

# What is a γρυπαίετος (Aesch. Fr. inc. fab. 422 R.)?\*

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The purpose of the following paper is to identify what kind of mythical creature Aeschylus' γρυπαίετος ('griffin-eagle') that caused such a scandal for 'Euripides' in Aristophanes' *Frogs* 928–930 (= Aesch. fr. inc. fab. 422 R.) was. The term has usually been interpreted in three ways: (a) as a poetic form of 'eagle'; (b) as a poetic form of 'griffin'; (c) as 'eagle of the griffin species'. The testimony of Aristophanes' *Frogs* and vase-painting suggests that it may have been an idiosyncratic, archaic type of griffin, called by modern specialists 'griffin-bird' and characterised by having two legs, not four, and the body of a bird, not a lion. This fantastic creature appeared quite frequently on Archaic black-figure vases in Athens, but had completely disappeared by the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. As a result, its appearance would be unknown to Aristophanes' public, making the term γρυπαίετος impossible to make out (*Ra.* 930). Thus, the following paper suggests that Aeschylus' γρυπαίετος ('griffin-eagle') is a fabulous composite beast made up of griffin and eagle parts, as its name suggests: a griffin head (with an open hooked beak, long pointed ears, a protuberance or horn over the eyes, and a curl or plume falling down one side of the neck) crowning an eagle body (two-legged, feathered, with wings and talons).

*Keywords:* Aeschylus, Aristophanes, griffin, γρυπαίετος, griffin-eagle.

## 1. The problem

In Aristophanes' *Frogs* 911–38, during the famous agon between 'Aeschylus' and 'Euripides', the latter criticizes his rival's theatrical technique. Aeschylus, 'Euripides' argues, deceives his audience by presenting the main character sitting and silent (911–913). The chorus would break into long lyrical runs while the character remained silent (914–915). The expectant audience waited to see when the character would finally break his silence; by then, the drama had reached its halfway point (919–920). Finally, the character spoke, but what came out of their mouth, 'Euripides' complains, were dozens of imposing, war-like, fearsome words (924–925), the meaning of which was unknown to his audience (926 ἄγνωτα τοῖς θεωμένοις).<sup>1</sup> 'Euripides' gives the following as an example of such incomprehensible and terrifying terms (928–930):

ἀλλ' ἢ Σκαμάνδρους ἢ τάρφους ἢ π' ἀσπίδων ἐπόντας  
γρυπαίετους χαλκηλάτους καὶ ῥήμαθ' ἵπποκρημνα,  
ἃ ζυμβαλεῖν οὐ ῥάδι' ἦν.

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<sup>1</sup> Cioffi 2015, 211: "The γρυπαίετος and the ἵππαλεκτρῶν are singled out at *Ar. Ranae* 928–938 for their Aeschylean obscurity"; Stanford 1963, 154: "[ἄγνωτα] either unknown or unintelligible".

Nothing but Scamanders, and moats, and shields with griffin-eagles of beaten bronze on them, and sheer massive mountains of words that it was very hard to work out the meaning of. (Transl. by A. H. Sommerstein.)

Dionysus nods and offers confirmation from his own experience: he once spent a whole sleepless night wondering what kind of bird the tawny ἵππαλεκτρῶν was, an animal mentioned by Aeschylus in one of his tragedies (932 τὸν ξουθὸν ἵππαλεκτρούνα ζητῶν τίς ἐστὶν ὄρνις). Aeschylus angrily reminds him that it is an emblem painted on a ship (933 σημεῖον ἐν ταῖς ναυσίν, ὤμαθέστατ', ἐνεγέγραπτο). 'Euripides' defends his art against his rival's attacks: he certainly did not write about composite monsters like the cock-horse and the goat-stag, as Aeschylus did (937 οὐχ ἵππαλεκτρούνας, μὰ Δί', οὐδὲ τραγέλαφους, ἄπερ σύ), creatures that the Persians embroidered on their tapestries and wall hangings (938 ἂν τοῖσι παραπετάσμασιν τοῖς Μηδικοῖς γράφουσιν).

All three fantastic animals mentioned in Aristophanes' lines come from Aeschylus' fragments: the ἵππαλεκτρῶν or cock-horse from *Myrmidones* fr. 134 R. (ἰὰ τὸ δ' αὐτεῖ ξουθὸς ἵππαλεκτρῶν / στάζει ἰκνηρόθεν τῶν φαρμάκων πολὺς πόνος), the γρυπαιέτος or griffin-eagle from fr. inc. fab. 422 R. (γρυπαιέτος (χαλκήλατος ἐπ' ἀσπίδος ἐπών) and the τραγέλαφος or goat-stag from fr. inc. fab. 444 R. (τραγέλαφος). Although to be fair it ought to be acknowledged that only fr. 134 R. is ever quoted outside of *Frogs*, or independently from it.

The purpose of this article is to imitate Dionysus and to ask what kind of bird the Aeschylean γρυπαιέτος was, or more precisely, what kind of animal this term, which 'Euripides' found so incomprehensible and shocking, designates.

Although it is an extremely rare word,<sup>2</sup> γρυπαιέτος seems at first sight to have an obvious meaning: 'griffin-eagle' (*DGE* s. v.). But what exactly is a 'griffin-eagle'? Stephanus (*TLG* II, 1830, 794 "monstrosam avem ... mixtam ex aquilarum et gryphum ... genere, ut γυπαιέτον") and Italic (1964, 59 "monstruosa avis mixta ex grype et aquila") follow the interpretation of sch. rec. *Ar. Ra.* 929a: an animal composed of parts of eagles and griffins (ζῶα σύνθετα ἐκ γρυπῶν καὶ ἀετῶν). However, since a griffin is a composite monster with the body, paws and claws of a lion and the beak and wings of an eagle,<sup>3</sup> it could be understood that the part (the eagle or the lion) is already included in the whole (the term γρύψ, griffin).<sup>4</sup> That is, it would not be permissible to define the γρυπαιέτος as a mixture of griffin and eagle, because the griffin itself is already partly an eagle.

