“And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting,
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is dreaming
And the lamplight o’er him streaming throws his shadows on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
   Shall be lifted-nevermore!”
-Edgar Allen Poe: The Raven
**Introduction**

Ravens have been one of the most celebrated birds in the history of humanity. From the Fortress of the Raven in Jordan, to the totem poles of Native Americans, and virtually all points on the Earth in between, raven has left its mark. Why is the raven so prominent in humanities history? What might we learn today from the raven?

This is a collection of information from a wide variety of sources. Sources that range from personal observations in nature to scientific observations through controlled experimentation. It also includes mythology, folklore and fairy tales from around the world that have been recorded over time in books. Lastly, it lists mystical and metaphoric examples from ancient texts to New Age writers. All of the sources are listed at the end of the book. It is not my intent to endorse everything you read; it was my intention to gather together as much information about the raven available through sources other than the internet. I’m sure there is more information about raven, but there may not be more conglomerated into one book.

When the idea of researching the raven first came into being, I did not realize how much information there was available about the raven. Therefore, it has taken me longer to complete this task than originally intended. But it has proven to be a very educating and enjoyable experience. Hopefully the material accumulated will help others on their chosen path. It seems like the raven has influenced a wide variety of paths humanity has chosen to follow over the millions of years it has existed.

Lastly, this resource is intended to be freely shared among those who are interested in learning about the raven. Raven is not discriminatory in who desires to be guided by his nature.
Similar in appearance and habits to the common crow, the raven is far larger than its relative, measuring 21 to 27 inches. Ravens are known for their aerial acrobatics. They fly high, tumble and roll in the skies, and even chase eagles and hawks (Lynch and Roberts 2010:93).

DNA testing has classified various races of raven. Just like humans and others creatures, the race of the raven will vary with geographical location. The raven breeds widely across Holarctic, generally away from concentrated human populations, from the northern oceans to Central America, Northwest Africa, Northwest India, and Northwest China. Three races across North Palearctic: corvus corax varius from Faroes, Iceland; corvus corax corax from Great Britain & Ireland, Scandinavia, France to River Yenesei; corvus corax kamtschaticus across East Asia to Pacific, North Japan. Across South Palearctic, corvus corax hispanus occurs in Iberia, Balearic Islands; corvus corax laurencen (formerly ‘subcorax’) from Aegean through Central Asia to Northwest China; corvus corax canariensis from Canary Islands; corvus corax tingitanus from Northwest Africa. Further races in Southeast Asia and two in North America that appear not to correspond with the molecular divergence, although some authorities recognize a third race (corvus corax clarionensis), which coincides more closely with the Californian clade (Knox and Parkin 2010:252).

The bill is a projecting structure of horn-made out of the same material as the nails—that grows as it is worn down. In the case of adult birds, bill size remains constant. The bill is joined to the skull in a way that allows for the movement of the lower mandible, and, thus, the opening of the mouth. Because of the raven’s unrestricted diet, its bill is simple and relatively long (Encyclopedia Britannica 2008:19).

To the human eye, a particular group of ravens may all look the same. But to the raven eye, studies have shown that they are able to recognize individuals and where each individual raven is on the social hierarchy. While roosting at night ravens only allow certain individuals to roost next to them, usually a preening partner or mate. In feeding, raven knows when he can dominate another and when he cannot (Heinrich 1999).
The raven announces or observes the death of individual ravens. Susan Scott witnessed a raven cawing as it looked down upon a dead comrade. The raven was cawing harshly and unrelentingly, but painfully urgently, cawwww, cawwww. She walked over to where it perched on a telephone wire, beak open; facing the ground, throat feathers ruffling with each call. As she drew close, the raven did not fly away, did not even seem to notice her approach, but continued to cawwww without pause at something on the ground. When she came upon a pile of black feathers strewn in the grass, she could recognize the focus of his distress and finally share the moment, rather than be distracted by it. A dead raven lay on the ground directly under the telephone wire (Scott 2003:15).

Ravens communicate so clearly that an experienced observer can identify anger, affection, hunger, curiosity, playfulness, fright, boldness, and (rarely) depression. By a combination of voice, patterns of feather erection, and body posture, they indicate functions like feed me, stay away, come here, and recognition (Heinrich 1999).

The raven is a playful bird. It likes to play with objects, especially shiny metallic objects, and perform stunts on tree branches. Like a small child one raven will attempt to take another raven’s toy. They have large brains, in fact the highest brain volume of any bird, and may be more intelligent that dogs (Heinrich 1999). Crows and ravens can be taught to speak a few words. They have a deep bond and familiar connection with their owners (Zell-Ravenheart 2004:255). Indeed, some ravens can be trained to imitate human speech (Holzer 2003:49). In Scandinavian folklore, the story of “The Lost Bell” is about a shepherd boy who believes his bell was stolen by a raven, crow, jackdaw, or magpie (C.J.T. 1890:16). The boy changes himself into a bird and begins searching nearby nests. Ravens do like to collect and tinker with shiny objects so the story is not that far fetched. Bernd Heinrich would give his ravens shiny toys (Heinrich 1999).

Ravens and wolves almost ignore each other when they feed together. Ravens sometimes eat the wolf’s scat. Ravens tease resting wolves by pulling on their tails. When the wolf snaps at the raven it will jump away and then repeat the action after the wolf has settled back to rest. The ravens will continue to harass the wolves until they resume traveling and hunting so that the ravens can share the kill. Ravens and wolves form social bonds (Heinrich 1999). Ravens appear in most ecosystem reports on wolves, especially as evidence of the trophic importance of predators to biomes, since ravens fulfill the role of scavenger and, in narrative terms, the role of supporting character. Among its other educational characteristics, the wolf-raven relationship, perhaps even more than the wolf-wolf relationship, has provided evidence of lupine idle play (Robisch 2009:37).

Wolves and ravens seem to have an understanding. The interactions between them make a case for sophisticated interspecies communicative systems. Among the smartest of birds, corvids learn to listen to wolf howls and follow wolves on the move in order to find scavengable carcasses. This relationship has been made famous in poems, paintings, and legends of the wolf and raven on burial grounds and battlefields. In Shelley’s Adonais, for example, we read of “The herded wolves, bold only to pursue; the obscene ravens, clamorous o’er the dead.” In turn, wolves and foxes will sometimes follow corvids by sight or sound, especially in desperate times, in order to locate a dead or dying animal. Such incidents occurring along the northern Pacific coast have produced interesting biological studies, in addition to a plethora of myths and legends about Raven and Wolf more forgiving than Shelley’s sentiment. The unfortunate result of wolf/raven cooperation is that in some cases the carcass scouted by the bird is old or spoiled and transmits disease to the scavenging wolf (Robisch 2009:105).
Since the birds generally travel by day and the pack might cover long distances overnight, ravens have learned to track wolves. They have been seen flying directly over tracks in winter to a kill (wolves generally travel single-file and may take turns breaking trail through snow). If they find a carcass that has not been ripped open, the hide of which they cannot penetrate with their beaks, they may lead a predator to the kill site and wait for the meal to be “sliced” (Robisch 2009:106).

Wild ravens are considerably difficult to handle in a hospital setting, yet there does arise occasion when veterinary services are needed (Mosby 2009:25). Veterinary services often used X-rays to diagnose internal conditions, such as pneumonia, that can cause death (Mosby 2009:221).

Erysipelas is caused by infection with the bacterium Erysipelothrix rhusiopathiae. This disease is primarily associated with swine and domestic turkeys, but it has been diagnosed in many groups of birds, including the raven, and in mammals. The causative agent has also been isolated from the slime layer of marine and freshwater fish and from crocodiles. Erysipelas is found worldwide. Little is known of the ecology of this disease in birds. Most reports of erysipelas in free ranging birds involve individuals or small numbers of birds, but major die-offs can occur. The largest recorded die-off killed an estimated 5,000 birds, primarily eared grebes, during 1975 on the Great Salt Lake, Utah (USGS 1999:121).

Aspergillosis is a respiratory tract infection caused by fungi of the genus Aspergillus, of which A. fumigatus is the primary species responsible for infections in wild birds. Aspergillosis is not contagious (it will not spread from bird to bird), and it may be an acute, rapidly fatal disease or a more chronic disease. Both forms of the disease are commonly seen in free-ranging birds, including the raven, but the acute form is generally responsible for large-scale mortality events in adult birds and for brooder pneumonia in hatching birds (USGS 1999:129).

Other infectious diseases in ravens include avian cholera (Pasteurella multocida), tularemia (Francisella tularensis), West Nile virus (a raven in Southern Mexico is the first captive bird to be reported with West Nile virus), Aspergillosis, and avian pox (Atkinson, Hunter & Thomas 2007:various).

Ravens were once very widespread in the wild in England until they became persecuted in the nineteenth century by farmers who thought they were a threat (Albarella and Yalden 2009:96). By 1865, Ravens had gone from nine English and nine Scottish counties (Albarella and Yalden 2009:172). The British population of Ravens was estimated to be about 7,000 pairs during 1988–91, mainly in the west and north. Since then there has been an increasingly widespread return to sites in lowland England from which they were driven by farmers and gamekeepers during the 19th century. A more recent estimate put the British breeding population at 12,000 pairs (Fray, Davis, Gamble, Harrop & Lister 2009:609).

Linda Hogan describes a scene set in Ely, Minnesota in her article “Deify the Wolf”: We are in the Boundary Waters region in February, where the “skeletal gray branches of trees define a terrain that is at the outermost limits of our knowledge and it is a shadowy world, one our bones say is the dangerous borderland between humans and wilderness” and “the shadowy world of wolves” whose howls are “dancing ghosts”. But we’re also in a highly controlled environment. Hogan is with a group on a wolf-watchers’ outing, so this is a tourist moment that attempts to transcend the tourist’s limited vision. Quickly she invokes an Anishanabe myth of human descendence from wolves, which moves into a highly corporeal paragraph describing wolf sign, that “what we see of the wolves” is found in leftover bones, scat, tracks, and
scavenger activity: she includes a powerful description at a moose carcass of “a coal black raven standing inside the wide arch of those ribs like a soul in a body” (Robisch 2009:63).

Although cooperative behaviors are common in animals, the cognitive processes underpinning such behaviors are very likely to differ between species. In humans, other-regarding preferences have been proposed to sustain long-term cooperation between individuals. The extent to which such psychological capacities exist in other animals is still under investigation. Five hand-reared ravens were first tested in an experiment where they could provide food to another raven at no cost to themselves. We offered them two behavioral options that provided identical amounts of food to the actor and where one of the two options additionally delivered a reward to a recipient. Subsequently, we made the ravens play a no-cost cooperation game with an experimenter. The experimenter had the same options as the animals and matched the ravens’ choices, making the prosocial choice the more profitable option. In both conditions, ravens were indifferent to the effects of their choices and hence failed to help other ravens and to cooperate with the experimenter. While our negative results should be interpreted with care, overall, our findings suggest that the ravens had no understanding of the consequences of their actions for a potential recipient (Bshary, Bugnyar, Lascio, & Nyffeler 2012).

Little is known about long-term memory of social relationships, but it has been recently demonstrated that common ravens (Corvus corax) discriminate between the calls of familiar individuals according to the social relationships they had previously had with them, even if they did not encounter these individuals for up to 3 years (Scheiber & Weib 2012).

