

THE IMPLICATIONS OF ANIMAL NOMENCLATURE IN AELIAN'S *DE NATURA ANIMALIUM*

It must be confessed that Aelian often tries our patience: we are irritated by his lack of any kind of system, by his repetitions, his inconsistencies, his servile credulity, his failure to verify statements where the facts were within reach, his style 'mit dem öden Schlamm der sophistischen Diction übergossen.'

(Scholfield 1958, xxiv)

1. Introduction

Aelian's *Περὶ ζῴων ιδιότητος* (*De natura animalium*) is a collection of stories about a wide variety of animal species in which the author's propensity to include *mirabilia* and paradox elements becomes quite apparent. In contrast to Aristotle's zoological treatises, and even to the zoology included by Pliny the Elder in his *Naturalis historia* (Books 8–11), Aelian does not offer very much in the way of proper scientific information.¹ Indeed, he claims on several occasions that his reports were either based upon personal observation (ἀυτοψία) or at least informed by authorities' accounts.² But on the whole, he does not intend to provide a sys-

1) For a comprehensive discussion of Aelian's works, see Kindstrand (1998). A useful evaluation of his *De natura animalium* can be found in French (1994, 260–276); see also Hübner (1984) and Fögen (2007). Bowie's entry on Aelian (1985) in the *Cambridge History of Classical Literature* is rather tendentious and does not do much justice to this ancient writer.

2) Reference to ἀυτοψία is made repeatedly, e.g. in *De nat. anim.* 2.11, 5.26, 5.47, 11.40. In numerous other cases, authorities are mentioned, both prose writers and poets. Sometimes certain peoples or groups of people are indicated as authorities, e.g. in *De nat. anim.* 7.20 (Egyptians), 7.27 (Arabs), 9.21 (Egyptians), 11.11 (Egyptians), 12.32 (Indians), further 14.6 and 16.5 (Indian Βραχμᾶνες). Occasional-

tematic investigation of the animal world. Instead, he combines the transmission of relatively unsophisticated knowledge that is unencumbered by excessive detail with entertainment for a readership that consists of even fewer specialists than the audience targeted by Pliny's *Natural History*. This is one of the reasons why the arrangement of his stories does not follow a coherent organising principle, but is impressionistic and aleatoric, as it were. This narrative strategy suggests that Aelian does not intend a logically coherent presentation of his subject matter, but instead provides a great deal of variation (ποικιλία) in order to avoid monotony, as he himself points out in the epilogue to *De natura animalium*.³ The style of his work is rather simple, characterised on the syntactic level by a tendency towards short sentences and parataxis.

Connected with his aim to entertain his readers is an ethical component. The relationship between animals and humans is presented in a way that attributes certain moral qualities to some animals and for this reason anthropomorphises them in many instances. From Aelian's point of view, it is noteworthy that several animals, despite their being without reason (ἄλογα), accomplish outstanding achievements in technical as well as ethical respects.⁴ Certain forms of animal behaviour are considered to be morally exemplary (see e.g. *De nat. anim.* 1.4, 7.11, 7.17, 11.31).

ly, Aelian does not refer to his sources by name, but despite their anonymity he apostrophises them as experts for the topic discussed, e.g. in *De nat. anim.* 6.59, 8.9, 9.14, 9.21, 10.33, 10.44, 13.13, 13.23 fin., 14.5 and 14.20. There are, however, instances where the sources remain unspecified, e.g. in *De nat. anim.* 3.5 init., 3.7 fin. (ὡς φασιν), 3.30 (ὡς φασιν), 4.41 (ὡς ἀκούω), 6.20 (πέπυσμαι ... παρείληφα δὲ ἄρα φήμη ... φασί τινες), 6.45 (πέπυσμαι), 7.11 (... ἐς οὗς ἐμὸν καὶ ἐκεῖνο ἦκεν), 10.1 (ἀκούω δ' οὖν ... ὃ δὲ πέπυσμαι, ἐκεῖνό ἐστιν), 10.35 (... ἄλλοι λέγουσιν) and 14.15 (πυνθάνομαι ... λέγουσι δὲ αὐτὸν εἶναι θαλάττιον ὄφιν).