The scholiasts to *Ra.* 928–9 noticed this *non sequitur* and tried to explain it in various ways. According to some, the term simply referred to unusual or strange shield-devices, especially the eagles that were usually engraved or drawn on shields (sch. *Ra.* 929 Ἐπίσημα ἀσπίδος ἀλλόκοτα. εἰώθασι γὰρ ζωγραφεῖν εἰς τὰς ἀσπίδας ἀετούς). According to Johannes Tzetztes (sch. rec. *Ar. Ra.* 928b γρυπαιέτους δὲ ἢ "γρυπούς ἀετούς" ... ἢ "γρυπας

<sup>2</sup> It is attested solely in *Ar. Ra.* 929 and its scholia. One might of course wonder whether γρυπαιέτος is a genuine fragment, or a mock Aeschylean word coined by Aristophanes to parody his style. Given that *Ar. Ra.* 929–930 cites it in the same breath as Aesch. fr. 380 R., which is independently attested elsewhere (sch. *Il.* 16.380), it is safe to assume that both are authentic Aeschylean fragments and not coinages by Aristophanes. Ever since Butler (1816, 259) first identified it ("hoc fragmentum ... certe ex Aeschylō desumptum videtur apud Aristophan. *Ran.* v. 959"), γρυπαιέτος has been included in almost all editions of Aeschylus' fragments.

<sup>3</sup> E. g. Leventopoulou 1997, 609; Arnott 2007, 90.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. e. g. Paus. 1.24.6 γρυπας δὲ θηρία λέουσιν εἰκασμένα, πτερὰ δὲ ἔχειν καὶ στόμα ἀετοῦ. Both Thompson (1895, 47: "a fabulous bird") and *LSJ* s. v. ("a kind of griffin or wyvern") are noncommittal about the nature of the γρυπαιέτος.

ἡ ἀετούς” — οὐ μὴν δὲ “γρύπας ἀετούς”), γρυπαίετος should be understood in one of two ways: either γρυπ- does not come from γρύψ, but from γρυπός (‘hooked’), so that the device was a ‘hook-beaked eagle’ (cf. sch. rec. Ar. Ra. 928b “γρυπούς ἀετούς”, ἐπικαμπῆ τὰ ράμφη ἔχοντας), or one should understand “γρύπας ἡ ἀετούς”, ‘griffins or eagles’, as if the bronze-beaten shield-devices were either griffins or eagles (cf. sch. rec. Ra. 929a γρύπας καὶ ἀετούς κεχαλκευμένους). The latter interpretation, documented in Thomas Magister’s and Triclinius’ scholia to Aristophanes, corresponds to the type of compound called *dvandva*, extremely rare in Classical Greek but common in Byzantine Greek,<sup>5</sup> which also provided the Byzantine nouns γρυψολέων (‘griffin and lion’) and γρυπόνναγρος (‘griffin and onager’) (*LBG* ss. vv.). Therefore, the interpretation ‘eagles and griffins’ cannot be valid for Aeschylus’ time.

## 2. Modern interpretations

Modern commentators have also contributed their solutions, in many cases derived from the ancient ones we have seen in section 1. In general, they can be reduced to the following three:

- (1) γρυπαίετος is simply equivalent to αἰετός (‘eagle’)<sup>6</sup>. This interpretation is based on the above-mentioned scholium (sch. Ra. 929 ... εἰώθασι γὰρ ζωγραφεῖν εἰς τὰς ἀσπίδας ἀετούς) and understands γρυπαίετος simply as referring to an eagle portrayed in low relief on a shield, interpreting it as ‘hook-beaked eagle’ (from γρυπός ‘hooked’ + αἰετός ‘eagle’). So the creature on the shield would simply be a poetic term for ‘eagle’.

But if γρυπαίετος were simply a poetically elaborated name for ‘eagle’ (or any other readily identifiable animal), would it prove so unusual and memorable as to leave the audience baffled, give rise (decades after!) to Aristophanes’ joke, and give Euripides’ occasion to illustrate by such an example his mockery of Aeschylus’ bewildering style? All the more so when one considers how common the adjective γρυπός was, how often eagles appeared as shield devices<sup>7</sup> and how banal the meaning of ‘hook-beaked eagle’ is.<sup>8</sup> Would really this meaning (the first that occurs to the scholiast, therefore the most obvious one) be among the things that were ξυμβαλεῖν οὐ ῥάδι (‘not easy to make out’) and ἄγνωστα τοῖς θεωμένοις (‘unknown to the public’), especially as the hooked beak of the eagle was so proverbial that it even served as a physiognomic description of a type of nose<sup>9</sup>? Rather, it must refer to a composite creature sufficiently exotic and unknown to bear comparison with the ἵππαλεκτρῶν and the τραγέλαφος, other fantastic beings invoked by Dionysus and Euripides’.

<sup>5</sup> Kühner, Blass 1892, 318, § 338.

<sup>6</sup> Dover 1993, 308: “γρυπός is ‘hooked’ (including ‘hook-nosed’), and αἰετός ‘eagle’... there is no need to think that a γρυπαίετος differs from an αἰετός”; Arnott 2007, 59: “since the word grypos in ancient Greek means ‘hooked’ or ‘hook-nosed’, and every Aëtos has a hooked beak, the Aeschylean Grypaietos was presumably a poetically embellished synonym for Aëtos”.

<sup>7</sup> Chase 1902, 104–105.

<sup>8</sup> Aeschylus draws attention to the hooked talons of the bird of prey, not the beak: PV 488 γαμψωνύχων τε πτήσιν οἰωνῶν, fr. 193.11 R. *aduncis lacerans unguibus*. Cf. Ar. Nu. 337 γαμψοὺς οἰωνοὺς (sch. ad loc. καμπύλους ταῖς ῥίσι καὶ τοῖς ὄνυξι).