Vagrant non-breeding ravens frequently attract other ravens to rich ephemeral food sources. There, grouping may allow them to overcome the defense of territorial breeders. Here, we focus on ravens making use of regular food supplies in a game park, where they divert food from the provision of park animals. We investigated if ravens foraging in the Cumberland game park (Grünau, Austria) are attentive towards one another when they experience some unpredictability in food provisioning. We confronted a group of 30–50 ravens with two different treatments. Ten minutes ahead of the feeding of either wolves or wild boars we showed buckets containing pieces of meat to the ravens flying overhead. In the reliable cue treatment (RCT), the meat was placed next to one of the two enclosures, whereas in the unreliable cue treatment (UCT), the buckets were placed simultaneously in front of both enclosures though only in one of the enclosures were the animals fed 10 min later. Thus, during RCT but not during UCT, ravens could predict where food would become available. Only during UCT, ravens moved in large groups between the two feeding sites. Many ravens moving at the same time in the same direction may indicate some co-ordination in space and time, which is most likely achieved by social attraction among individuals. Furthermore, the number of ravens approaching and leaving, respectively, a feeding site cross-correlated with a temporary increase in the rate of a food-associated call, the yell. This suggests that in addition to watching each other, calling may have contributed to group formation (Bugnyar & Kotrschal 2001).

Ravens foraging in groups should develop behavioral tactics to optimize their gain. In novel feeding situations, predation risk and pressure of kleptoparasites may be particularly high and hence may constrain optimal foraging. To create a novel feeding situation, we offered common ravens (Corvus corax) equal numbers of either small (40g) or large (160 g) pieces of meat on successive days, always in combination with the same novel object. During the first weeks, when ravens were still neophobic, small pieces were taken in larger numbers than large pieces. Intraspecific kleptoparasitism was more likely to occur when ravens carried large food items. It seems that initiating foragers were mainly innovative subdominants. Preference for
small items might have decreased with increasing habituation because more dominants were then feeding directly at the source and hence were less likely to resort to kleptoparasitism as an alternative foraging tactic (Kijne & Kotrschal 2002).

**Mythology, Folklore, Fairy Tales and Legends**

Raven is wily, deceitful, lusty, impulsive, curious, mischievous; an all around complex individual. It is these “human” attributes that endeared him to the audiences who listened to his exploits in the following tales, lore, and myths.

On some old Egyptian zodiacs there was a figure of Raven among the zodiac constellations, what may indicate that different type of division of the ecliptic into zodiac constellations was used in earlier times. There was a constellation called Raven neighboring the zodiac Virgo constellation. This old Egyptian zodiac, which was made of schist, is called “Libyan Palette” (Fomenko, Fomenko, Krawcewicz, and Nosovskiy 2005:52).

In Sumerian literature paradigmatic texts cover the rather loose group of compositions that has mostly been labeled ‘wisdom texts.’ The most important group of paradigmatic compositions is the disputations and so called eduba texts. Disputations are verbal contests, usually between nonhumans: Hoe and Plow; Tree and Reed; Bird and Fish; Goose and Raven; Winter and Summer; and Silver and Copper. The contestants try to prove their superiority in terms of their usefulness to humanity by listing their own virtues, as well as the vices and disadvantageous aspects of their opponents, cast in rather unfriendly speeches. The eduba texts are satirical descriptions of life at school, featuring lazy students and greedy teachers who welcome every opportunity to use the cane. Usually the protagonists of paradigmatic compositions go without a personal name – and for a good reason. They do not represent individuals, but rather are representatives of their group. Thus Hoe is not one particular hoe, but Hoe in general, the prototypical hoe (Veldhuis 2004:68).

Also in Sumerian literature, the raven is associated with a variety of divine beings, apparently not with one in particular. Enlil disguises as a raven in “Enlil and Namzitarra” and in “A-ab-ba hu-luh-ha” he orders the raven to bring despondence to the people. In “Inana and the Numun Plant”, the raven is associated with Inana, while in “Inana and Sukalutuda”, the raven takes orders from Enki to do ritual and agricultural work, thus inventing the cultivation of the date palm. In “Emesal” Dumuzid laments, the raven’s presence in the shepherd’s hut seems to be
a symbol for his death. In the first millennium version of the incantation series Udug-hul the raven is described as ‘messenger of the gods’ (Veldhuis 2004:299).

In the “Legend of Naram-Sin,” a host of spirits was sent against described as such: “Warriors with bodies of cave birds, a race with raven’s faces. The great gods created them; in the plain the gods built them a city” (Sitchen 1996:279).

In Near Eastern mythology (Babylonian), Benini was a monster with the face of a bird or raven. Benini, along with his evil mother, Melinni, and a host of demonic birds once attacked Babylon. They were finally defeated when the proper prayers were said and the proper sacrifices offered to the gods (Mercatante 2009:170).

Sahar is an Arabic giant jinnee; Solomon, wishing to find out how to cut metal noiselessly, had the water in a well replaced with wine and so made Sahar drunk. He then persuaded the jinnee to tell him the secret and was referred to the raven. The king hid two of the bird’s eggs under a crystal bowl and the raven then arrived with a stone called a samur in its beak and used it to crack the bowl. Solomon then dispatched his jinn to find the source of this mystery stone and they returned with enough for all his workmen who could thereafter work without disturbing others (Coleman 2007:899).

The priests of Mithras were styled Heirocoraces, or sacred Ravens (Oliver 1855:68).

Ravens had a symbolic status in England going back to the Iron Age and were probably kept as pets (Albarella and Yalden 2009:108). In Britain, archeological sites have revealed burials of humans with ravens. They clearly had some symbolic purpose, being interred directly with human skeletons. The fact that they were associated with human burial chambers was surely not an accident. Perhaps here we see some reflection of the ‘sky burials’ performed by Parsees and others, in which human corpses were left exposed for vultures and crows to dismember (Albarella and Yalden 2009:76). Stonehenge, most emblematic of Neolithic sites, also produced evidence of raven (Albarella and Yalden 2009:77).

There is some evidence for the hunting of ravens in Ancient Britain. The body of a raven with wings outspread was buried at the bottom of a pit, which also contained a pig, at Winklebury. Ravens were buried in pits at Danebury, their numbers being far in excess of their normal representation in proportion to other wild birds. Crows and ravens could have been hunted because they were a threat to crops, but there is more likely to have been a ritual element in these deposits (Green 1992:52).

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 937 AD ends its description of the Battle of Brunnanburgh by relating that the dead of the opposing Welsh/Scots/Irish army were left on the battlefield to be scavenged by Ravens, White-tailed Eagles, and Wolves (Albarella and Yalden 2009:124).

Western European land-based beliefs held that the crow or raven (Corvus) held human souls of un-baptized persons and wicked priests (McClelland 2010:41).

Tiécelin was a raven in the European tale “Reynard the Fox.” He was tricked out of a piece of cheese by Reynard but escaped when the fox tried to eat him as well (Coleman 2007:1017).

When a Roman pullarius wrongly reports positive omens before battle, this comes to the attention of the consul’s son, ‘born before the school of thought that rejects the gods’. He duly informs his father Papirius, who is not daunted: he merely declares that the man had attracted the prognosticated ira deum to himself. Placing the man in the front line, he is soon proved right when a chance javelin, thrown before battle had even commenced, caught the pullarius and killed him. While Papirius noted that the gods had duly punished the man, a nearby raven
apparently confirmed his diagnosis by cawing (Davies 2004:23). Ravens were looked to for signs of confirmation by the Romans, especially in battle affairs.

Corvus M. Valerius was an illustrious man in the early history of Rome. He obtained the surname of Corvus, or Raven, because, when serving as military tribune under Camillus (349 BCE), he accepted the challenge of a gigantic Gaul to single combat, and was assisted in the conflict by a raven which settled upon his helmet, and flew in the face of the Gaul (Smith 2010:126).

Livy informs us that the gods took an unexpected hand when a raven (corvus) appeared unexpectedly and settled on the Roman’s helmet, whereupon Corvus delightedly accepted the omen and prayed for the help of whichever god it was that had sent the omen: the raven immediately launched against the Gaul, who, terrified and distracted, was duly slain by Corvus. The raven flew away eastwards. The ensuing struggle over the Gaul’s armor led to the utter defeat of his countrymen and the victory was the beginning of a distinguished career for the young tribune (Davies 2004:134).

In extremely rare circumstances, the gods are deemed to have intervened somewhat more specifically than usual: when Corvus is assisted by a raven in single combat against a formidable Gaul, Livy tells us that the gods interrupted, overshadowing the human aspect, but even then the Roman must finish off the job. The gods must have an intermediary’ to have their effect, whether it be natural forces (storms), animal or human (Davies 2004:103).

Erasmus was Bishop of Formiae in Italy, who fled to Mount Lebanon to escape the persecutions of Roman Emperor Diocletian. There he is said to have been fed by a raven until captured, tortured, and disemboweled, his intestines being pierced with red hot hooks and wound out of his body onto a nautical capstan while he was still alive. According to legend he survived this and numerous other torments under various Roman emperors to die a natural death in or about 303 (Blackmore 2009:110).

St. Anthony the Abbot lived in the wilderness of Egypt. After Anthony had lived for 75 years in the desert, he had a vision of St. Paul the Hermit, who had been living in penance for 90 years. So Anthony set out across the desert. After journeying several days and meeting on the way a centaur and a satyr, he came at last to a cave of rocks where St. Paul the Hermit lived beside a stream and a palm tree. The two men embraced. While they were talking, a raven came, bringing a loaf of bread in its beak. St. Paul said the raven had come every day for the last 60 years, but that day the portion of bread was doubled (Mercatante 2009:84).

Raven was the Transformer whose changes brought the world from myth time to historical time. Myths that feature Raven abound across the far north and the northwest coast regions. He was a crafty, greedy, and frequently self-centered fellow whose adventures, or more often misadventures, centered on his pursuit of lustful desires. Frequently, Raven’s cons backfired on him, but some of Raven’s actions benefited mankind, whether he meant them to or not. It was Raven who desired light and devised an elaborate plan that eventually netted him the prize. But in the process, he unleashed the stars, moon, and the sun, and they are now in the heavens for all to enjoy. The people who lived at that time were not used to the sun’s blazing light, so they ran off into the forests and became the animals we know today (Bastian and Mitchell 2004:40).

In Native American mythology, at times Raven could change himself or others into a variety of animate beings or inanimate objects. Once Raven came to a raspberry bush. When he shook the bush, it turned into a man who became his slave. The man traveled with Raven and was supposed to be his spokesperson when they encountered other people. However, the man
didn’t always relay Raven’s messages correctly and Raven would end up being the one who was tricked. On another occasion, Raven held a great feast and invited all of the animals. While they were dining on fish, Raven let out a shout and all of his guests were changed into stones (Bastian and Mitchell 2004:159).

Yanauluha was a medicine man of the Zuni tribe in South America. He taught mankind the arts of agriculture, etc. When he tapped the earth with his staff, four eggs appeared, two white and two blue. Some people chose white; these hatched into colorful macaws which flew south. Those who chose blue fed the whitish birds that emerged, only to find that these changed into ravens. These two groups evolved into the active and strong on the one hand and the gentle and wise on the other (Coleman 2007:1115).