3) *De nat. anim.* ep.: οἶδα δὲ ὅτι καὶ ἐκεῖνα οὐκ ἐπαινέσονται τινες, εἰ μὴ καθ' ἕκαστον τῶν ζώων ἀπέκρινά μου τὸν λόγον, μηδὲ ἰδίᾳ τὰ ἐκάστου εἶπον ἀθρόα, ἀνέμιξα δὲ καὶ τὰ ποικίλα ποικίλως, καὶ ὑπὲρ πολλῶν διεξήλθον, καὶ πῆ μὲν ἀπέλιπον τὸν περὶ τῶνδε λόγον τῶν ζώων, πῆ δε ὑπέστρεψα ὑπὲρ τῆς αὐτῶν φύσεως ἕτερα εἶραν. (...) τῷ ποικίλῳ τῆς ἀναγνώσεως τὸ ἐφοικὸν θηρῶν καὶ τὴν ἐκ τῶν ὁμοίων βδελυγμίαν ἀποδιδράσκων, οἷονεὶ λειμῶνά τινα ἢ στέφανον ὠραῖον ἐκ τῆς πολυχροίας, ὡς ἀνθεσφόρων τῶν ζώων τῶν πολλῶν, φήθην δεῖν τήνδε ὑφαναί τε καὶ διαπλέξαι τὴν συγγραφὴν.

4) See, for example, *De nat. anim.* 2.11 (elephant), 2.25 fin. (ant), 2.32 (swan), 3.10 (hedgehog), 3.23 (stork), 5.22 (mouse), 6.23 (scorpion: οἶα δὲ ἄρα σοφίσματα καὶ τοῖς σκορπίοις ἡ φύσις εἴοικε δοῦναι καὶ τοῖσδε ἰδίᾳ), 6.47 (hare: σοφία τινὶ φυσικῇ τὸ θηρίον τοὺς ἀνθρώπους αἰμυλώτατα ἀπατήσαν), 6.59 (dog: διδάσκαλον τῶν ὄλων τὴν φύσιν ἄμαχον), 7.10 (dog).

Although it is quite obvious that Aelian does not follow a rigid scientific approach, he does demonstrate an interest in terminology, especially as far as the names of animals are concerned. There are numerous passages in his work *De natura animalium* where he remarks upon the proper meaning and origin of certain terms that designate animals or are at least somewhat related to animals. This article discusses these instances so as to examine their status and significance within the treatise.

2. *Categorising Aelian's metalinguistic statements concerning terms for animals*

2.1 The most common reason for Aelian to dwell upon a certain term is to explain its origin, or, in other words, to ask why an animal is named in a certain fashion. Frequently, it is the animal's typical forms of behaviour or its peculiar activities that have provided the motivation for its name. One example is the *δρυοκολάπτης*, the woodpecker (De nat. anim. 1.45):⁵

τὸ ζῷον ὃ δρυοκολάπτης ἐξ οὗ δρῶ καὶ κέκληται. ἔχει μὲν γὰρ ῥάμφος ἐπίκυρτον, κολάπτει δὲ ἄρα τούτῳ τὰς δρυῖς (...).

The phrase ἐξ οὗ δρῶ or analogous formulae occur in similar instances as in De nat. anim. 4.21 (μαρτιχόρας: “man-eater”, perhaps a lion or a tiger), 6.18 (ἀκοντίας: the “javelin-snake”) and 9.24 (ἄλιεύς: the “angler”, a species of frog). A comparable case is the fish called τρώκτης (“gnawer”) whose nature is indicated by its name, as it has very powerful teeth (De nat. anim. 1.5).⁶ Outward form (ἢ τοῦ σώματος ὄψις) and disposition (φύσις) are the principles that have led to the term κυνοκέφαλος (“dog-head”) for a creature allegedly found in India (De nat. anim. 4.46). Other names were motivated by the habitat of an animal, like κραιμβίς (“cabbage-caterpillar”),⁷ by the frequency of giving birth, like τρίγλη (referring to the red mullet, De nat. anim. 10.2), or by the food that

5) On Greek bird names, see Robert (1911), Thompson (²1936) and, especially for Aelian, Gossen (1935, 319–328).