<sup>9</sup> E. g.: Arist. *Physiogn.* 811a36: οἱ δὲ γρυπὴν ἔχοντες καὶ τοῦ μετώπου διρθρωμένην μεγάλῃ ψυχοῖ ἀναφέρεται ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀετούς; Olymp. In *Platonis Alcibiadem comm.* 154: Οὕτω γὰρ καὶ ὁ ἀετός γρυπός ἐστίν, ὡς βασιλικός.

Secondly, the list of zoonyms mentioned by Aeschylus clearly shows that the interpretation of γρυπαιετός as γρυπός + αιετός does not correspond to his usage. In all the cases in which Aeschylus names an animal and at the same time indicates a physical or behavioural characteristic, he never uses a compound consisting of an adjective denoting such a characteristic and a noun as the head; rather, he uses a noun accompanied by an adjective or another noun in apposition.<sup>10</sup>

- (2) γρυπαιετός is equivalent to γρύψ (griffin).<sup>11</sup> γρυπαιετός is just a more sonorous and poetic way of referring to the griffin, just as the terms ‘centaur’ and ‘hippocentaur’ refer to the same mythic creature. However, there *was* a difference between centaur and hippocentaur,<sup>12</sup> as shown by the existence of other compounds with -κένταυρος as the head such as ἀνοκένταυρος (‘half man, half donkey’, gorilla or chimpanzee, Ael. NA 17. 9), νεφελοκένταυρος (‘cloud-centaur’, Luc. VH 1.16), ἰχθυοκένταυρος (‘fish-centaur’, sc. Triton, sch. Lyc. 34), μονοκένταυρος (‘man with an ox’s head’, gloss) among which there are obvious differences of meaning. A similar case may be made for another mythological composite creature, the sphinx: there is a difference between σφιγξ and ἀνδρόσφιγξ (‘sphinx with the face of a man and not of a woman’, Hdt. 2.175). That is to say, the compound forms are not merely poetic terms to designate the same kind of mythic creature, but show that there is a difference in meaning, of greater or lesser importance, with respect to the simple terms. If λευκόγρυψ (‘white griffin’) is not a mere synonym

<sup>10</sup> See *Pers.* 81 φονίου ... δράκοντος, 577 ἀναύδων / παιδῶν, 611 βοός τ' ἀφ' ἀγνῆς, *Sept.* 26 χρηστηρίους ὄρνιθας, 53 λέοντων ... Ἄρη δεδορκότων, 294 πάντρομος πελειάς, 1020 πετηνῶν ... οἰωνῶν, 1035–1036 κοιλογάστορες / λύκοι, *Supp.* 16–17 οἰστροδόνου βοός, 44 ἀνθονομούσας προγόνου βοός, 62 κίρκη-λάτου γ' ἀηδόνος, 224–225 κίρκων τῶν ὀμοπτέρων, 275 εὐτέκνου βοός, 284–285 ἵπποβάμοσιν ... καμήλοις, 300 εὐκραίρω βοῖ, 301 βουθόρω ταύρω, 307 βοηλάτην μύπα κινήτριον, 351 λυκοδίωκτον ... δάμαλιν, 511 δρακόντων δυσφρόνω, 557 βουκόλου περόεντος, 568 βοτὸν ... δυσχερὲς μειζόμβροτον, 800–801 κάπιχωρίος / ὄρνισι, 895 δίπους ὄφις, / ἔχιδνα, *Ag.* 36 βοῦς ... μέγας, 112 θούριος ὄρνις ..., ὁ κελαινὸς ὁ τ' ἐξόπιν ἀργᾶς, 119 λαγίαν ἐρικύμονα ... γέναν, 135 πτανοῖσιν κυσί πατρὸς/ αὐτότοκον ... μογερὰν πτάκα, 141 δρόσοις ἀέπτοις μαλερῶν λέοντων πάντων τ' ἀγρονόμων φιλομάστοις θηρῶν ὄβρικάλοισι, 394 ποτανὸν ὄρνιν, 717–720 λέοντος ἱ- / νιν ... ἀγάλακτον ... φιλόμαστον, /... ἄμερον, εὐφιλόπαιδα / ... ἐπίχαρτον ... φαιδρωπός, 827 ὠμηστής λέων, 1142–1145 ξουθὰ ἀκόρετος βοᾶς ... ἀηδῶν, 1146 λιγείας ... ἀηδόνος, 1169 βοτῶν ποιονόμων, 1224–1225 λέοντ' ἀναλκιν ... / οἰκουρόν, 1228 μισητῆς κυνός, 1232–1233 δυσφιλέξ δάκος ... / ἀμφίσβαιαν, 1258–1259 δίπους λέαινα ..., / λέοντος εὐγενοῦς, 1297–1298 θεηλάτου / βοός, 1472 κόρακος ἔχθροῦ, *Ch.* 247 αἰετοῦ πατρὸς θανόντος ... δεινῆς ἐχίδνης, 421 λύκος ... ὠμόφρων ἄσαντος, 446 πολυσινοῦς κυνός, 924 ἐγκότους κύνας, 938 διπλοῦς λέων, 994 μύραινά γ' εἶτ' ἔχιδν', 1050 πυκνοῖς δράκουσιν, *Eum.* 127 δεινῆς δρακαίνης, 193 λέοντος... αἱματορρόφου, 246–247 τετραυματισμένον ... νεβρόν, 866 ἐνοκίου δ' ὄρνιθος, *PV* 286 τὸν περυγκῆ τόνδ' οἰωνόν, 395 τετρασκελῆς οἰωνός, 452–453 ἀήσυροι / μύρμηκες, 465–466 φιληνίους / ἵππους, 488 γαμψωνύχων ... οἰωνῶν, 588 τὰς βούκερω παρθένου, 674–675 ὄξυστόμω / μύωπι, 803–804 ὄξυστόμους ... ἀκραγεῖς κύνας / γρύπας, 1009–1010 νεοζυγῆς / πῶλος, 1022 πτηνός κύων, δαφονίδος αἰετός, *frs.* 74.2 R. ὀρθόκερω βοῦς, 123 R. χωρίτης δράκων, 160.2 R. πυρφόροισιν αἰετοῖς, 193. 21 R. *diram volucrum*, 210 R. δύστηνον ἀθλίαν φάβα, 227 R. ἀρουραῖος ... σμίνθος, 233 R. Αἰτναῖος ... κάνθαρος, 236 R. Σφίγγα δυσαμεριὰν πρύτανιν κύνα, 282 R. ἰταμαῖς κυσὶν ἀεροφοίτοις, 298 R. ταῦρος ... νεοσφαγῆς, 310 R. λευκός ... ὁ χοῖρος, 330 R. λεοντόχορτον βούβαλιν νεαίρετον, 370 R. μελανοστέρφων γένος, 426 R. ἠριγένεια (λέαινα). On the extreme rarity of *dvandva* compounds in classical Greek see section 1 above.