An Eskimo story tells about how raven wanted to marry a snowbird and fly with the geese. A small snowbird was crying because she had lost her husband. While she was crying, the raven, which had no wife, came along. When the raven reached her he said, ‘‘Why are you crying?’’ ‘‘I am crying for my husband, because he has been away so long a time,’’ said the snowbird. ‘‘My husband went out to look for food for me, and has not come back.’’ The raven told her that her husband was dead; that he had been sitting on a rock, when this became loosened and fell through the ice, and that he had fallen with it. ‘‘I will marry you,’’ he said. ‘‘You can sleep here under my armpit. Take me for a husband; I have a pretty bill; I have a pretty chin I have good enough nostrils and eyes; my wings are good and large, and so are my whiskers.’’ But the little snowbird said, ‘‘I don’t want you for my husband.’’ Then the raven went away, because the snowbird did not want to marry him. After a while the raven, which was still without a wife, came to some geese who had become persons. The geese were just going away. The raven said, ‘‘I too, I who have no wife, I am going.’’ The geese, because they were about to leave, now became birds again. One of them said, ‘‘it is very far away that we are going. You (meaning the raven) had better not go with us. Don’t come with us.’’ The raven said, ‘‘I am not afraid to go. When I am tired, I shall sleep by whirling up.’’ Then they started, the raven going with them. They flew a great distance (having now become birds), passing over a large expanse of water, where there was no land to be seen. Finally, when the geese wanted to sleep, they settled and swam on the water, and there they went to sleep. The raven also grew very tired, and wanted to sleep, but of course could not swim. So he whirled upwards towards the sky. But as soon as he went to sleep, he began to drop from up there. When he fell into the water he woke up and said, ‘‘Get together, so that I can climb on your backs and go to sleep there.’’ The geese did as he told them, and he was soon asleep on their backs. Then one of the geese said, ‘‘He is not light at all. Let us shake him off, because he is so heavy.’’ Then they shook him off their backs into the water. ‘‘Get together,’’ cried the raven. But they did not do so, and thus the raven was drowned (Green Volume 4 2008:76).

In an Inuit myth of the first humans, raven befriends the first men who emerge from pods of a giant pea pod. He creates women for companionship, animals and plants to provide the raw materials for survival, and fire, tools, and shelter to allow humanity to adapt to the harsh environment. While a culture hero and not truly a creator, raven can be seen as an important secondary figure who transforms the world to serve Inuit needs (Green 2009:8).

Wakiash was a Kwakiutl chief of North America. Seeking a dance of his own, he was carried off on the back of a raven. He landed in a house full of animals which had adopted human form and was allowed to take some of their dances and songs. Back home, he found that he had been away not four days but four years. He taught his people the songs and his new dance and made a totem pole, Kalakuyuwish, and took this name for himself (Coleman 2007:1091).
Among the Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest, the beaver, the eagle, the raven, and the killer whale are all associated with particular clans. People display their identity and status with totem poles, which are tall standing logs carved with images of mythical animals, and raven is one of the creatures used on totem poles. Totem poles mark village entrances, burial sites of chieftains, and the entrance of each clan house (Gale 2009:73). In the Northwest Coast tribes of the Makah and Nootka, masks of ravens and thunderbirds are made with moving parts, mouths open to reveal fish inside, or Raven, or a human being (Robisch 2009:236).

The Cora Indians in Mexico believed that, long ago, Iguana took the fire from Earth when he quarreled with his mother-in-law. The people first sent Raven, then Hummingbird, then all the other birds to retrieve it, but they all failed to climb into the sky to reach Iguana (Bingham 2010:48).

Tate Kyewimoka is a rain and water goddess of the Huichol tribe in Mexico. She appears in lightning and is said to resemble a red snake. She lives in a deep gorge with caves, in Santa Catarina, and brings the rain from the west. Her animals include deer and ravens and she is also the goddess of the corn (Jordan 2004:305).

The Tinglit indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest coast of America are divided into two ritually opposed bird social groups, the Ravens and the Eagles. They are matrilineal and children inherit their social group from their mothers, but most marry from the opposite social group. Bodily adornments, dances, names, and titles will reference their bird clan. They will imitate the birds call for signaling (Gosler and Tidemann 2010:183).

In another Tinglit tale Raven was traveling and happened on a village where the fishermen were catching a lot of halibut. The people invited Raven to stay with them and proved to be very hospitable and generous hosts. It wasn’t long, however, until Raven thought up some mischief to do. When the fishermen went out the next day, Raven dove in and swam underwater to where the fishing lines were dangling. At first he just nibbled on the bait, but his greediness got the best of him and he took a big bite. When the fisherman felt the tug on the line, he started hauling in his catch. Raven fought against the line and finally grabbed on to the bottom of the boat. The other fishermen also pulled on the line and at last Raven’s nose broke off. Then Raven swam to shore and transformed himself into an old man. He glued a piece of bark on his face in place of a nose and walked back to the village. The people at the first house invited him in and fed him well. During dinner, the man of the house told how they had caught a nose that day. Raven asked what had become of the nose. So the man told him it was at the chief’s house. When Raven arrived there, the chief served him a big meal and shared the story of how the fishermen had caught a nose. Raven asked to see it and then, after examining it closely, declared that it was a bad sign. “If you keep this nose, many people will come to fight you.” That frightened the people so much that they pleaded with Raven to take the nose away with him. Thus Raven’s beak was restored (Bastian and Mitchell 2004:159).

In a Northwest Coast story in which Raven is both a trickster and a culture hero, the world was all in darkness except for one village that had light. In order to win the chief’s daughter as his wife, Raven was determined to steal the light for his people. When he managed to reach the village of light, he used great trickery to steal the caskets that contained the Moon, stars, and Sun. When Raven returned to his people and opened the casket containing the Moon and stars, the people were amazed and delighted, and the chief gave Raven his favorite daughter as a wife. Raven asked the chief what he had to offer for an even better light. The chief responded that he would give his second daughter. Raven then opened the casket of the Sun.
From that day on, the Sun, Moon, and stars shone in the sky, and Raven lived happily with his two wives (Lynch and Roberts 2010:93).

Raven could possibly be seen by some as the totem for tattoo artist. A story from the Arctic region tells about how in the beginning, Loon and Raven were both completely white. One day they decided to tattoo each other. First Raven worked on Loon. When he finished, the colors and designs on Loon looked very attractive. Then it was Loon’s turn to tattoo Raven. However, Raven would not sit still. He kept complaining that the procedure hurt, and he would jump and pull away. Loon scolded him and told him to calm down and sit quietly. But Raven continued to squirm. Finally, Loon threatened, “If you don’t sit still so I can finish, I’m going to explode.” It wasn’t long before Raven started fidgeting again and Loon grabbed the oil lamp and hurled the contents at him. As Loon was fleeing the house, Raven picked up the oil lamp and threw it at Loon striking him in the legs. That is why loons have great difficulty walking on land and why ravens are all black (Bastian and Mitchell 2004:159).

Among the Koryak of Kamchatka, Yiniangawgut was a powerful primeval woman and the object of competition between Raven and Little-Bird, both of whom sought her in marriage. To find out the better mate, she challenged her suitors with the task of mending a break in the sky. Raven was terrified by the heights, but Little-Bird mended the tear with some fat and won Yiniangawgut’s hand. But Raven chewed up the sun, leaving the earth in darkness. Yiniangawgut’s sister Chanyai created the world’s rivers through singing, so that there was enough water to drink, but the people still suffered from darkness. Yiniangawgut went to Raven’s house to trick him into letting the sun out. She tickled him until he was roaring with laughter, and then had intercourse with him. When he awoke, she pointed out that his home was missing important utensils, like plates, which she had at her home. Then she stuck his head on a roof so that it became a new sun (Monaghan 2010:147).

Yehl is the creator-god in the form of a raven, among the Tlingit Indians in north-west Canada. He flew over the primeval mists and used his wings to clear them away until the dry land appeared. According to the myth, he changed himself into a blade of grass and let himself be swallowed by a chief’s daughter, from whom he was then born as the first man (Lurker 1987:206). Kanook is a god of darkness of the Tungit people; an evil principle brother of Yehl (Raven). He refused to release water for the benefit of mankind so his brother tricked him into releasing it. He was envisaged in the form of a wolf (Coleman 2007:561).

Lendix-Tcux is a tutelary god of the Chilcotin tribe in British Columbia Canada. He is so-called transformer known by different names among many Indian tribes. He is a wanderer who can change shape from human to animal and who educates the human race. He often appears in the guise of a raven, or as a dog, and has three sons (Jordan 2004:173).

Toa’lalit is the god of hunters for the Bella Coola tribe of British Columbia Canada. He oversees the hunting of mountain goats. He is invisible, but great hunters may catch a glimpse of his hat, moccasins or mountain staff moving about. His animals are the lynx and raven (Jordan 2004:319).

Kutkinnaku is a beneficent spirit revered by the Koryak people in eastern Siberia. He taught mankind to hunt and catch fish, and gave them the fire-stick and the shaman drum. In myth he appears as a raven (Lurker 1987:107).

Kurkil is a Mongol creation god envisaged as a raven (Coleman 2007:595).

A Koryak legend tells us that the culture hero, Big Raven, caught a whale but was unable to put such a heavy animal back into the sea. The god Vahiyi (Existence) told him to eat wapaq (mushroom) spirits to get the strength that he needed. Vahiyinin spat upon the earth, and little white plants—the wapaq spirits—appeared: they had red hats and Vahiyinin’s spittle congealed
as white flecks. When he had eaten wapaq, Big Raven became exceedingly strong, and he pleaded: "Oh wapaq, grow forever on earth." Whereupon he commanded his people to learn what wapaq could teach them. Wapaq is the Fly Agaric, a gift directly from Vahiyinin (Hofmann, Ratsch, and Shultes 2001:82).

In a Northwest Coast creation account, the first people emerged from a seashell Raven found on the seashore, rather than an underground place (Lynch and Roberts 2010:51).

Many myths tell of sacred places. These are locations where specific events took place in the distant past that have spiritual meaning for today or are remembered because the event changed the way humans live or interact with this world. One such story relates how Raven created Nunivak Island from a piece of soil he had taken from a certain cape on the mainland. He carried the soil on his back until he found the spot where he wanted the island. After dropping the soil in the ocean, he tied it down with a rope he had fashioned from roots. But that didn’t seem right, so he unleashed the clump of soil and sent it swimming away. Later on, the clump of soil found a large block of ice floating along and joined up with it to become Nunivak Island. Then Raven looked it over and decided the island needed a mountain, so he flew off to find a suitable mountain. When he returned, he hauled the mountain onto the island. Raven still thought it didn’t look right, so he caused the wind to blow, which caused mountains to form on the end of the island (Bastian and Mitchell 2004:36).

In an Aleut legend, Great Raven created light by throwing pieces of mica into the sky. In many tales, light was acquired by theft; for example, the Tanaina figure Chulyen (Crow) and the Northwest Coast Native American figure Raven, stole light for the benefit of their people (Lynch and Roberts 2010:62). In the tale often entitled “Raven Steals the Light,” Raven’s greed for light ended up being a benefit to all. Long ago, while everything was still dark, there was a great chief who kept light hidden away in three boxes. Raven, who had been busy forming the land and seas, decided that he needed light to proceed with his work. So Raven set off on his quest to steal the light, but he could not figure out how to get inside the chief’s house undetected. One day when the chief’s daughter left the house to fetch water, Raven devised a plan. He changed himself into a small leaf and floated into the girl’s drinking water. The girl was very thirsty. She drank the water quickly but didn’t realize she had swallowed the leaf. Inside her body Raven transformed himself once more and caused her to become pregnant. Raven grew as all babies do and eventually the girl gave birth to a son. No one suspected that this was not an ordinary little boy. The grandfather was delighted with his new grandson and began to spoil him from the very first day. As the baby grew he became more and more demanding. His mother and grandfather tried to keep him entertained and happy by giving him anything he wanted. One day Raven, disguised as the baby, put his arms out as if trying to reach the boxes that stored the light. The adults tried to distract him by giving him other toys to play with, but Raven just threw those things across the room. Raven cried and cried until his grandfather finally took down the first box. The old chief told the little boy that he could play with the box, but he was not allowed to open it. Raven took the box and played quietly. When no one was looking, he opened the lid and out flew the stars. They ascended high in the sky and are there to this day. The old man scolded his grandson for disobeying, but later when Raven demanded the second box, he took the box down and gave it to the boy. Again, Raven played quietly with the second box and waited for the right opportunity. When it came, he opened the lid and out flew the moon. Now the grandfather was more than a bit upset. But sometime later, when Raven began crying and demanding to be allowed to play with the third box, his grandfather eventually relented and handed the box to the little boy on the condition that he would never open it. Raven quickly changed back to his raven form, and with
the box in his beak, flew out the smoke hole and into the starlit sky. When he was far away from the chief’s house, he opened the lid of the third box and immediately a blazing ball of light appeared in the once dark sky. The light was much too bright for many of the people. They ran away, some to live in the forests on the mountainsides, some to live in caves, and some to live under the water. That is how the different animals came to be (Bastian and Mitchell 2004:158).

