέχνη), as to lead to ignorance of the author's real name and, later, to positing the existence of two authors would not be surprising, even today, in certain parts of the Mediterranean world. And what applies there now applies a fortiori to that world in antiquity:

---

see any comparable relationship between Pindaric song and the teachings of Corax and Tisias.

[55] Lucian's apparent equation of the "art" of Tisias with the activity (*ergon*) of the "damnable Crow" is even more suggestive of the view of Corax proposed here, as is Corax's appearance as an emblematic *corvus* atop a standard carried by Tisias at Martianus Capella 5. 433–34, p. 150 Willis. Both passages, however, are too vaguely allusive to allow any firm conclusions as to the form in which the story was familiar to their respective authors.

[56] Isocrates' supposed reply (Apophthegmata δ' 1, p. 278 Blass–Benseler) upon being asked why the populace is in the habit of being robbed and cheated by its rhetors.

[57] Ad loc., p. 251. 8–9 Couvreur.

[58] Knowledge of the epithet may also have been one of the things that suggested to Plato the prominent and contrasting role assigned in the *Phaedrus* to another famous Tisias with an alias. Tisias the Chorus-Master—i.e. Stesichorus (cf. the Suda, *s.v.*)—is as surely a patron saint of "good" rhetoric in the first part of the dialogue as Tisias the Crow is of "bad" rhetoric in the second.

> Anyone familiar with the village life of central and southern Italy
> knows how difficult it is to identify a person by his name but how easy
> it is to locate him through the nickname known to the people of the
> area in which he lives—

from which the author[59] rightly concludes, inferring ancient practice from
modern, that the appearance in archaic Greek poetry of what are obviously
redende Namen need not mean that the persons who bear them are fictitious.
Alessandro Manzoni had presumably made the same observation about
village life in the 1820s; and he, too, drew inferences about an earlier period,
when he came to write his famous novel of seventeenth-century Lombardy:

> Fate a mio modo [Agnese is launching Renzo on his ill-fated attempt to
> seek out the services of a lawyer/*rhētōr* to counter the designs of Don
> Rodrigo] ... andate a Lecco ... cercate del dottor Azzecca-
> garbugli,[60] raccontentategli. Ma non lo chiamate così, per amor del cielo:
> è un soprannome. Bisogna dire il signor dottor— Come si chiama,
> ora? Oh to'! non lo so il nome vero: lo chiaman tutti a quel modo.
> Basta, cercate di quel dottore alto, asciutto, pelato, col naso rosso, e
> una voglia di lampone sulla guancia. ... quello è una cima d'uomo!
> Ho visto io più d'uno ch'era più impicciato che un pulcino nella
> stoppa, e non sapeva dove batter la testa, e, dopo essere stato un'ora a
> quattr'occhi col dottor Azzecca-garbugli (badate bene di non chiamarlo
> così!) l'ho visto, dico, ridersene ... [61]

A certain "tio Buscabeatas, aunque no era este su verdadero nombre ... " is
the protagonist of a story of village life near Cádiz by a Spanish
contemporary of Manzoni[62]—and the examples could doubtless be
multiplied. Tisias was probably as powerless as Doctor Azzecca-garbugli to
suppress the name to which local reaction to the infancy of rehearsed
courtroom eloquence was condemning him and his fledglings. Only the
published version of his model pieces, informing readers, at least down to
Aristotle's day, of the author's identity, and preserving some true memory
of ὁπόθεν χαίρει ὀνομαζόμενος, ultimately saved him from the fate of his
Manzonian counterpart—though at the price of condemning historians of
ancient rhetoric to a bimillenary case of seeing double.

Many of those historians will doubtless continue to prefer the double
vision. But even if they do, they may well find that this "antonomastic"
accounting for Corax is at least *ben trovato*. What more appropriate fate for
the putative founder of the entire rhetorical tradition, with the centuries-long

---

[59] B. Gentili, *Poetry and its Public in Ancient Greece* (Engl. transl. Baltimore 1988)
294–95.

[60] Dr. Shystermeister (lit., "Spy out the ploy") is surely—ὁπόθεν χαίρει
μεταφραζόμενος—a spiritual as well as onomastic analogue to Corax.

[61] *I promessi sposi*, cap. 2.

[62] Pedro Antonio de Alarcón, *El libro talonario*.

study of figural speech it incorporates, than to be finally revealed as nothing more—or nothing less—than a figure of speech himself?

Yale University