6) On Greek fish names, see Thompson (1947) and, especially for Aelian, Gossen (1935, 300–315).

7) De nat. anim. 9.39: τίκτεται δὲ καὶ ἐν τῇ κράμβῃ σκολήκων γένος, καὶ ὄνομα αὐτῶ ἐκ τῶν ἡθῶν, ἐν οἷς διατῆται. καλεῖται γοῦν κραιμβίς.

it consumes, like ἄκανθος (De nat. anim. 10.32; see Thompson ²1936, 31f.). The compound name of the Egyptian χηναλώπηξ (“goose-fox”; see Robert 1911, 90f.) is explained by its double nature: it has the appearance of a goose, but as it also has the mischievous character of a fox (De nat. anim. 5.30), the compound, according to Aelian, appropriately encapsulates the bird’s features as a whole:

ὁ δὲ χηναλώπηξ,πέπλεκταί οἱ τὸ ὄνομα ἐκ τῶν (ἐκατέρου) τοῦ ζώου
 ἰδίων τε καὶ συμφυῶν. ἔχει μὲν γὰρ τὸ εἶδος τὸ τοῦ χηνός, πανουργίαν
 δὲ δικαιοτάτα ἀντικρίνοιτο ἂν τῇ ἀλώπεκι.

Comments about the suitability of a given term are not infrequent, as can be observed from De nat. anim. 7.24, where Aelian emphasises that δρομιάς (“runner-crab”) mirrors the animal’s supposedly principal activity “most properly” (πρεπωδέστατον).⁸ The aptness of particular designations is further underscored for the names of the bird ἀγρεύς (“hunter”, according to Thompson [²1936, 1] the Indian mynah) in 8.24, of the ξιφίας (“sword-fish”) in 14.23 and also of the herb λυκοκτόνος (“wolf’s-bane”) in 9.18.

2.2 In cases where the rationale behind a certain animal name is not fully manifest, Aelian points out that there are several explanations, as for the φαλάγγιον (“grape-spider”)⁹ in De nat. anim. 3.36. The problem here is, however, that while he provides one explanation for why the spider is associated with grapes (namely because of its dark colour and its shape that resembles a bunch of grapes), he nonetheless observes in a very general fashion that there may be another way to account for its name (εἴτε δι’ αἰτίαν ἑτέραν). One may argue that this is not a very illuminating way of tackling the problem, especially from a modern taxonomist’s point of view. Yet for a text such as *De natura animalium*, it seems to signal that Aelian does not want to put too much emphasis on the intricacies of linguistic issues.

8) De nat. anim. 7.24: πλανῶνται δὲ δεῦρο καὶ ἐκεῖσε (οἱ) καλούμενοι δρομῖαι (ὧδε γὰρ καλεῖν αὐτοὺς πρεπωδέστατον)· ἀτρεμῖν γὰρ καὶ ἡσυχάζειν ἐπὶ τῆς αὐτῆς χώρας οὔτε ἐθέλουσιν οὔτε πεφύκασιν, ἀλλὰ περὶ τοὺς αἰγιαλοὺς ἀλῶνται, ὅθεν περ καὶ ἐξέφυσαν· ἦδη δὲ καὶ στέλλονται πορρωτέρω, ὥσπερ οὖν οἱ τῶν ἀνθρώπων φιλαπόδημοι.

9) Greek insects and their names are dealt with by Gil Fernández (1959), Davies & Kathirithamby (1986) and Beavis (1988).