Another Northwest Coast Native American myth tells that when all the people had been destroyed, Raven created new ones from leaves. This explains why people die, especially in autumn when the leaves fall off the trees (Bastian and Mitchell 2004:157). Strangely many persons in my own family have died in the fall.

In a Native American Tillamook tale, raven helps old man Thunder. Old man Thunder loved the tail part of a whale. He would cut it off and run a stake through it and put it by the fire with his big trough under it for the oil to drip in. The old man’s roasting stick was one half of a big fir tree. Tonight Thunder’s son-in-law wished, “I hope that big stick will burn and break off.’ Very soon it burned, it broke. The old man said, “Well! That never happened like that before. I have had that same stick for all time. I wonder how that happened?’” After a while he decided, “I will just have to get a fir tree and split it in two. I need a stake.” He went, he took his wedge and his hammer, he got a big tree, and he was going to split it in two. His son-in-law looked on, he watched him. He wished, “I hope that wedge will drop into a crack in that tree and he will reach for it. I hope the wedge will fly out and his hand will get pinched hard, and hurt badly.” That was just what happened. The old man’s daughter knew her husband had done that. She told him, “How you abuse the old man!” He got hurt very severely, that wedge flew too far away, and he could not reach it. He simply could not. He suffered dreadfully. Thunder and lightning roared and flashed. When that old man was suffering he looked around and his glance made lightning. Finally old man Thunder called Raven. He said, “Come and help me out. Move that wedge closer to me.” Raven was not strong. That wedge was so large he could not lift it. Raven tried so hard to lift it that the skin between his toes split. Finally he got it moved enough so the old man could reach it with his foot. Then with his foot he dragged that wedge in, picked it up, and split that tree with one blow. His hand was all swelled. He paid Raven many pieces of whale meat. Raven was very glad (Blackwell 2004:38).

Spaul was the supreme god of the Native Americans on Queen Charlotte Island. This being is envisaged as a benevolent raven that killed the evil Queenah (Coleman 2007:958).

The Chinook-Wishram Native Americans tell a tale about an old woman who got sick after a coyote penis became stuck in her. They brought the old woman to raven for curing but raven was unable to cure the woman (Blackwell 2004:81). In another Chinook tale, Too-hux cut open a whale and out flew the raven, Hahness. The giantess Quoots-hooi ate the raven’s eggs from which the first humans appeared (Coleman 2007:375).

The Cherokee told a story about raven failing to bring back fire and in which spider was the hero. The world was without fire and was cold until the Thunderers set fire to a hollow sycamore tree with their lightning. The animals could see the smoke but could not reach the tree, because it grew on an island. Various birds volunteered to fly to the tree and bring back the fire. The Raven went first, but while he was wondering what to do, his feathers were burned black, and he returned without fire. The little Screech Owl went next, but as he was looking down inside the tree, a blast of hot air nearly burned out his eyes. He managed to fly home, but it was some time before he recovered, and his eyes remain red to this day. The Hoot Owl and Horned Owl tried next, but the smoke from the now fiercely burning fire nearly blinded them, and ashes borne by the wind made white rings around their eyes that they could not rub away. No other
birds would venture to the island, so the Black Racer snake and the great Blacksnake both swam to the fire and were scorched black. At last the Water Spider volunteered to go and bring back the fire. She spun a small bowl, a *tusti* bowl, and fastened it to her back. The Water Spider crossed the water to the island, put one coal of fire into her bowl, and returned safely with it. Ever since, man has had fire (Bastian and Mitchell 2004:49).

Of all the Cherokee wizards or witches the most dreaded is the Raven Mocker, the one that robs the dying man of life. They are of either sex and there is no sure way to know one, though they usually look withered and old, because they have added so many lives to their own. At night, when some one is sick or dying in the settlement, the Raven Mocker goes to the place to take the life. He flies through the air in fiery shape, with arms outstretched like wings, and sparks trailing behind, and a rushing sound like the noise of a strong wind. Every little while as he flies he makes a cry like the cry of a raven when it “dives” in the air—not like the common raven cry—and those who hear are afraid, because they know that some man’s life will soon go out. When the Raven Mocker comes to the house he finds others of his kind waiting there, and unless there is a doctor on guard who knows how to drive them away they go inside, all invisible, and frighten and torment the sick man until they kill him. Sometimes, to do this, they even lift him from the bed and throw him on the floor, but his friends who are with him think he is only struggling for breath. After the witches kill him they take out his heart and eat it, and so add to their own lives as many days or years as they have taken from his. No one in the room can see them, and there is no sear where they take out the heart, but yet there is no heart left in the body. Only one who has the right medicine can recognize a Raven Mocker, and if such a man stays in the room with the sick person these witches are afraid to come in, and retreat as soon as they see him, because when one of them is recognized in his right shape he must die within seven days. There was once a man who had this medicine and used to hunt for Raven Mockers, and killed several. When the friends of a dying person know that there is no more hope they always try to have one of these medicine men stay in the house and watch the body until it is buried, because after burial the witches do not steal the heart. The other witches are jealous of the Raven Mockers and afraid to come into the same house with one. Once a man, who had the witch medicine, was watching by a sick man and saw these other witches outside trying to get in. All at once they heard a Raven Mocker cry overhead and the others scattered “like a flock of pigeons when the hawk swoops.” When at last a Raven Mocker dies these other witches sometimes take revenge by digging up the body and abusing it (Green 2009:145).

The following is told on a Cherokee reservation as an actual happening: A young man had been out on a hunting trip and was on his way home when night came on while he was still a long distance from the settlement. He knew of a house not far off the trail where an old man and his wife lived, so he turned in that direction to look for a place to sleep until morning. When he got to the house there was nobody in it. He looked into the sweat lodge and found no one there either. He thought maybe they had gone after water, and so stretched out in the farther corner to sleep. Very soon he heard a raven cry outside, and in a little while afterwards the old man came into the sweat lodge and sat down by the fire without noticing the young man, who kept still in the dark corner. Soon there was another raven cry outside, and the old man said to himself, “Now my wife is coming,” and sure enough in a little while the old woman came in and sat down by her husband. Then the young man knew they were Raven Mockers and he was frightened and kept very quiet. The old man to his wife, “Well, what luck did you have?” “None,” said the old woman, “there were too many doctors watching. What luck did you have?” “I got what I went for,” said the old man, “there is no reason to fail, but you never have luck.
Take this and cook it and let’s have something to eat.” She fixed the fire and then the young man smelted meat roasting and thought it smelled sweeter than any meat he had ever tasted. He peeped out from one eye, and it looked like a man’s heart roasting on a stick. Suddenly the old woman said to her husband, “Who is over in the corner?” “Nobody,” said the old man. “Yes, there is,” said the old woman, “I hear him snoring,” and she stir red the fire until it blazed and lighted up the whole place, and there was the young man lying in the corner. He kept quiet and pretended to be asleep. The old man made a noise at the fire to wake him, but still he pretended to sleep. Then the old man came over and shook him, and he sat up and rubbed his eyes as if he had been asleep all the time. Now it was near daylight and the old woman was out in the other house getting breakfast ready, but the hunter could hear her crying to herself. “Why is your wife crying?” he asked the old man. “Oh, she has lost some of her friends lately and feels lonesome,” said her husband; but the young man knew that she was crying because he had heard them talking. When they came out to breakfast the old man put a bowl of corn mush before him and said, “This is all we have—we have had no meat for a long time.” After breakfast the young man started on again, but when he had gone a little way the old man ran after him with a fine piece of bead work and gave it to him, saying, “Take this, and don’t tell anybody what you heard last night, because my wife and I are always quarreling that way.” The young man took the piece, but when he came to the first creek he threw it into the water and then went on to the settlement. There he told the whole story, and a party of warriors started back with him to kill the Raven Mockers. When they reached the place it was seven days after the first night. They found the old man and his wife lying dead in the house, so they set fire to it and burned it and the witches together (Green 2009:146).

In Dakota myth, Raven was one of the spirit helpers of Takuskanskan, the being that personified motion and gave life to things. A Northwest Coast tribe, the Haida, call Raven Nankilslas (He Whose Voice Is Obeyed). The Haida relate stories about Raven’s travels as he went about the world changing it into its present form, teaching animals, and naming plants. Others saw Raven as the primary creator. The Inupiaq, an Arctic tribe, told how Raven created their homeland by harpooning a great Whale, which floated to the ocean’s surface and became land (Lynch and Roberts 2010:93).

Still revered among the Haida Indians of coastal British Columbia and Vancouver Island as a sea-goddess and the patron deity of tribes and families, Foam Woman appeared on the northwestern shores of North America immediately after the Great Flood. She revealed 20 breasts, 10 on either side of her body, and from these the ancestors of each of the future Raven Clans were nurtured (Joseph 2005:116).

Xil Sga’agnwai is a medicine god of the Haida Indians that is said to appear as a raven (Jordan 2004:350).

Winged creatures were frequent symbols in Celtic mythology. In early Celtic times the raven and the wren, especially, were thought to have powers of divination—the ability to foretell the future. They also serve as messengers and guises of the gods (Matson and Roberts 2010:10).

Bravonium appears in one Roman itinerary as Branogenium. Kenneth Jackson has suggested that Branogenus means "born of the raven", but it can equally mean "born of the king" or, taking genus in its more general sense, "people of the king." This could suggest that the original Celtic site of Bravonium/Branogenium was a hill fort occupied by royalty or descendants of royalty (Ashley 2005:147).

In Romanian vampire lore, certain vampires have the ability to shape shift into ravens (Bane 2010:96).
The third- or second-century BC helmet from Ciumesti in Romania bears the figure of a raven on the top. This piece is especially interesting because the wings are hinged so that when its wearer ran towards the enemy, the raven’s wings would flap up and down in a realistic and unnerving manner (Green 1992:88).

In Bulgaria and Macedonia there is a vampiric spirit known as vompir or vompiras if it is female spirit. A vompir can only be destroyed once it has occupied a corpse. After it has been captured, the vampire must be decapitated followed by the severing of its feet and hands. The body is then to be tied up tightly and either stabbed through the heart with a stake made of aspen wood or have a raven’s claw driven into the skull from behind the right ear. Lastly, the body must be buried underneath a huge millstone (Bane 2010:147).

In Japan, a large Yuzuruha Shinto Shrine is decorated with flags of a three-legged raven, which is a messenger of the Shinto gods (Roberts 2010:108). The Japanese entity gyu-O was relied upon to determine if a person was lying. An accused person swears on oath, using a white paper bearing the rough outline of a crow or raven, which is then burnt. The accused then swallows the ashes and, if he lied, he will be devoured by the gyu-O (Coleman 2007:446).

The Japanese regard the raven as the messenger of the goddess Amaterasu (Coleman 2007:871).

In China, a three-legged raven is said to live on the moon (Coleman 2007:870).

Athityarat was a Thai king. He built a shrine to Buddha on the spot where, according to a white raven, a sacred object was buried. When the building was finished, a bowl of fruit rose out of the earth (Coleman 2007:108).