<sup>11</sup> Ziegler 1912, 1928: “G[r]yps–Adler sagte der geniale Schöpfer der ρήμαθ' ἵππόκρημα und βοεία statt des üblichen, etwas dürrftig klingenden γρύψ”; Sommerstein 1996, 237: “Griffin–eagle” is probably a more sonorous name for the same creature, just as *kentauros* ... and *hippokentauros* ... denote the same being”.

<sup>12</sup> According to D. S. 4.70.1, Sch. Pi. P. 2.2.78, ‘Κένταυρος’ defines the original sons of Ixion and Nephele, who had human form (ἀνθρωποφρεῖς), while ‘ἵπποκένταυρος’ designates the offspring of their union with mares, who had both equine and human form (διφρεῖς). Cf. ἀνδρόπαις (‘child who is like a man’) as opposed to παῖς.

for γρύψ, but names the Lammergeier (*CGL* 3.188.29, 258.16),<sup>13</sup> then it stands to reason that γρυπαιετος and γρύψ should also be different (or at least different-looking) creatures.

Thus, none of these compounds can be used as a parallel to argue that γρυπαιετος is simply equivalent to γρύψ, but rather the opposite: the use of the compound introduces a difference in the meaning of the base term. As seen above in section 1, Greek writers saw griffins as fantastic composite creatures with the back, feet and claws of a lion (hence quadrupeds) and the beak and wings of an eagle. This is exactly the same creature that Aeschylus himself describes in *PV* 803–804 under the name γρύψ (ὄξυστόμους γὰρ Ζηνὸς ἀκραγεῖς κύνας / γρῦπας) and introduces on stage as a ‘quadruped bird’ (τετρασκελῆς οἰωνός, 395): a four-legged animal with the hooked beak of an eagle, metaphorically described as a ‘dog of Zeus’ precisely because of its four limbs and eagle-like physical features (cf. *PV* 1022). Photius (ι 157) is adamant: a griffin has four legs, wings and a hooked beak (γρύψ διὰ τὸ τετράσκελον εἶναι καὶ πτέρυγας καὶ ῥύγχος ἔχειν ἐπικαμπές). If γρύψ and γρυπαιετος were different names for the same fantastic animal for Aeschylus, would γρυπαιετος be so unknown or unusual to Aristophanes’ audience? Would Aeschylus have felt the need to use differentiated terms? It is logical to suppose that for Aeschylus γρύψ and γρυπαιετος denote different creatures, with some resemblance to each other.

- (3) γρυπαιετος denotes an eagle of the griffin species. Tucker (1906, 201) stated that “a ‘griffin-eagle’ is an ‘eagle of the griffin species’, cf. ἀλαιοετος, νυκταιετος”. However, in Greek the formation of hyponyms for a given bird species usually takes place by adding a first element, consisting of an adjective, an adverb or a noun (in either genitive or dative), to the basic zoonym, which forms the head of the compound.<sup>14</sup> This first member of the new compound specifies the habitat or some physical or behavioural characteristic of the new species that defines it or distinguishes it from the species whose name it is based on. Let’s see it in practice with the different hyponyms that designate species of ‘eagle’ in Greek:<sup>15</sup> ἀλαιοετος (‘sea eagle’ = Osprey), ὑψαιοετος or ὑπαιοετος (‘high-eagle’, ‘sub-eagle’ = Egyptian or Griffon Vulture), μελαναιοετος (‘black eagle’ = Greater or Lesser Spotted Eagle), χρυσαετος (‘golden eagle’ = Golden Eagle), νυκταιετος (‘night eagle’ = Night Heron or Eagle Owl).<sup>16</sup> Therefore, γρυπαιετος does not follow the Greek usage that we would expect to classify the eagle as belonging to the species of the griffin.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Arnott 2007, 196.

<sup>14</sup> Adjectives: φαλακρόκοραξ (‘bald raven’, Cormorant or Bald Ibis), χλωροστρουθίον (‘green sparrow’, Serin, Siskin or Greenfinch), χρυσαετος, (‘golden eagle’, Golden Eagle), πυρροκόραξ (‘red raven’, Red-billed Chough), λευκερωδιός (‘white heron’, Little Egret or Spoonbill), λευκόγρυψ (‘white griffin’, Lammergeier), μελαναιοετος (‘black eagle’, Greater or Lesser Spotted Eagle); adverbs: ἀεισκόπων (‘always-scops owl’, European Scops-owl, being a resident and not a winter migrant), ὑπολαῖς (‘under the stone’, Black-ear Wheatear), ἐπιλαῖς (‘on the stone’, unknown bird), ὑπαιοετος (‘sub-eagle’, Egyptian or Griffon Vulture), ὑψαιοετος (‘high-eagle’, the same), ὑποτριόρρης (‘sub-buzzard’, Sparrowhawk); nouns: ἀλαιοετος (‘sea eagle’, Osprey), νυκταιετος (‘night eagle’, Night Heron or Eagle Owl), νυκτίκοραξ (‘night raven’, Long-eared or Eagle Owl or Night Heron), ὄρειπλάργος (‘mountain stork’, Egyptian Vulture), ὄροσπιζος (‘mountain chaffinch’, Bluethroat or Cretzschmar’s Bunting), ὄστοκόραξ (‘bone raven’, Lammergeier), πετροχελιδών (‘rock swallow’, Crag Martin). For identification see Arnott (2007, ss. vv.)