2.3 Some animals have rather transparent names, but in addition, there are other terms for the same animal,¹⁰ the usage of which often differs from one group of speakers to another. The snake δῖψας, for example, is named after her most frequent pursuit, the provoking of thirst. As it may not be entirely clear what is meant by this sort of activity, Aelian specifies that it is this snake's bite that causes burning thirst in humans and makes them finally burst (De nat. anim. 6.51). After describing its size and shape, Aelian goes on to report further names for the same creature, some of which are also motivated by the effect of its bite such as πρηστήρ ("inflater")¹¹ or καύσων ("burner"), whereas others refer to its appearance (μελάνουρος; "black-tail") or its typical movements (ἀμμοβάτης; "sand-crawler"). Aelian seems to have had the impression that it might not be obvious that the term κεντρίς ("stinger") denotes the same snake, for otherwise he would not have remarked that the reader should trust his authority. Although he provides a rather extensive list of terms for the animal in question, he does not explain why and how these differences came into existence. References to the people who are said to use the individual expressions remain very unspecific and general (De nat. anim. 6.51):

ἀκούω δὲ ὅτι καὶ πρηστήρας αὐτὰς καλοῦσιν τινες, καύσωνας δὲ ἄλλοι
(...) κέκληται δὲ καὶ μελάνουρος, ὡς φασι, καὶ ἀμμοβάτης.

Neither regional (diatopic) nor social (diastratic) linguistic variation is given here as a reason. Even diachronic differences cannot be entirely ruled out, although the tenses of the verbs in the quoted passage all suggest that the terms were part of contemporary usage.

There are comparable instances where no criterion for the usage of terms is mentioned, as in the case of the three names ἐγγραυλῖς, ἐγκρασίχολος and λυκόστομος for the anchovy.¹² A similar lack of elaboration characterises the invocation of different

10) The ancient metalinguistic evidence concerning variants in technical terminology is dealt with by Fögen (2003, 47f.); see also Fögen (2000, passim).

11) Aelian has a separate chapter on the πρηστήρ in De nat. anim. 17.4, where no alternative names are indicated. From his description in 17.4, one may doubt whether the snakes called πρηστήρ and δῖψας were really identical, as Aelian claims in 6.51.

12) De nat. anim. 8.18: ἐγγραυλῖς, οἱ δὲ ἐγκρασίχολους καλοῦσιν αὐτάς, προσακήκοά γε μὴν καὶ τρίτον ὄνομα αὐτῶν, εἰσὶ γὰρ οἱ καὶ λυκοστόμους αὐτάς ὀνομάζουσιν. See Thompson (1947, 58).

appellations for the young offspring of wild animals, of which there are said to exist at least two for each species, such as σκύμος and λεοντιδεύς for lion-cubs as well as σκύμος and ἄρκηλος for young leopards, the former testimony being acknowledged by the philologist Aristophanes of Byzantium, as Aelian affirms. According to Aelian, however, the problem with this example is that for other speakers who remain unidentified, the term ἄρκηλος may not denote a cub but a special kind of leopard.¹³

In the chapter on a fish of the species mullet (*De nat. anim.* 9.36), Aelian uses the existence of two terms for the same animal, i. e. ἄδωνις and ἐξώκοιτος (see Thompson 1947, 3 und 63f.), to elaborate upon the origin of the first by inserting a short rendition of the corresponding myth: the “Adonis fish” is described as a creature that likes both land and sea, and therefore seems to be a kind of flying fish. Allegedly, it is thus called because its name-givers intended to hint at Adonis, son of Cinyras, who was torn between the goddesses Aphrodite, standing for the upper world, and Persephone, representing the world beneath the earth. The discussion of the meaning of a term is here connected with an aetiological account.¹⁴

2.4 The usage of some terms is presented as being limited to a particular geographic area, as in the case of the σιβρίτης, a name for scorpions that is used by the inhabitants of Ethiopia.¹⁵ The term κόνικλος for a small hare is described as being restricted to West Iberia, where this species supposedly occurs very frequently (*De nat. anim.* 13.15). In this passage, Aelian adds that he is no inventor of names (ποιητῆς ὀνομάτων) and has thus preserved the original name (τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς) coined by the Iberians of the West. One may find it surprising that, although he was born in Italy

13) *De nat. anim.* 7.47: τῶν ἀγρίων ζῴων τὰ ἔκγονα τὰ νέα διαφόρως ὀνομάζεται, καὶ τὰ γε πλείω διπλὴν τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν ἔχει. λεόντων γοῦν σκύμοι καὶ λεοντιδεῖς ὀνομάζονται, ὡς Ἀριστοφάνης ὁ Βυζάντιος μαρτυρεῖ, παρδάλων δὲ σκύμοι τε καὶ ἄρκηλοι· εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ φασι γένος ἕτερον τῶν παρδάλων τοὺς ἀρκήλους εἶναι.