Celtic lore is well connected to the raven. Macha, also called Maha, is a Celtic war goddess and powerful druidess of the Tuatha de Dannan, she is akin to Epona, the horse goddess of wisdom, and associated with the horse, raven, and the crow. She is a goddess suited to black cars and travel protection (Knight and Telesco 2002:68).

Morrigan, or Morrígana, is the “Phantom Queen” or “Great Queen,” and a sea goddess, she is the Celtic triple goddess of war, who shape shifts into a raven (Knight and Telesco 2002:70). The crow or raven symbolized the awesome destroyer aspect of the triple goddess. It reminds us how the once feared or revered names or symbols for the crone or crone goddess are all derogatory putdowns. To call a woman “an old crow” is as bad as calling her a “hag,” which once meant “holy woman” (Bolen 2001:95).

Magical animals in medieval narrative are often the result of transformation or reincarnation, for example, the brown bull of Cooley in Táin Bó Cuailnge and the raven forms of the Morrígan (Koch 2006:1130).

Indeed, the bones of geese are found in the graves of eastern European Celtic warriors. But the raven or crow was the bird of battle par excellence. These birds are cruel – hence the collective term ‘an unkindness of ravens’ – and scavenge on dead flesh, so they symbolize both the pitilessness and the carnage of war. The association of ravens with combat and destruction is found above all in the vernacular tales of Ireland, where the goddesses of war, the Morrígan and the Badbh, could change at whim from human to raven form, squawking dreadful omens and terrifying armies by their presence. ‘Badbh Catha’ actually means ‘Battle Crow’. Sometimes these women appear as old hags hunched in black rags and so take on the semi-guise of carrion birds while retaining their human form. One of the perceived characteristics of ravens was their ability to prophesy the future, especially the outcome of battles: the armies to whom the war-goddesses appeared as birds took their presence as a prediction that they would be defeated. When the Ulster hero Cú Chulainn is finally killed, he has such a fearsome reputation that it is
not until one of the raven-goddesses alights on his shoulder that his enemies believe he is dead and dare to approach and behead him (Green 1992:88).

Ravens may have been associated with pits and wells because of a perceived chthonic symbolism: ritual shafts penetrate deep underground, forming a line of communication between the living and the dead, the earth and the underworld powers. Ravens and crows, with their black plumage and their habit of feeding off dead things, were clearly seen as messengers from the Otherworld. Certainly in early Irish mythology the goddesses of battle and destruction frequently appeared as ravens (Green 1992:126).

Of the birds that appear on Celtic coins, most prominent are the marsh birds, such as the crane, and the crow or raven (Green 1992:156). In both British and Gaulish coinage there occurs the curious image of a horse on whose back is an enormous carrion-bird, sometimes with a small cake or pellet in its beak. Its talons dig into the back of its mount and the reins are apparently held by nothing except the bird itself. The scene must surely reflect a Celtic myth: the bird is huge in relation to the horse, a device which supports the interpretation of the bird as a supernatural being. The pellet in the beak is a detail which recurs on other bird iconography: the late Iron Age raven figurine from the hill fort at Milber Down in Devon bears this cake, as do the two raven-statuettes from the Romano-Celtic hoard of religious bronzes from Felmingham Hall, Norfolk. The imagery of these coins is idiosyncratic and it is tempting to link it with an important early Irish myth concerning the war-goddess Badbh Catha (Battle Crow), who wreaked havoc on the battlefield, unmanning armies by her appearance among them as a huge raven, gloating over the bloodshed (Green 1992:160).

The major characteristic of ravens in the early literature is of evil, death and destruction. In addition, a strong image repeated in many of the stories is that of ravens as prophets, foretelling the future – which was itself usually linked with death. The concept of ravens as birds of omen is interesting; indeed, they were used by Irish Druids in augury (predicting the future by studying the flight of birds). In the Insular tradition, their prophecy is generally associated with the disastrous outcome of battles. The connection between ravens and oracular utterances may have arisen because of the harsh but distinctive ‘voice’ of the raven, which may have been perceived as resembling human speech. Usually the gift of prophecy is sinister, but in the case of the Irish hero-god Lugh, ravens warn him of the approach of his enemies, the Fomorians, and thus influence the result of the second Battle of Magh Tuiredh. Indeed, some authorities identify Lugh as a raven-god. In one Irish poem, ‘The Hawk of Achill’, this association is very clear (Green 1992:177).

Lugh (Lug) was worshipped during the thirty-day midsummer feast in Ireland. Magical sexual rites undertaken in his name ensured ripening of the crops and a prosperous harvest. He is linked with Rosmerta in Gaul and also corresponds to the Roman god Mercury. His animal totems are the raven and the lynx, representing deviousness. He is known as Leu in Wales (Ball 2007:207). The ancient capital of Galliens Lugdunum (the modern Lyon) was named after Lugh. His functions identify him as a god of war and of the magic arts, but poets benefit from him as well as warriors and magicians. In the Irish sagas, Lugh is also called Lamfada he of the long hand, and some students have seen in this a reference to the sun’s rays, just as his spear has been interpreted as indicating lightning. His Irish epithet Samildanach (‘he who can do everything’) presents him as a master craftsman and artist. Lugh had a particular relationship with the earth-goddess Tailtu (Lurker 1987:114).

Bran is a Welsh hero god and also the god of poetry and the underworld. His name means ‘raven’ (Ball 2007:208).
In Celtic mythology, Branwen (white raven) was a goddess of love, wife of King Matholwch, and sister of Bran (Mercatante 2009:198).

Owen Glendower is a Welsh hero said to own a stone, which he had obtained from a raven, which could make him invisible (Coleman 2007:795).

Loch-wife is a Scottish woman living underwater in a loch. Her life was coiled up inside an egg concealed in a trout inside a raven inside a stag. Her only companion was the Laidly Beast. She was destroyed by Tam (Coleman 2007:629).

A poem from southeast Scotland called “The Gododdin” is an elegy for warriors from a tribe known as the Gododdin. Two lines in the poem, which appears in the late thirteenth-century manuscript known as the Book of Aneirin, are of particular interest: a warrior named Gwawrddur is praised for his prowess and is said to have 'fed black ravens [i.e. he slaughtered the enemy and left their bodies for ravens to eat] on the rampart of a fortress (Lupack 2007:13).

“The Dream of Rhonabwy” is a thirteenth century tale. In the tale Rhonabwy sees Arthur engage in the board game gwyddbwyll with *Owain, son of *Urien. As they play, they hear first that Arthur's troops are harassing Owain's ravens and then that the ravens are harassing Arthur's troops. Owain asks that Arthur call off his troops, and Arthur makes a similar plea that Owain call off his ravens; but neither complies and they continue playing until Arthur crushes the golden pieces on the board and the fighting stops (Lupack 2007:18).

American fantasy novelist Nancy Springer tells Mordred's story in “I Am Mordred”. The novel describes Mordred's youth; his conflict between loving Arthur, encouraged by Nyneve, and hating him, encouraged by Morgan le Fay; and his attempt to come to terms with the fate predicted by Merlin—his killing of Arthur. Though Mordred learns that fate cannot be avoided, he attempts to entrust his soul to Arthur in a Druid ceremony. Instead, it is transferred to a raven. After the final battle, Arthur is taken to Avalon to be healed; and during his long sleep, he is watched over by that raven. Thus Mordred fulfils his destiny but follows the advice of Vivien, the Lady of the Lake, who has said he can only fight his destiny with love (Lupack 2007:201).

In Arthurian legend, King Arthur still lives in the guise of a raven, and therefore the birds are never killed (Mercatante 2009:827).

In Denmark, the Night-Raven is said to be the incarnation of one who was murdered or committed suicide and was buried, at the junction of roads, in a grave from which it frees itself by moving only one grain of soil per year (Coleman 2007:750).

Cathubodua was a Gaulish battle goddess connected with crows or ravens (Matson and Roberts 2010:10). His name means “Battle Raven” (Matson and Roberts 2010:9).

Nantosuelta was a Gaulish water goddess, fertility figure, and goddess of hearth and home. She was the consort of Sucellus, who was sometimes called the king of the gods. Her connection with the raven, which in Celtic mythology often serves as a symbol of impending death, hints at a darker side (Matson and Roberts 2010:87).

There is a Yakut legend of the shaman Aadja, in it is told the tale of two brothers and how one of them died. His was aware of all that went on around him but could not move or speak. Much distress came to him when his body was buried and he lay in his grave. In part of the tale a raven appeared, it shoved its head between the man's legs, lifted him, and flew with him directly upward. In the zenith he saw an opening. They went through this to a place where both the sun and moon were shining and the houses and barns were of iron. All the people up there had the heads of ravens, yet their bodies were like those of human beings. And there could be heard inside the largest house something like the voice of an old man: "Boys! Look! Our little son has brought us a man. Go out and bring him in!" A number of young men dashed out and,
seizing the newcomer, bore him into the house, where they set him on the flat of the hand of a gray haired old man, who first tested his weight and then said: "Boys, take him along and place him in the highest nest." For there was a great larch up there, whose size can hardly be compared to anything we know. Its top surely reached heaven. And on every branch there was a nest, as large as a haystack covered with snow. The young men laid their charge in the highest of these, and when they had set him down, there came flying a winged white reindeer, which settled on the nest, and its teats entering his mouth, he began to suck. There he lay three years. And the more he sucked from the reindeer the smaller his body became, until finally he was no bigger than a thimble. Thus reposing in his lofty nest, he one day heard the voice of the same old man, who now was saying to one of his seven raven-headed sons: "My boy, go down to the Middle World, seize a woman, and bring her back!" The son descended, and presently returned with a brown-faced woman by the hair. They were all delighted, and arranging for a celebration, danced. But the one lying in the nest then heard a voice that said: "Shut this woman in an iron barn, so that our son, who lives in the Middle World, may not come up and carry her away!" Thus reposing in his lofty nest, he one day heard the voice of the same old man, who now was saying to one of his seven raven-headed sons: "My boy, go down to the Middle World, seize a woman, and bring her back!" The son descended, and presently returned with a brown-faced woman by the hair. They were all delighted, and arranging for a celebration, danced. But the one lying in the nest then heard a voice that said: "Shut this woman in an iron barn, so that our son, who lives in the Middle World, may not come up and carry her away!" (Campbell 1960:259).

Among the Siberian Chukchi, Miti created people by tossing stones on the earth where her husband, Raven, had thrown twigs to make reindeer. When she had made herders, she gave them shelter by making huts from moss, placing fire within them, and throwing them to earth (Monaghan 2010:143).

In another Chukchi creation myth, it states that in the beginning there were no people—just the Creator, an old man, and Tangen, a young boy. They wrestled until they were tired and then Tangen said, “Let’s create people.” “Very well,” said the Creator. So they took handfuls of earth, blew on them, and made the grass haired people. But they could not speak, so Tangen wrote for two years and gave them the writings—but still they could not speak, and the Creator only laughed. So Tangen wrote for three years, and three years more, but still they could not speak. Then the Creator turned himself into a raven and cawed at the people, “Krya, Krya,” and they cawed back, “Krya, Krya,” and then they could speak. The Creator reported back in raven form to the Divine Being in heaven, and the Divine Being sent reindeer to feed the people. Before the Divine Being could put the sun into the sky, the Creator/Raven stole the sun and hid it in his mouth. He kept on denying that he had it, saying with a muffled voice, “Search me.” When Tangen’s messengers searched him, they tickled him so thoroughly he couldn’t stop himself from laughing. At that, the Sun escaped from his mouth into the sky and lit up the world (Philip 2007:97).