<sup>15</sup> Buck, Petersen 1984, 478.

<sup>16</sup> For identification see Arnott 2007, ss. vv. It would be tempting to cite such delightful compounds as ἵππογέρανοι, ἵππόγυποι and ἵππομύρμηξ (*Luc.VH* 1.12–13), but unfortunately all they mean is ‘cranes, vultures and giant ants used as cavalry’ (*LSJ* ss. vv.), so they are of little use as parallels.

<sup>17</sup> A counter-argument could be made out of γυπαιοετος (*Suda* γ 506), ‘vulture-eagle’, perhaps to be understood as ‘eagle of the vulture species’. However, this is very likely a ghost word, either a *varia lectio*



### 3. The meaning of γρυπαιετος: an animal with the physical characteristics of an eagle and a griffin

My suggestion is that it is necessary to go back to the beginning and to start from what we can deduce from *Ra.* 928–937 about Aeschylus' γρυπαιετος: (a) the γρυπαιετος was already unknown at the time of the performance of *Frogs* (405 BC) (v. 930); (b) it is different from the traditional griffin, which Aeschylus calls γρύψ and describes as a four-legged bird in *PV* 904; (c) it is a decorative element used in art (in this case a shield-device) (v. 927–929); (d) it is homologous to other fabulous composite creatures mentioned in Aeschylus' tragedy, such as the ἵππαλεκτρῶν and the τραγέλαφος (vv. 932, 937). Let us see if this can help us to discover what the mysterious γρυπαιετος is and what it was like.

Aeschylus had a certain fondness for describing monstrous creatures, many of them winged:<sup>18</sup> these include the four-legged bird of Oceanus (*PV* 286, 395–396), the half-woman, half-swan Graiai (*PV* 794–795), and the Gorgons, innovatively described as winged monsters (*PV* 798–799).<sup>19</sup> In doing so, Aeschylus is merely following the taste for the visual representation of monstrous animals such as sirens, centaurs, sphinxes and griffins, which appear as decorative elements mainly on Corinthian vases from the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>20</sup>

As we have seen in section 1, Aristophanes parodies Aeschylus' taste for composite animals by citing, in addition to the γρυπαιετος, the ἵππαλεκτρῶν ('cock-horse') and the τραγέλαφος ('goat-stag'). Therefore, in order to understand what kind of animal the γρυπαιετος is, it seems appropriate to compare it with these two other exotic creatures that appear in the same context as the γρυπαιετος: they are equally unknown to Aristophanes' audience, their name is composed in the same way, and they are also decorative elements (cf. d *supra*).

Let us begin with the meaning of the name. One of the systems used by the ancient Greeks to name an exotic or unknown animal was fusing in a compound name two zoonyms of known animals whose physical characteristics, by their size, appearance or colour, were reminiscent of the new creature to be named.<sup>21</sup> Let's see what happens with ἵππαλεκτρῶν and τραγέλαφος, terms which, being better attested, can serve as a model to find out the meaning of γρυπαιετος. Τραγέλαφος (Ar. *Ra.* 937 = Aesch. fr. inc. fab. 444 R.), 'goat-stag', was a fantastic mixture of several animals which was a favourite with vase painters (Pl. *Resp.* 488a οἶον οἱ γραφῆς τραγελάφους καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα μειγνύντες γράφουσιν). It was later identified with an exotic but real animal, an antelope, a deer-like mammal with a goat's beard (Plin. *Nat.* 8.120).<sup>22</sup> As for the ἵππαλεκτρῶν, or cock-horse,

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or a corruption of ὑπάετος (*DGE* s. v. γυπαιετός). The *Ixeuticon*, a prose paraphrase of a didactic poem on bird-hunting attributed to Dionysius Periegetes or Dionysius Philadelphus, contains an interesting observation: griffins are included among the birds of prey, but must be carefully distinguished from eagles (*Au.* 1. 2 Πάντων δὲ χρῆ προκρίνειν τοὺς ἀετούς, ἐπεὶ μηδὲν ὑπὲρ γρυπῶν σαφὲς ἔστιν εἰπεῖν), so that it could be understood that eagles and griffins both belonged to the raptor family, but were different creatures. Immediately after the griffin, Dionysius mentions the other raptor species distinguished by the Greeks: eagles (1.3), *harpai* (unidentified birds of prey) (1.4), vultures (1.5), falcons (1.6) and kites (1.7).

<sup>18</sup> Pollard 1977, 123.

<sup>19</sup> *Ib.* 124.

<sup>20</sup> Doerig 1983, 140.

<sup>21</sup> Cioffi 2015, 210–212. Cf. *D.S.* 2.51 (on giraffes, called 'camel-leopard' in Greek): αἱ δὲ καλούμεναι καμηλοπαρδάλεις τὴν [μὲν] μίξιν ἀμφοτέρων ἔχουσι τῶν ἐν τῇ προσηγορίᾳ περιειλημμένων ζώων.

<sup>22</sup> Bothe 1828, 96.