14) Oppian in his *Halieutica* spends a few lines on the description of the Adonis fish (*Hal.* 1.155–167), but although he also points to the fact that there are two names for the same fish, he does not relate the term ἄδωνις to the myth. – On possible sources of Aelian’s and Oppian’s treatments of fish, see Richmond (1973).

15) *De nat. anim.* 8.13: ἐν Αἰθιοπία τοὺς καλουμένους Σιβρίτας σκορπίους (οὗτω δὲ αὐτοὺς ὡς εἰκός οἱ ἐπιχώριοι φιλοῦσιν ὀνομάζειν) (...).

and calls himself a Roman in his other work, the Ποικίλη ἱστορία (Var. hist. 2.38, 12.25, 14.45),¹⁶ he does not touch upon the Latin equivalent (*cuniculus*) of the Greek term κόνικλος.¹⁷ But as he does not explicitly mention or quote any Roman authors in the *De natura animalium*, one might argue that there was not much room for Latin elements in his work. Furthermore, when he mentions a celebrity such as Crassus, he feels the need to add that he was a Roman (De nat. anim. 8.4),¹⁸ as he does with Lucullus and Hortensius (3.42), Claudius (5.29), Galba (7.10) and Germanicus (2.11). Central elements of the myth of Aeneas are explained in greater detail than might have been required for a Roman readership (De nat. anim. 11.16). In his Ποικίλη ἱστορία (*Varia historia*), Aelian sometimes feels the need to justify his sparse references to Roman affairs (Var. hist. 2.38, 12.25, 14.45). This would corroborate the impression that Aelian wrote for a predominantly Greek-speaking readership that did not possess very elaborate, if any, knowledge about Roman culture, and very likely also for Romans who preferred literature written in Greek and perhaps Greek culture in general.¹⁹ For these readers, comparisons of Greek terms with their Latin counterparts would have seemed rather superfluous.

16) Philostratus reports that Aelian had never travelled to any part of the world outside of Italy. He also praises him for his pure Attic Greek, which he finds even more admirable, since Aelian lived in a Latin-speaking environment: Αἰλιανὸς δὲ Ῥωμαῖος μὲν ἦν, ἠττικίζε δέ, ὡσπερ οἱ ἐν τῇ μεσογείᾳ Ἀθηναῖοι. ἐπαίνου μοι δοκεῖ ἄξιος ὁ ἀνὴρ οὗτος, πρῶτον μὲν, ἐπειδὴ καθαρὰν φωνὴν ἐξεπόνησε πόλιν οἰκῶν ἑτέρᾳ φωνῇ χρωμένῃν (Vit. Soph. 2.31).

17) Pliny the Elder likewise associates the term *cuniculus* with Spain; see Nat. hist. 8.217: *et leporum plura sunt genera. (...) leporum generis sunt et quos Hispania cuniculos appellat, fecunditatis innumerae famemque*. Varro not only links it with Spain but also examines briefly the semantic background of the word; see De re rust. 3.12.6f.: *cuniculi dicti ab eo, quod sub terra cuniculos ipsi facere solent, ubi lateant in agris. (...) duo quidem utique te habere puto, quod in Hispania annis ita fuisti multis, ut inde te cuniculos persecutos credam*.

18) Plutarch in his *De sollertia animalium* briefly narrates the same anecdote about Crassus and his mourning for a dead moray, but he seems to presuppose his readers' knowledge about Crassus being a Roman (De soll. anim. 23, 976a). The same story is alluded to in two other instances, in which familiarity with Crassus' identity as a Roman is taken for granted (De capienda ex inimicis utilitate 5, 89a; Praec. ger. rei publ. 14, 811a).