And still another Chukchi myth states raven made the land from his feces and the water from his urine. He chopped up trees and made the animals and sea beasts from the pieces (Philip 2007:97).

In Greek mythology birds are frequently employed in the foundation of cities. Ravens led the settlers of Cyrene, Magnesia, Coraces, Mallus, Lyon and Cardia; a crested lark those of Colonides in Messenia; and doves those of Cumae and Naples (they figure too in the legends of the oracles at Dodona and in Libya). In a number of Hellenistic myths, an eagle took a piece of sacrificial meat to the place of foundation, as at Alexandria, where beforehand birds had come
down and eaten up the meal that had been used, in the absence of chalk, to mark out the boundaries: this was interpreted as meaning that Alexandria would nourish the world, 'because birds travel over the whole earth' (Bowie 1993:155).

In a Greek tale by Ovid, he tells of a girl named Marpessa that Apollo desired. A raven spies the girl cheating on Apollo and hastens to tell Apollo. On her way to see Apollo she meets the crow, who advises her not to tell Apollo anything because she has lost divine favor. The crow then tells the girl of her own transformation from girl to a bird, when pursued for her beauty by the lustful Neptune, Minerva took pity on her and changed her into a crow. For a while she was Minerva’s favorite bird, until ousted by the owl (Cameron 2004:289). Apollo cursed the raven that brought him the news of Marpessa’s unfaithfulness changing its color from white to black (Hansen 2004:112).

Aristeas was a priest of Apollo. In some accounts he accompanied Apollo in the form of a raven (Coleman 2007:90). In Italy the Metapontines say that Aristeas appeared in person in their country and ordered them to erect an altar to Apollo and near to it a statue bearing the name of Aristeas the Proconnesian. Apollo, he told them, had come to them alone of the Italiotes; and he accompanied the god at the time, being now in the shape of Aristeas, but then, when he accompanied the god, in the shape of a raven. After these words he vanished, but the Metapontines say that they sent to Delphi to ask the god what the apparition signified. The Pythia ordered them to obey the apparition: it would be better for them if they obeyed. They accepted this and did as they were told, so there is now a statue bearing the name of Aristeas, close by the image of Apollo, and laurel bushes are standing around it. The raven is also mentioned by Pliny who in telling how the soul of Aristeas was seen flying from his mouth in the shape of a raven (Bremmer 1983:26).

The Greek goddess Artemis also has associations with the raven. On a Greek lekythos (Greek pottery used for storing oil) is a painting of Artemis standing at an altar with a flaming torch. She has an oinochoe (Greek wine jug) held to pour. She holds a branch in her left hand and with her right hand she pours a libation from a phiale (Greek ceramic or metallic vessel) onto an altar on which sits a fruit. A raven perches on the altar (Patton 2009:64).

In a ancient Greek myth, where humans send an archetypal Raven in search of water and Raven, failing in his mission, is condemned to be forever thirsty in summer (hence his characteristically hoarse voice) (Curry and Willis 2004:41).

Peredur or Percival of Wales, as well as the lady Deirdre of Irish story, would have no consort unless the hair was black as the raven’s wing, the skin as white as snow, and the two red spots in the cheeks as red as the blood of the bird which the raven was eating in the snow (Macbain 1885:29).

Owain, the son of Urien Rheged, is never mentioned in the older poems and tales without reference to his army of ravens, “which rose as he waved his wand, and swept men into the air and dropped them piecemeal on the ground.” We are here reminded of the Irish war goddess who so often appears as, and is indeed named, the “scald-crow” (Badb) (Macbain 1885:57).

In Welsh lore, Cenferchyn is the warrior who gave Owain 300 ravens that ensured victory whenever he was in battle (Coleman 2007:200).

Probably dating from the thirteenth century, “The Dream of Rhonabwy” takes place in the context of a rebellion by Iorwerth against his brother Madawc, son of Maredudd. It is Rhonabwy who leads Madawc’s troops and who one evening falls asleep on a calf’s hide and remains sleeping for three nights. He dreams of King Arthur’s game of chess with Owain, who
has an army of three hundred ravens, and of the gathering of Arthur’s forces for the great Battle of Mount Badon, in which the Celts defeated the invading Anglo-Saxons (Fee 2001:187).

The crow and the raven are constantly connected in Northern Mythologies with battle deities. “How is it with you, Ravens?” says the Norse “Raven Song,” “whence are you come with gory beak at the dawning of the day. There is flesh cleaving to your talons, and a scent of carrion comes from your mouth; you lodged last night near where you knew the corpses were lying” (Macbain 1885:73).

There is a persistent tradition, going back to the Anglo-Saxon chronicle for 878, of a famous banner possessed by a Danish leader, sometimes said to represent a raven, which flapped its wings to foretell victory and drooped in anticipation of defeat (Davidson 1998:118).

Odin (Low German Wodan, South German Wuotan) himself is attended by two ravens called Huginn and Muninn, Thought and Memory (West 2007:34). Odin cherishes Muninn (memory), fearing its loss even over Huginn (thought) (Krasskova 2005:122). As a Germanic god, he is described in the Edda as the chief of the Aesir as the husband of Frigg. He is god of war, patron of heroes and ‘father of the dead’ (Walvater). He is served by the Valkyries. Sacred to the god are the wolf and the raven; and two ravens, Hugin and Munin, whisper into his ear what they have seen on their flight through the world. The name Odin/Wodan is connected with the German word Wut rage, fury. Wodan is the god of ecstasy, of magic (runic magic) and of the art of poetry; and to achieve wisdom he sacrificed one of his eyes. In saga and in popular belief he appears as a one-eyed warrior armed with a spear, or as a wanderer in a blue mantle with a floppy hat. Finally, he is also the leader of the ‘wild army’ of peregrinating souls. One of his epithets is Grimnir (‘the masked one’) – this because of his fondness for changing his outward shape (e.g. into eagle or snake) and for disguises. Other specific epithets are Hangagud (‘god of the hanged’) and Bölverkr (‘harm-bringer’). In Scandinavia and in England, the third day of the week is called after him – English Wednesday. In the myth, Odin is swallowed by Fenrir at Ragnarök, the destruction of the world. Early medieval bracteates show the god threatened by a monster; he is accompanied by two birds and sometimes by a deer as well (Lurker 1987:141).

Viking war flags carried symbols of ravens as Odin’s servants (Daly 2010:84).

In Viking times, the coat of arms of the Isle of Man was a ship with sails furled, but after the Viking era ended this was changed to the three legs emblem, the earliest known examples being on the Manx Sword of State (c. ad 1230) and the 14th-century Maughold Cross. Since 1996, a peregrine falcon and a raven have been added as supports on either side of the shield, alluding to the custom of giving two falcons to each English monarch on coronation day. The motto that forms part of the coat of arms is Quocunque jeceris stabit (it will stand wherever you throw it) (Koch 2006:676).

It is believed that part of Odin’s worship consisted of human sacrifices. It was believed that the god once hung on a gallows, wounded with the thrust of a spear, and thus gained wisdom. Some of his worshippers were hung on gallows in the same manner. Odin was called God of Hanged Men or Lord of the Gallows because of this. He would tell one of his ravens to fly to the hanged man, or he would go himself to talk to the man. An 11th-century account by Adam of Bremen tells of a sacrificial grove near a temple at Uppsala where human bodies hung from the branches of the sacred trees (Mercatante 2009:730).

Odin has links with Apollo, not so much qua healer—though it is he who cures Baldr’s lame horse in the Merseburg spell—but rather as a kind of shamanic figure. He presides over the poetic art, and he is associated with the wolf and the raven. Just as Apollo’s raven reports to him the lovemaking of Ischys and Coronis, so Odin’s two ravens fly about the world all day and then
return to perch on his shoulders and speak into his ears of all they have seen or heard (West 2007:149).

The affinity between the two gods extends to the Celtic Lugus, Irish Lug (Lugh). He, like Odin, is a chief among gods, a leader in battle who fights with a great spear, a master of poetry and magic; he has two ravens who warn him when the enemy Fomoire is approaching. Neither deity does much healing, but Lug heals his wounded son Cu Chulainn as Odin heals the Danish prince Sivard (West 2007:149).

Odin’s Raven Chant (Hrafnagaldur Odins) is a poem which tells the story of the gods’ visit to the underworld and their questioning of a goddess who dwells there (Daly 2010:51).

In a Hesiodic fragment it is reckoned that the crow lives nine human generations, the stag four times as long as the crow, the raven three times as long as the stag, the date-palm nine times as long as the raven, and the Nymphs ten times as long as the date palm (West 2007:287).

In India, Manda is the divine regent of the planet Saturn: he is also known as Fani. He is supposed to be old, ugly and lame, and he travels in a cart drawn by eight dappled horses or rides on a blackbird, a vulture or a raven (Lurker 1987:118).

Bakasura is one of the Hindu demons, in the form of a huge raven, sent by Kansa to kill the infant Krishna (Coleman 2007:124).

Shani is the Hindu god of ill fortune. He is regarded as the planet Saturn personified. In one account, it was his fierce gaze that burned the head off the infant Ganesha which Parvati (or Vishnu) replaced with the head of an elephant. He is depicted as black-skinned and riding a vulture or a raven (Coleman 2007:925).

In Hindu stories, the raven is an incarnation of Brahma (Coleman 2007:871).

Mihr (also as Mehr, Meher) is an Armenian sun god, semantically related to the Persian Mithra. He was taken to be the son of Aramazd. On earth, he manifested himself in the form of fire. He is accompanied by a black raven and he lives in a cave – symbols in sharp contradiction with his solar nature (Lurker 1987:125).

Vareghna was the Persian god Verethragna in the form of a raven (Coleman 2007:1073).

In a Russian myth Ivan Vyslavovich is killed by his two jealous brothers. For thirty days Ivan’s body lay where he had been killed, until it was discovered by the wolf. Thinking of a way in which he could revive his young friend, the wolf caught a young raven (some versions say it was a crow) and threatened to tear it in half. The raven, or crow (named Voron Voronich), pleaded for mercy, to which the wolf replied that he would spare the young bird if the bird’s mother would bring him some of the Water of Life and Death. The bird agreed and flew off. Three days later, she returned with two little bottles of the Water of Life and Death. To test the water, the wolf tore the mother bird in half and then sprinkled the water from one bottle over the carcass. Immediately the bird flew up into the sky, fully restored. The second bottle the wolf sprinkled over Ivan, who came back to life (Dixon-Kennedy 1998:138).

In Islamic legend, Cain and Abel are called Kabil and Habil. Kabil (Cain) and Habil (Abel) each had a twin sister. Kabil’s twin sister was Aclima, and Habil’s twin was Jumella. Adam wanted Kabil to marry Jumella and Habil to marry Aclima. Kabil, however, rejected the idea. Adam then said God would be asked through a sacrifice to decide. Sacrifice was made, and Kabil’s offering was rejected, signifying that God did not approve of Kabil’s rejection of the marriage. In a fit of anger Kabil killed Habil. For some time Kabil carried around the dead body of his brother, until he saw a raven scratch a hole in the ground to bury a dead bird. Kabil took the hint and buried Habil in the ground (Mercatante 2009:217).
The raven is mentioned in several places in the Bible. The raven, known in the Old Testament as a messenger bird, was sent out by Noah to look for dry land (Gen 8:7). The Jews were forbidden to eat ravens (Lev 11:15). The ravens feed Elijah at the wadi Cherith (1 Kings 17:6). God provides ravens their prey when their young cry out for food (Job 38:41). The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures (Pro 30:17). In an oracle against Edom (Isa 34), the forthcoming devastation of the country is depicted with the imagery that the country will be the abode of owls and ravens (Isa 34:11).