Dionysus says that he stayed awake to find out what kind of bird it was, to which Aeschylus angrily replies that it is a sign on an Achaean ship (*Ra.* 932–933). The ἵππαλεκτρῶν was a horse with a cock's hindquarters, wings and tail, which appears at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC and is frequently depicted in Athenian black-figure vases of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, ἵππαλεκτρῶν and τραγέλαφος seem to mean either 'mixture of horse and cock' and 'mixture of stag and goat',<sup>24</sup> on the one hand, or 'cock that is like a horse' and 'stag that is like a goat' on the other.<sup>25</sup> In reality, the exact nature of the compound is of little importance,<sup>26</sup> because the meaning is essentially the same: an unknown or fabulous animal described by its resemblance to the physical characteristics of one or several other more familiar animals.<sup>27</sup>

In this vein, γρυπαιετος should mean 'animal with physical characteristics of eagle and griffin', as the recent scholium to *Ar. Ra.* 929a mentioned in section 1 above, or 'eagle that is like a griffin'. We return to the original question: but what exactly is a mixture of eagle and griffin?

The next question we need to ask then is what exactly the physical characteristics of the griffin were. The most complete description of the outward appearance of the traditional griffin appears in Ctesias (688 F 45h *FGrH*):

τὸν γρύπα ἀκούω τὸ ζῷον τὸ Ἰνδικὸν τετράπουον εἶναι κατὰ τοὺς λέοντας, καὶ ἔχειν ὄνυχας καρτεροὺς ὡς ὅτι μάλιστα, καὶ τούτους μέντοι τοῖς τῶν λεόντων παραπλησίους. κατὰ πτερον δὲ τὰ νῶτα εἶναι, καὶ τούτων τῶν πτερῶν τὴν χροάν μέλαιναν αἰδοῦσι, τὰ δὲ πρόσθια ἐρυθρὰ φασί-τάς γε μὴν πτέρυγας αὐτὰς οὐκέτι τοιαύτας ἀλλὰ λευκάς. τὴν δέρην δὲ αὐτῶν κυανοῖς διηρθίσθαι τοῖς πτεροῖς Κτησίας ἰστορεῖ, στόμα δὲ ἔχειν ἀετώδες καὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν ὅποιαν οἱ χειρουργοῦντες γράφουσι τε καὶ πλάττουσι. φλογώδεις δὲ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς φησὶν αὐτοῦ.

I hear that the griffin is a quadruped animal of India, quite like the lion, and has very strong claws, very similar indeed to those of the lion. It has wings on its back, the colour of the feathers of which, they claim, is black, but the front parts are said to be red. The wings themselves are not red or black, but white. Ctesias says that its throat is adorned with blue-black feathers, and that it has a beak like that of an eagle, and a head like that drawn and made by artists. He says that its eyes are the colour of flame.

<sup>23</sup> Doerig 1983, 141–142; Perdrizet 1904, 29.

<sup>24</sup> Copulative compound, of the type ἰατρόμαντις, 'soothsayer and physician'.

<sup>25</sup> Attributive compound, of the type ἀνδρόπαις, 'boy but like a man' (Amado 1998, 110).

<sup>26</sup> Opinions differ as to the exact nature of the compounds γρυπαιετος, ἵππαλεκτρῶν and τραγέλαφος. Debrunner (1917, 46) considers ἵππαλεκτρῶν and τραγέλαφος to be attributive compounds, while Kühner, Blass (1892, 318, on ἵππαλεκτρῶν) and Todt (1855, 17) consider them to be copulative compounds. Risch (1944, 56) called them *Mischungskomposita* and considers them related to determinative compounds, but not entirely identical.

<sup>27</sup> Cioffi 2015, 210. To give some bird examples: στρουθοκάμηλος ('bird that is like a camel', Ostrich, because of its size) (*D.S.* 2.50), γυπαλέκτωρ ('bird that is like a vulture', Hoopoe, perhaps because of its tawny colour) (*PMag. Berol.* 2.18), ἵππαλεκτρῶν ('bird that is like a horse', a vulture, Hsch. ι 780, for its size), χηναλώπηξ ('goose-fox', Egyptian Goose, perhaps because of the colour of its head) (*Hdt.* 2.72). Examples from the other animal classes are χοιροπίθηκος ('monkey that is like a pig', perhaps Baboon) (*Arist. HA* 503a19), καμηλοπάρδαλις ('mixture of camel and leopard', Giraffe) (*Agatharch.* 72), κροκοδιλοπάρδαλις ('mixture of crocodile and leopard', Nile Monitor, for its spots) (*IG* 14. 1302), χοιρέλαφος ('mixture of pig and deer', perhaps Babirusa, because of the strange tusks that resemble horns), κυνόλυκος ('mixture of dog and wolf', Hyena), ἱπέλαφος ('deer that is like a horse', perhaps Nilgai Antelope, for its size), λυκοπάνθηρος ('mixture of wolf and panther', Jackal, for its spots), ὄνέλαφος ('deer that is like a donkey', Antelope). For the identification of these zoonyms see: Cioffi 2015, 211; Arnott 2007, ss. vv., *LSJ* ss. vv.

Notice that Ctesias does not describe the head of the griffin as simply an eagle's head, but as something distinctive and peculiar to this creature, seen more easily in paintings and statues (τὴν κεφαλὴν ὁποῖαν οἱ χειρουργοῦντες γράφουσι τε καὶ πλάττουσι). Let us also add two pieces of information that can be deduced from the presentation of the γρυπαίετος in *Ar. Ra.* 928–930: it is a form of griffin already unknown in contemporary iconographic representations (Aristophanes assumes that the audience will not even recognise the word) (cf. a *supra*) and does not belong to the standard type of griffin explicitly described by Aeschylus in *PV* 803–804 as a γρύψ (cf. b *supra*).

Now, what was a griffin's head like? Following the indications of Aristophanes and Ctesias, let us see what painters and sculptors were doing. Vase paintings show certain physical features of the griffin which, I believe, provide the answer to the riddle of what a γρυπαίετος was and what shape it had. In archaic representations (7<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century BC), the head of the griffin was iconographically very distinctive: aside from its open hooked eagle-like beak, it was characterised by a pair of long, narrow, erect, pointed ears, a prominent protuberance or horn above the eyes, and sometimes a sort of plume or curl descending down the neck.<sup>28</sup> This, and not an eagle's, was the real griffin's head, as depicted by Greek artists (Figs 1–2).