19) See De nat. anim. 17.44, where Aelian addresses both Greeks and Romans as his readers: ῥινοκέρωτος δὲ εἶδος γράφειν τρισέωλόν ἐστιν· ἴσασι γὰρ καὶ Ἑλλήνων πολλοὶ καὶ Ῥωμαίων τεθεαμένοι.

2.5 It may suffice for Aelian to juxtapose terminological doublets as equals without any further explanation, as with *τύφλωψ* and *τυφλίνης*, names that both designate the “blind snake”; alternatively, one of the expressions is preferred over the other, motivated by the verdict of a scholarly authority, as with the snake names *παρείας* and *παρούας*, the latter of which was favoured by Apollodorus (De nat. anim. 8.12). Yet Aelian fails to elucidate why this was the case. Moreover, it is not specified which Apollodorus is meant; Aelian probably thought that the identity of the author was sufficiently clear to the reader, especially since he had already quoted Apollodorus’ work “On poisonous animals” (ἐν τῷ Θηριακῷ λόγῳ) in De nat. anim. 8.7.²⁰

2.6 Aelian often substantiates the information that he supplies in his narrative with references to authorities, either individuals or groups. Those whom he mentions by name are either prose writers or poets, but as has been demonstrated above (n. 2), he also adduces groups of people that remain relatively unspecific (most often in the case of the inhabitants of a certain country) or even completely unidentified. As can be expected for terms and their proper meaning, it is in particular grammarians whom Aelian quotes as experts. It has been shown above (section 2.3) that the Alexandrian grammarian Aristophanes of Byzantium is invoked as an authority on questions of terminology (De nat. anim. 7.47), in this case with respect to names for the offspring of certain animals. The short passage on the name *λαέρτης*, applied either to an ant or to a wasp, seems to be an almost literal citation from the grammarian Telephus of Pergamum²¹ (De nat. anim. 10.42):

20) In the register contained in the third volume of his Loeb edition of Aelian’s *De natura animalium* (1959, 441), Scholfield lists 8.12 under the entry for the “doctor and naturalist” Apollodorus (third century B. C.), “the prime authority on poisons for all subsequent writers”. But one might also consider other candidates, for example the philologist Apollodorus of Athens (second century B. C.), pupil of Diogenes of Babylon and Aristarchus, or the grammarian and lexicographer Apollodorus of Cyrene (probably before first century A. D.). On the whole, however, it seems, more likely that Scholfield is correct, as the reference to the author of the *Theiaca* in 8.7 does not stand very far apart from 8.12.

21) Telephus was a Greek grammarian who lived in the second century A. D. Apart from three fragments (FGrHist 505 F 1–3), one of which is the Aelian passage discussed here, only the titles of his works are known (see Suda, s. v. Τήλεφος [= FGrHist 505 T]), among which there was a ῥητορικὴ καθ’ Ὀμηρον in two books.

μύρμηκος εἶδος θανατηφόρου φασὶν εἶναί τι, καὶ λαέρτην ὄνομα ἔχειν
τόνδε τὸν μύρμηκα. καὶ σφήκας δὲ τινὰς ἐκάλουν λαέρτας, λέγει ταῦτα
Τήλεφος ὁ κριτικὸς ὁ ἐκ τοῦ Μυσίου Περγάμου.

Two aspects of this quotation are conspicuous: Aelian neither explains why the same name is applied to two different animals, nor does he clarify the origin of the term. Even a linguistically unsophisticated reader might ask whether this animal name is to be linked with Odysseus' father Laertes, and if so, in what respect.²² While it must remain pure speculation whether Telephus himself offered a more extensive discussion of the term, it can be maintained that Aelian contents himself with a rather unilluminating account. In order to satisfy the expectations of a more inquisitive reader, he could have hypothesised on the meaning of λαέρτης and the motivation for its usage in connection with insects, if only for the sake of witty entertainment. But perhaps he thought that this would have been too demanding for the readership targeted by his work.