Some of the richest sets of dinosaur tracks in the world are conspicuous in the Connecticut River Valley running through Massachusetts and Connecticut (the largest prints measure about seventeen inches long). When some of these footprints were discovered in 1802 at South Hadley by the Massachusetts farm boy Pliny Moody, they were thought to be the tracks of Noah's raven. Later, in 1845, Edward Hitchcock identified them as Eubrontes dinosaur prints (Mayor 2005:48).

Though Noah sent out the raven, there is question about its willingness to go. In the Jewish “Myths of Exile” some say that when Noah called upon the raven to go forth from the ark, the raven was incensed. It began to argue with Noah, saying, “Of all the birds in the ark, why do you pick on me? Your Master hates me since He commanded you to bring seven pairs of the clean creatures into the ark, but only one pair of the unclean, like me. You hate me because you could have chosen any one of the species of which there are seven pairs, but instead you chose me. What if the Angel of Heat or the Angel of Cold should smite me, wouldn’t the world be short one kind? So why is it that you chose me? Or do you desire my mate?” Others say that when Noah sent forth the raven to determine the state of the world, it went forth to and fro (Gen. 8:7) until it found a carcass of a man upon the summit of a mountain. It settled there and did not return to the ark. That is when Noah called upon the dove, and sent it forth (Schwartz 2004:462).

There are many fables in rabbinic literature and in later Jewish folklore. These fables include many speaking animals, but rarely do they speak, as in this midrash about Noah, with a human being. There are also many other Jewish fables about the raven. The twelfth century fabulist Berekhiah ha-Nakdan includes in his Mishle Shualim le-Rabbi Berekhiah ha-Nakdan several fables about ravens (Schwartz 2004:462). Harab Serab is a raven in the Cabbala (Coleman 2007:455).

Because of the raven’s insolence towards Noah, he placed a curse on the raven. Noah cursed the raven thus, “May thy mouth, which has spoken evil against me be accursed, and thy intercourse with thy wife be only through it.” All the animals in the ark said Amen. And this is the reason why a mass of spittle runs from the mouth of the male raven into the mouth of the female during the act of copulation, and only thus the female is impregnated. Altogether the raven is an unattractive animal. He is unkind toward his own young so long as their bodies are not covered with black feathers; though as a rule ravens love one another. God therefore takes the young ravens under His special protection. From their own excrement maggots come forth, which serve as their food during the three days that elapse after their birth, until their white feathers turn black and their parents recognize them as their offspring and care for them (Green Volume 1 2008:192).

The raven has himself to blame also for the awkward hop in his gait. He observed the graceful step of the dove, and envious of her tried to emulate it. The outcome was that he almost broke his bones without in the least succeeding in making himself resemble the dove, not to mention that he brought the scorn of the other animals down upon himself. His failure excited
their ridicule. Then he decided to return to his own original gait, but in the interval he had unlearnt it, and he could walk neither the one way nor the other properly. His step had become a hop betwixt and between. Thus we see how true it is, that he who is dissatisfied with his small portion loses the little he has in striving for more and better things (Green Volume 1 2008:192).

In the old initiation there were definite stages in the ascent to spiritual heights. To these stages certain names were attached, one of which — to use the expression peculiar to the Persian initiation — is of particular interest to us. The first degree of the Persian initiation was designated by the term ‘Raven’; the second was called the ‘Occult’, the third ‘Warrior’, the fourth ‘Lion’, the fifth degree was known in every nation by the name of that nation; thus it was said of a Persian who had ascended to the fifth degree of initiation that he was a ‘Persian’. The initiate first became a ‘Raven’; that is, he observed the outer world and, being the servant of those who were in the spiritual world, he bore tidings to that world from the physical world; hence the symbol of the raven as the messenger between the physical and the spiritual worlds, from the ravens of Elijah to the ravens of Barbarossa. The initiate of the second degree is fully within the spiritual world. The third degree is yet further advanced; here the initiate is called upon to enter the lists on behalf of the truth of occultism; he becomes a ‘Warrior’; an initiate of the second degree was not allowed to contend on behalf of the truths of the spiritual world. In the fourth degree the initiate becomes firmly established in the truths of the spiritual world. The initiate of the fifth degree was one of those who, as I explained, learnt to control the forces which were transmitted in the female element of reproduction and in the blood of the generations. What name then must have been given to one who had been initiated within the Jewish people? He was called an ‘Israelite’, just as he would have been called a ‘Persian’ in Persia (Steiner 1933).

In a Chaldean deluge myth, when the vessel became stuck on the mountain named Nizir, a raven was sent out; the raven went and saw the corpses on the waters; it ate, rested, turned, and came not back (Donnelly 2001:35).

The ‘nycticorax’ of medieval writings is considered the ‘night raven’, it shuns light. The night raven is referred to in various occult writings. It seeks its food at night rather than during the day (Clark 1992:173). Aristotle said that it was clearly a species of owl (Curley 1979:72).

In the 17th Century writing “Chymical Wedding,” the following story is told: “Whereupon I presently drew out my bread and cut a slice of it; which a snow-white dove of whom I was not aware, sitting upon the tree, saw, and therewith (perhaps according to her usual manner) came down. She betook herself very familiarly with me, and I willingly imparted my food to her, which she received, and so with her prettiness she again refreshed me a little. But as soon as her enemy, a most black raven, perceived it, he straightaway darted down upon the dove, and taking no notice of me, would force away the dove’s food, and she could not guard herself otherwise than by flight. Whereupon they both flew together towards the south, at which I was so hugely incensed and grieved that without thinking what I did, I hastened after the filthy raven, and so against my will ran into one of the aforementioned ways a whole field's length. And thus the raven having been chased away and the dove delivered, I then first observed what I had inconsiderately done, and that I was already entered into a way, from which under peril of great punishment I could not retire. And though I had still wherewith in some measure to comfort myself, yet that which was worst of all to me was that I had left my bag and bread at the tree, and could never retrieve them. For as soon as I turned myself about, a contrary wind was so strong against me that it was ready to fell me. But if I went forward on the way, I perceived no hindrance at all. From which I could easily conclude that it would cost me my life if I should set myself against the wind, wherefore I patiently took up my cross, got up onto my feet, and
resolved, since so it must be, that I would use my utmost endeavor to get to my journey’s end before night” (Green and McLean 1984).

In Algeria during the French occupation, hopelessness, suffering, and misery are portrayed in al-Wagfa through the image of the raven, whose feathers normally never change color yet turn gray due to unprecedented conditions. The allegory stands for the graying of human hair as a result of trying experiences: “From East to West the raven has turned gray. O Reader of the unknown, help us in our ordeal.” (Bamia 2001:98)

Magdelona was French daughter of the king of Naples. She fell in love with Pierre of Provence and they eloped together. A raven seized her jewel-bag and dropped it in the sea and Pierre nearly lost his life in trying to retrieve it. She was asleep at the time and, when she awoke and found Pierre missing, she assumed that he had deserted her. She then sailed to Provence where she established a hospital for the poor and sick on a small island. Here, years later, she was re-united with Pierre who had been saved from the sea by pirates who sold him to a sultan who later set him free and gave him much wealth (Coleman 2007:652).

To native Hawaiians, the ‘alala—closer to the raven family than to the crow—is a sacred bird, a guardian spirit and a guide to the afterlife. When a Hawaiian dies, the soul travels to a Leaping Place—each island district has one, usually a high ocean promontory — and awaits its guide. For people of the districts of South Kona and Ka’u on Hawai’i Island (also known as the Big Island), one of those spirits is the ‘alala, and one of the Leaping Places is the volcanic cliff at the southernmost point of the island, Ka Lae. When the guardian spirit arrives at the appointed place, it joins the waiting soul, and together they leap into the afterlife. Without a spirit guide such as the ‘alala, a soul could lose its way and drift forever through a twilight of ghosts and night moths, with only grasshoppers to eat (Walters 2006:I).

An early visitor to the Hawaiian Island, James King, found ravens as pets in a Hawaiian household. They took great care not to hurt or offend their pet ravens; it was seen as a god of sorts. King attempted to purchase the pet ravens but the owners refused to sell. The days of abundance of ravens in Hawaii have ebbed from the pages of history. The decline and fading of the raven from Hawaii marked an end to cultural history for many present and future Hawaiians (Walters 2006:29).

Hugo de Folieto was a medieval scribe that wrote a book about birds from a clerical perspective. He wrote that the raven represents the vice of gluttony and is like a prelate (bishop or high ranking clergy) blackened with the soot of sins who urges fasting while he stuffs himself on rich food (Clark 1992:20).

The raven is perceived in various ways, so that by the raven is understood sometimes a preacher, sometimes a sinner, sometimes the Devil. Isidore, in the Book of Etymologies, says that the raven first seeks out the eye in corpses. The raven is the Devil, who first seeks the eye in corpses, because in carnal men he destroys the wisdom of prudence, and thus through the eye he draws out the brain. He draws out the brain through the eye, because he subverts the perceptive power of the mind when the wisdom of prudence is destroyed (Clark 1992:175).

Kassiel is the archangel of Saturn and ruler of Saturday. He is said to be the archangel of solitude and tears who “shows forth the unity of the eternal kingdom.” Kassiel is sometimes called the Angel of Temperance and his name means “speed of God.” The root word of this name is kas, which indicates sum, accumulation, pinnacle, or throne. Kassiel has appeared in many guises including a wise crone in a chariot drawn by dragons, an angel with a raven's head and wings, a giant winged skeleton, and a man who passes through the life phases of youth, maturity, and age, while on his robe the seasons pass in endless rotation. He may be envisioned in a
hooded robe of blue-violet trimmed with yellow-orange and ornamented with a hexagram containing the symbol of Saturn or the letter tau. His implements may include a sickle, a scythe, an hourglass, a book or scroll, an astrolabe, or a compass (Cicero and Cicero 2006:134).

The Montagnais tribe of North America, describe how the Great Hare (Michabo) reestablished the world after a flood. Michabo told raven to bring him a lump of clay so he could remake the world, but raven could not find any (Graves 1987:422).

In a tale from the Ukraine called “The Golden Mountain” a flock of ravens with iron beaks carry away the carcass of a dead horse (Dixon-Kennedy 1998:97)

In a Russian tale called “Raven Ravenson” a raven who, along with the sun and the moon, helped an old peasant pick up a measure of rye grain after he had carelessly spilled it. As a reward, each of the three was to receive one of the man’s three daughters as his wife. Raven Ravenson chose the youngest girl, the moon chose the middle daughter, and the sun chose the eldest one (Dixon-Kennedy 1998:232).

In yet another Russian tale called “Vol’ga Buslavlevich,” a mighty warrior, Queen Pantalovna had a dream. In that dream a tiny white bird had met in aerial combat with a mighty black raven, the white bird triumphing and scattering the feathers of the raven to the four winds. She added that the white bird was none other than Vol'ga Buslavlevich, while the raven was the sultan of Turkey. The sultan was furious and struck the queen, whereupon Vol'ga Buslavlevich turned himself into a wolf and quickly ran to the royal stables, where he tore the throats of all the horses there. Then he turned himself into a weasel and ran through the palace, breaking bows and arrows, shattering swords and spears, and smashing steel maces. Then Vol'ga Buslavlevich resumed his form as a tiny white bird and flew quickly back to Kiev (Dixon-Kennedy 1998:306).