Although the typology of the Near-Eastern griffin is much broader and must necessarily be left out of this work, artistic representations show that until the Hellenistic period the Greeks knew basically two main types of griffin, both four-legged: the griffin-bird, with the body of a lion and the head of a bird of prey, and the griffin-lion, with the body and head of a lion and the hindquarters of a bird of prey.<sup>29</sup> However, I would like to draw attention to a third, rarer and highly idiosyncratic type, characterised by the fact that the typical griffin head and neck described above were not superimposed on the body of



*Fig. 1.* Caption: Bronze griffin head from votive cauldron on tripod stand, Olympia, 7<sup>th</sup> cent. BC, Bronze Gallery, National Archaeological Museum of Greece, Athens.

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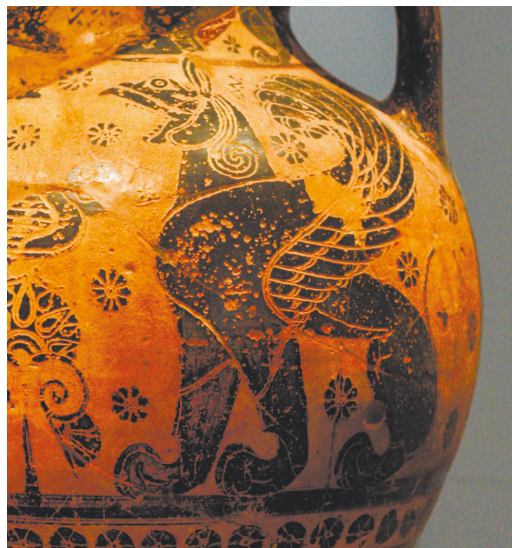
<sup>28</sup> Ziegler 1912, 1927–1928; Dierichs 1981, Beilagen 4, 6; MacDonald 1987, 4–5; Winkler-Horaček 2015, 226–227. In addition to its head, the griffin must have had other distinctive parts, different from those of the eagle and the lion, such as its claws: *Tz. Theog.* 173–174, Sch. Lyc. 1465A ἡ δὲ Σφίγξ ... ἦν τὰ ἄνω ἔχον παρθένου καὶ τὰ μέσα λέοντος, πόδας καὶ ὄνυχας γρυπός, πτέρυγας ἀετοῦ.

<sup>29</sup> Furtwängler 1884–1890, 1742–1777; Leventopoulou 1997, 610; Winkler-Horaček 2015, 207–231.



Fig. 2. Caption: Four-legged griffin (detail). Attic black figure belly-amphora type B, Nessos Painter, ca 610–600 BC, Berlin, Altes Museum (Antikensammlung), 1961.7.

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a lion, but on the body of a bird. Its two-legged body had curved and spread wings, and sometimes the feet of a water bird (Figs 3–4).<sup>30</sup> That is to say, this type of griffin represents a bipedal monster, not a quadruped like the usual griffins, with a raptor's winged body crowned by the characteristic griffin head (with its protuberances, its open hooked beak, its curly plume and its long, pointed ears), rather than a proper eagle's head.<sup>31</sup> This description fits well with the meaning I propose for *γρῦπαιετος*, 'animal with the physical characteristics of an eagle and a griffin': unlike the traditional *γρῦψ*, there was nothing of the lion in it.

Let us recall that the *γρῦπαιετος* is, according to Aristophanes, a shield-device, i. e. it is a decorative element, not a literary creature (cf. *c supra*). Now, there are examples of two-legged griffins with the body of a bird used as decoration. The best known of these is the famous dinos from the cemetery of Arkades in Crete (Heraklion, Afrati L18a, second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC):<sup>32</sup> three griffin-birds' robust, two-legged bodies, with wings outstretched on either side, are painted on the surface of the dinos, while their bronze heads protrude from it.<sup>33</sup> These two-legged griffins with the body of a bird, very popular in Corinthian vase-painting in the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC,<sup>34</sup> were also well known

<sup>30</sup> Furtwängler 1884–1890, 1762; Reed 1976, 373; Leventopoulou 1997, 610; Winkler-Horaček 2015, 278. No Greek term has survived for this last type (or perhaps species) of griffin, but Greek vase-painting specialists have called it 'griffin/griffon-bird' or 'Greifenvogel' (Payne 1931, 51).

<sup>31</sup> Karo 1900, 150–153; Dierichs 1981, Beilagen 1.2, 5.6–7, Abb. 14–31; Winkler-Horaček (2015, 226) describes it as an eagle's head, but the differences are very clear. A good illustration of the type is LIMC VIII/2, catal. nr. 4 s. v. 'gryps' (Stuttgart, Württemberg Landesmuseum, 4.60, 575–550 a. C.).

<sup>32</sup> Benton 1938, 58.

<sup>33</sup> Levi 1945, 13, 23; Reed 1976, 373, n. 22. A griffin-headed bird of prey is documented as a device on a bronze shield found in the Ida cave (Heraklion, Archaeological Museum 8, 7<sup>th</sup> century), but in this case it is not clear whether the body has four or two legs. See: Reed 1976, 366, n. 2; Winkler-Horaček 2015, 228.

<sup>34</sup> Payne 1931, 90; Boardman 1974, 33; Winkler-Horaček 2015, 228. It would not be the first time that Aeschylus had been inspired by the monstrous creatures in Corinthian vase paintings: the unusual depiction of the Graiai as half-swans in PV 793–796 may also be reflected in a black-figure Corinthian amphora (see Pollard 1977, 124, n. 3).



Fig. 3. Caption: Swan between two-legged griffin-birds. Corinthian terracotta krater, ca 580–550 BC, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1979.11.7.