2.7 There are instances where Aelian admits that he does not know from what source the animal in question derives its name. Examples are the μέμβραξ, a species of a cicada (*De nat. anim.* 10.44; see Gil Fernández 1959, 233f.), and the sea-animal called μῦρος (*De nat. anim.* 14.15):

μῦρος δὲ ἄρα ἰχθύς πυνθάνομαί ἐστιν. ἐξ ὅτου μὲν οὖν ἐσπάσατο τὴν
ἐπωνυμίαν ἐκείνην, εἰπεῖν οὐκ οἶδα· κέκληται δ' οὖν ταῦτη. λέγουσι δὲ
αὐτὸν εἶναι θαλάττιον ὄφιν.

In this passage, Aelian emphasises that he has learned from others about this creature, which is defined here as a fish (ἰχθύς) and a sea-snake (θαλάττιον ὄφιν). Again, his source remains anonymous, and he does not attempt to come up with an explanation of his own as to the origin of the term.²³

22) According to Chantraine (1968, 612), the name λαέρτης is probably “un composé de λαός et du radical verbal qu'on a dans ἔρετο· ὠρμήθη (Hsch.); c'est l'homme qui met en mouvement le peuple”. In the entry in question, he draws attention to the Aelian passage and comments that it cannot be explained why the name has been applied to the two insects. See also Gil Fernández (1959, 193).

23) For further ancient evidence on the μῦρος or σμῦρος, see Thompson (1947, 165f., 248).

2.8 An especially interesting case is *De nat. anim.* 10.44 on the names of cicadas, of which different species are said to exist. Aelian lists some examples such as the *τεφράς* (“the ashen one”), which derives its name from its colour, the *μέμβραξ* (see section 2.7), the *λακέτας* (“chirper”), the *κερκώπη* (“long-tail”), the *ἀχέτας* (“shriller”) and the *ἀκανθίας* (“the prickly one”). How these cicadas differ from one another does not concern him; the terms are not connected with any biological demarcation of the individual types. What is most striking, however, is the author’s subsequent appeal to his readers to supplement his list of names of cicadas:

ἐγὼ μὲν (οὖν) τοσαῦτα τεττίγων ἀκούσας γένη μέμνημαι· ὅτῳ δὲ καὶ πλείω τῶν προειρημένων ἐς γνῶσιν ἀφίκετο, λεγέτω ἐκεῖνος.

Aelian employs this strategy of turning straightforwardly to his readers to give them the feeling of being directly integrated in the text’s train of thought, in this particular instance in the creation of terms for different types of a certain animal. By suggesting to his audience that they are participating in the discussion as active members, Aelian follows a narrative technique that may be called ‘scholarship in the making’ or ‘getting one’s readers involved’, which ultimately leads to the constitution of an in-group of author and recipients.

A high degree of immediacy is also generated by the purportedly “oral character” of this passage. By using phrases such as *ἀκοῆ παρεδεξάμην* and *ἀκούσας (...) μέμνημαι*, Aelian stages his discourse as a kind of public event, as a speech rather than a written document. To a certain extent, he probably also wanted to avoid the impression of being a “bookworm” and to create instead an image of himself as a lively and engaging scholar, who does not spend all day excerpting other authors’ writings. It is a method of presenting his material that he uses quite frequently throughout his work on animals (see n. 2).

3. Conclusions

In the prologue to his *De natura animalium* Aelian states that he has employed the “common style” (τὴν συνήθη λέξιν) for his work, i.e. non-technical diction that would be intelligible for a wide readership of non-specialists. On the whole, the author sticks to his pronouncement,²⁴ which is not just a captatio benevolentiae that would be contradicted by the actual linguistic and stylistic nature of the work – a phenomenon that is well-known from a great deal of ancient technical treatises and that can be explained by the topical character of their praefationes (Fögen 2003, 38–42; Fögen 2005, 3 f.). Even those passages in which he treats the names of certain animals do not thwart his striving for a simple style and straightforward narrative. Most of his statements concerning terms for animals tend to be rather short. It cannot be denied that Aelian has an interest in terminological issues, but he never enters upon linguistic minutiae. In those cases where he is not sure about the motivation for a certain denotation, he feels no need to pursue the problem any further.