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Fig. 4. Caption: Two-legged griffin-bird (detail). Attic black figure Siana cup, Griffin-bird Painter, 575–525 BC, Tübingen, Eberhard-Karls-Universität, Archäologisches Institut, OZ191.

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in Athens from the time of Proto-Attic pottery,<sup>35</sup> but by the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC they had fallen out of fashion or had disappeared completely.<sup>36</sup> Thus, although Aeschylus (b. 525 BC) may have seen some of these paintings or ornaments from an earlier generation (especially if they belonged to prestige or heirloom objects such as a shield or a vase), they would have been completely alien to both Aristophanes (b. 444 BC) and his contemporary audience. This would explain the surprise that ‘Euripides’ expresses about the meaning of γρυπταίετος in a comedy performed in 405 BC (cf. a *supra*). Once again, we can turn

<sup>35</sup> Moore — Gisler 2009, 8, n. 25; Winkler-Horaček 2015, 226–229. In fact, the Corinthian griffin-bird gives his nickname to the so-called ‘Griffin-Bird Painter’ (Beazley 1956, 71–74), a prolific Attic black-figure painter active between 575–550 BC, so called because of his penchant for depicting two-legged griffin-birds in his works.

<sup>36</sup> MacDonald 1987, 9, 53; Leventopoulou 1997, 610. As luck would have it, the bipedal griffin resurfaced in the Middle Ages as the Wyvern, a two-legged winged creature resembling a dragon. (I owe this reference to Ralph Hancock.)

to the parallel offered by the ἵππαλεκτρῶν (cf. d *supra*):<sup>37</sup> this fabulous beast, which was extremely common as a decorative element in Aeschylus' childhood and young adulthood and throughout the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, abruptly and completely disappeared from the Athenian artistic repertoire around 480 BC.<sup>38</sup> The absence of contemporary representations undoubtedly explains the confusion of Dionysus.<sup>39</sup> In short, both the ἵππαλεκτρῶν, the cock-horse, and the γρυπαίετος, the two-legged griffin-bird, are fabulous composite animals, typical of an earlier artistic period, which served as decoration (on shields, ships or tapestries) and had already vanished by the time of Aristophanes, so that their meaning, and what manner of creatures they were, was already unknown to the audience of *Frogs* and could be exploited for comical purposes.

#### 4. Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to find out the exact nature of the mysterious γρυπαίετος (Aesch. fr. 422 R.), a term used to describe a fabulous composite animal. From Ar. *Ra.* 928–930 the following can be deduced: (a) the γρυπαίετος was already unknown at the time of Aristophanes (v. 930); (b) it is different from the four-legged griffin; (c) it is a decorative element or an art object (v. 927–929); (d) it is homologous to other mixed mythological beasts mentioned by Aeschylus, such as the ἵππαλεκτρῶν and the τραγέλαφος (vv. 932, 937). A comparison with the sense of the compounds ἵππαλεκτρῶν and τραγέλαφος (d) shows that γρυπαίετος designates a mythical creature that combines the physical characteristics of two better-known animals, the griffin and the eagle (d).

In the light of this, I propose that γρυπαίετος designates a specific and highly idiosyncratic type of archaic griffin, particularly well documented in Corinthian vase-painting but also known from Athenian black-figure paintings, characterised by having the distinctive head of a griffin on an eagle's two-legged body, not a four-legged lion body (b). This fabulous and archaic animal, frequent in vase-painting until the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC (c), had completely fallen into disuse by the time of Aristophanes' *Frogs* (a), which would explain the bafflement of 'Euripides' and his inability to understand the meaning of the term. Thus Aeschylus' γρυπαίετος differs clearly from a four-legged γρύψ and would correctly be called a griffin-eagle, the most natural interpretation of the term: a mixture of the physical characteristics of the eagle (two-legged and feathered body, wings, talons) and the griffin (distinctive head with its protuberance or horn, long, erect, narrow ears, open hooked beak and curly plume or lock).

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<sup>37</sup> So much so that Hsch. ι 780 even got the two mixed up: ἵππαλεκτρῶν· τὸν μέγαν ἀλεκτρούνα, ἢ τὸν γραφόμενον ἐν τοῖς Περσικοῖς περιστρώμασι. γράφονται δὲ οἷον γρύπες.

<sup>38</sup> Doerig 1983, 141–142; Perdrizet 1904, 29; Williams 1990, 432.

<sup>39</sup> Cioffi 2015, 211.

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## Что такое γυρπαίετος (Aesch. Fr. inc. fab. 422 R.)?

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Цель данной статьи — определить, каким мифическим существом был эхилевский γρυλαίετος («грифон-орел»), вызвавший такой скандал у Еврипида в «Лягушках» Аристофана 928–930 (= Aesch. fr. inc. fab. 422 R.). Этот термин обычно интерпретируется в трех вариантах: (а) как поэтическая форма «орла»; (б) как поэтическая форма «грифона»; (в) как «орел породы грифонов». Свидетельства «Лягушек» Аристофана и вазовой живописи позволяют предположить, что это мог быть идиосинкратический, архаичный вид грифона, называемый современными специалистами «грифоном-птицей» и характеризующийся наличием двух, а не четырех ног и телом птицы, а не льва. Это фантастическое существо довольно часто появлялось на архаических чернофигурных вазах в Афинах, но полностью исчезло к концу VI в. до н. э. В связи с этим его внешний вид должен был быть неизвестен публике Аристофана, что делает невозможным понимание термина γρυλαίετος (Ra. 930). Поэтому в данной статье высказывается предположение, что эхилевский γρυλαίετος («грифон-орел») — это сказочное животное, состоящее из частей грифона и орла, как следует из названия: голова грифона (с открытым крючковатым клювом, длинными заостренными ушами, выступом или рогом над глазами и завитком или плюмажем, спадающим на одну сторону шеи), венчающая тело орла (двуногое, пернатое, с крыльями и когтями).

*Ключевые слова:* Эхил, Аристофан, грифон, γρυλαίετος, грифон-орел.

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