While it would be misguided to draw any conclusions about the author's intellectual capabilities from the structure of his narrative, and from his handling of terms, it is certainly possible to use these criteria to identify the readership targeted by his work. Aelian's *De natura animalium* is quite the opposite of a work such as Aristotle's *Historia animalium*, which exemplifies a content-oriented treatise, characterised by an endeavour for systematicity, not

24) The simplicity of Aelian's style, termed ἀφέλεια by Philostratus (Vit. Soph. 2.31), has often evoked stern criticism among modern scholars. See Scholfield's (1958, xxiv) statement, quoted at the very beginning of this article, and Bowie (1985, 681): “(...) the most striking feature of the style is not its lack of technicalities but its extreme Atticism in diction and simplicity of constructions. The preciosity of Aelian's short *cola*, grouped by parataxis and rarely varied by any other than participial subordination, rapidly becomes monotonous. (...) It is just tolerable within each entry or anecdote, but quite unsuited to continuous works of fourteen and seventeen books respectively.” Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff undoubtedly exaggerates when he speaks of “sophistisch unerträglich aufgeputzter Prosa bei Aelian” (Die griechische Literatur des Altertums, in: Id. et al., Die griechische und lateinische Literatur und Sprache, Leipzig / Berlin ³1912, 256); see also Gossen's (1935, 281) criticism of Wilamowitz' view. The most extensive treatment of Aelian's language and style is still Schmid (1893); see also the short overview in Kindstrand (1998, 2985–2988).

least in terminological respects (see Louis 1956). Furthermore, Aristotle refrained from the repeated integration of anecdotes in the *Historia animalium* for the sake of a more systematic and empirically oriented method. By contrast, Aelian was not a scientist and wrote for a much wider readership that did not require any detailed exposition of zoology. As can be seen from his epilogue (see n. 3), Aelian was aware that those who read the *De natura animalium* were seeking distraction and entertainment rather than comprehensive information, or to borrow Schmid's (1893, 302) verdict: "Ergetzung ist Hauptzweck von Aelians NA." It is with this background in mind that one must assess his incorporation of stories with an emphasis on the extraordinary and bizarre that were designed to cause astonishment (θαύμα) and consternation (ἔκπληξις), as he admits himself (De nat. anim. 7.8, 10.1 init. and 10.13).

Although the *De natura animalium*, with its often anecdotal and paradoxographical character, cannot be considered as a technical text,²⁵ there are moments in it where the author evokes an at least somewhat "technical" tinge. The passages in which there is a discussion of terms for animals certainly belong to that category, and they may be appropriately subsumed under the heading 'technicalities for the common reader'. This phenomenon constitutes a narrative strategy that is also characteristic of related, if not fully comparable, literary texts such as the miscellany (or anthology) – a genre represented, for example, by Aulus Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*, Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae* or Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, although these works tend to be broader in their thematic scope than Aelian's *De natura animalium*. As is the case for Aelian, systematic scholarly exposition does not constitute the main agenda for these authors; instead, lighthearted and often even humorous instruction is combined with entertainment. Aspects of terminology and etymology frequently come up as topics of interest, but for the most part, they are not integrated into these works for the sake of extensive linguistic analysis. Some of the miscellany writers draw much more attention to linguistic topics, including terminology, than does an author like Aelian in his *De natura animalium*; Gellius in particular has a lot to say about these issues (see Fögen 2000, 180–220). In other cases, especially in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*,

25) On the problems of defining the meaning of "technical" and "technical text" (or, to use the German term, "Fachtext"), see Fögen (2005, 2–6).

dwelling upon terms and their significance enables authors to give their otherwise non-specialist texts the aura of being at least somewhat “technical”. One might also interpret this phenomenon as an attempt on the part of these writers to enhance the prestige of their texts and to give their recipients the impression that the generally delightful and entertaining books they enjoy reading do not make for such easy reading after all. An analogous authorial motivation can be discerned in Aelian's *De natura animalium* and its use of animal nomenclature.²⁶

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