In a Hungarian tale called “The Lad Who Knew Everything,” a poor boy who was very tired from all his wanderings sat down on the roots of a tree. While he was lying there idly, a raven overhead spoke and said, “Ah! If the person who is dozing under the tree knew what I know, he would be the king’s son-in-law in a week!” “If he knew what, then?” asked the other ravens. “Why, this, that the king’s daughter has lost her precious gold cross, and now she has bound herself not to marry anyone but the man who shall produce the gold cross, for it is a keepsake from her dear mother. The man who can find it is not yet born into this world. It is in a good place here, in the hollow of the tree. The old king, however, has had a proclamation made throughout the whole kingdom that he will give his daughter and half his kingdom to, whoever produces the gold cross.” The lad laughed to himself, and thought, “You have spoken just at the right time, you chattering raven!” He waited for them to fly away, and then he climbed up the tree, and actually found the gold cross in the hollow (Green Volume 3 2008:111).

Another tale from Hungary called “The Grateful Beasts,” a man and woman who was very poor had three sons that desired to try their luck in the world. The mother gave them all some bread to start their journeys and bid them a fond farewell. Two of the brothers maimed their other brother, Ferko, by blinding his eyes and breaking his legs then leaving him in his misery. Seeking a place to rest and heal, Ferko climbed up a hill and lay in the cool grass under the shade of a tree. But it was not a tree. It was a gallows on which two ravens were seated. The one was saying to the other as the weary youth lay down, “Is there anything the least wonderful or remarkable about this neighborhood?” “I should just think there was,” replied the other; “many things that don’t exist anywhere else in the world. There is a lake down there below us, and anyone who bathes in it, though he were at death’s door, becomes sound and well on the spot, and those who wash their eyes with the dew on this hill become as sharp-sighted as the eagle, even if they have been blind from their youth.” “Well,” answered the first raven, “my
eyes are in no want of this healing bath, for, Heaven be praised, they are as good as ever they were; but my wing has been very feeble and weak ever since it was shot by an arrow many years ago, so let us fly at once to the lake that I may be restored to health and strength again.” And so they flew away. Their words rejoiced Ferko’s heart, and he waited impatiently till evening should come and he could rub the precious dew on his sightless eyes. At last it began to grow dusk, and the sun sank behind the mountains; gradually it became cooler on the hill, and the grass grew wet with dew. Then Ferko buried his face in the ground till his eyes were damp with dewdrops, and in a moment he saw clearer than he had ever done in his life before. The moon was shining brightly, and lighted him to the lake where he could bathe his poor broken legs. Then Ferko crawled to the edge of the lake and dipped his limbs in the water. No sooner had he done so than his legs felt as sound and strong as they had been before, and Ferko thanked the kind fate that had led him to the hill where he had overheard the ravens’ conversation (Green Volume 3 2008:114).

“The Three Lemons” is a tale that originated in Hungary. In the tale a prince is in search of a wife. An old woman appears to him and directs him to find a glass hill with a lemon tree on which he must pick three lemons and he will have a wife to be desired. Once, quite wearied out with his long journey, he threw himself down under the cool shade of a broad lime tree. As he threw himself down, his father’s sword, which he wore at his side, clanged against the ground, and a dozen ravens began croaking at the top of the tree. Frightened by the clang of the sword, they rose on their wings, and flew into the air above the lofty tree. “Till now I haven’t seen a living creature for a long while,” said the prince to himself, springing from the ground. “I will go in the direction in which the ravens have flown maybe some hope will disclose itself to me.” He went on—he went on anew for three whole days and three nights, till at last a lofty castle displayed itself to him at a distance. “Praise be to God! I shall now at any rate come to human beings,” cried him, and proceeded further. The castle was of pure lead; round it flew the twelve ravens, and in front of it stood an old woman— it was Jezibaba [a forest witch]—leaning on a long leaden staff. “Ah, my son! Whither have you come? Here there is neither bird nor insect to be seen, much less a human being,” said Jezibaba to the prince. “Fly, if life is dear to you; for, if my son comes, he will devour you.” “Ah! Not so, old mother, not so!” entreated the prince. “I have come to you for counsel as to whether you cannot let me have some information about the glass hill and the three lemons.” On he went and on he went for three whole days and three nights, and the further he went, the deeper he wandered into a thickly wooded and gloomy range of mountains. Before him it was desolate, behind him it was desolate; there wasn’t a single living creature to be seen. All wearied from his long journey, he threw himself on the ground. The clang of his silver-mounted sword spread far and wide. Above him four and twenty ravens, frightened by the clash of his sword, began to croak, and, rising on their wings, flew into the air. “A good sign!” cried the prince. “I will go in the direction in which the birds have flown.” And on he went in that direction, on he went as fast as his feet could carry him, till all at once a lofty castle displayed itself to him! He was still far from the castle, and already its walls were glistening in his eyes, for the castle was of pure silver. In front of the castle stood an old woman bent with age, leaning on a long silver staff, and this was Jezibaba. “Ah, my son! How is it that you have come here? Here there is neither bird nor insect, much less a human being!” cried Jezibaba to the prince; “if life is dear to you, flee away, for if my son comes, he will devour you!” “Nay, old mother, he will hardly eat me. I bring him a greeting from his brother in the leaden castle.” Three days had already passed since he quitted the silver castle, wandering continuously through densely wooded mountains, not knowing which way to go, whether to the
right hand or to the left. All wearied out, he threw himself down under a wide-spreading beech, to take a little breath. His silver-mounted sword clanged on the ground, and the sound spread far and wide. “Krr, krr, krr!” croaked a flock of ravens over the traveler, scared by the clash of his sword, and flew into the air. “Praise be to God! The golden castle won’t be far off now,” cried the prince, and proceeded, encouraged, onwards in the direction in which the ravens showed him the road. In each castle the prince was not eaten by the ogre son of the witch and allowed to pass to the next castle finally reaching the glass hill (Green Volume 3 2008:130).

In a Palestinian tale called “The Princess with the Golden Hair,” raven functions as a match maker by bringing omens to a king who was seeking a beautiful wife (Green Volume 1 2008:244). Later in the same tale, an immense raven spoke to a wise man who the king had hired to help find his bride and gave him guidance in his quest (Green Volume 1 2008:245). Upon finding the kings bride she required a pitcher of water from Hell and a pitcher of water from the Garden of Eden before she would return with the wise man to marry the king (Green Volume 1 2008:247).

In a Greek tale called “The Seven Ravens,” a king sends his seven sons to bring back healing water for their sickly sister. The seven brothers failed in their quest and did not return to the king for fear of his anger. Well the king got angry for them not returning and cast a spell on them that turned them into seven ravens (Kanatsouli, Manna & Mitakidou 2002:39). In 1985 East Germany issued a commemorative stamp in honor of the tale “The Seven Ravens” (Zipes 2000:496).

In the “Novelle” by Giovanni Sercambi (1347–1424) a tale, entitled “De bono facto,” relates how the donkey of Pincaruolo, a poor young peasant from the Milan area, collapses. Pincaruolo removes the donkey’s hide, sells it in the city, grabs a raven that sits on the carcass, and wanders off with it. When he comes in the evening to a lonely house and knocks, the woman has him wait outside until her husband Bartolo returns home. Eventually Bartolo invites Pincaruolo to a meager dinner and points out a bed to him. But the man, after thinking about wonderful dishes that he had seen the woman stealthily preparing beforehand, pinches the raven until it crows loudly. When Bartolo questions why the raven crows, Pincaruolo responds that the bird was asking for the food the woman had hidden (Ziolkowski 2009:159).

Morgan Llwyd’s 1653 book titled “The Book of the Three Birds,” consists of an allegorical discussion between the Eagle, the Raven, and the Dove, who represent respectively the state, the established church associated with the state, and the Puritan (Koch 2006:1781).

There is a fable of Aesop in which the crow, jealous of the raven's reputation among men as a bird of augury, tried to imitate it by croaking loudly when some travelers passed; this merely provoked the remark, 'Let's go friends, it's a crow, and when he croaks it’s not an omen (Bowie 1993:155).

John Uskglass writes in his story the “Raven King,” about a powerful magician who had close dealings with the realm of faeries. The Raven King is summoned to defeat a fairy that has designs for a certain human (Haase 2008:210).

Jukka Parkkinen has populated his series of fairy-tale novels with ravens and other wild creatures that end up coming face-to-face with life in postmodern Finland (Haase 2008:355).

Ravens and other birds have been portrayed as representations of the spirit. Looked at over the long course of mythic time and religious faith, belief in the divine Spirit's diachronic awareness of human beings is expressed analogously as the raven of consciousness whispering into the ears of Woden (Odin), and the wide-eyed owl of wisdom at the feet of Athena (Murphy 2000:39).
Sometime ravens become the diviners of good and evil. The two ravens of awareness and spirituality continue their job of sifting between the good and the bad and perform the last judgment. They could tell the good lentils from the bad in the ashes; they pecked out the bad and devoured them, and they put the good in the bowl (Murphy 2000:111).

Lack of conscious and unethical behavior can be shown as lacking the influence of the raven. In the original story of Cinderella, the father, whose axe attempted to eliminate the tree and the dove house and cut the roots of his daughter's spiritual ties to him, has no dove/raven (Christian/Germanic twin birds) of consciousness of his daughter, nor memory of his wife; he is inexcusably blind-hearted. His punishment is perhaps the worst of all. The story can no longer see him. It doesn't even punish him. He disappears from the tale without a mention, for he offended against the dove and the raven (Murphy 2000:112).

In the 1825 “Little Edition” of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs there is a drawing of Snow White in her glass casket on a little mountain top, surrounded by the stars, rocks, and trees. One of the seven dwarfs is keeping vigil. Alert and waiting is the owl at one end of the casket, the raven at the other, and the dove perched directly above Snow White. The owl is reddish brown, the raven is black, and the dove is white. They are the colors of Snow White's soul, her person itself, and it is from the soul of the good person that religion's spirit originates, from its red loving warmth, from its white loyal innocence, and from its humbling, black and earthlike, mortality. As they keep their long vigil over her, the owl dreams of her rescue by some provident accident, the raven dreams of her rescue by a tree, and the dove dreams that one day the king's son will come for her (Murphy 2000:131).

Raven reminds us of our mortality, our physical being that will one day die. Snow White's soul, seen through the eyes of her real mother and through the eyes of the owl, the raven, and the dove, is a thousand times more beautiful than the most beautiful person in the land. Her personality, her very soul, is red: loving and warm, white: innocent and faithful, and black: mortal (Murphy 2000:127).

Grimms’ Magic Fairy Tales merge Christian and Pagan beliefs in a very unique way. As the bearers of the glass casket stumble, Athena's owl sees the event as one fated to happen "by accident." Woden's raven fixes its gaze upon the cause of the accident, a small "tree." Christ's dove contemplates the loving arrival of the prince, whose love, with the help of a tree and an accident, caused Eden's poisoned apple to be spit out (Murphy 2000:132). The owl and the raven are related to the dove, all three fly on the air of the same unseeable spirit.

Sometimes raven acts as a guide for the souls of the dead. Brynhild was a Valkyrie ("chooser of the fallen"), one of the divine beings who rode on to the battlefield, choosing who will win and lose, live or die, and then choosing among the fallen those who will be taken to heaven to be their husbands. They often took the shape of the raven, since the raven could often be seen after a battle among the fallen, feeding (Murphy 2000:141).

In Wilhelm Grimms' fairy tale about Cinderella, the fear of the old woman should not cause the total rejection of her position in our lives. The story's conclusion gently assures the reader that in the end Chaucer's wise nun was right, amor vincit omnia; love conquers all, including death, but nonetheless the wheel still turns. The narrative, I think, advises the readers to rejoice in their hope of rescue by love, by being reborn to eternity through the dove of baptism, but it also suggests that it is appropriate to invite the ancient wise women of the owl and of the raven, and to be appreciative of their feelings and poetry (Murphy 2000:152).

In a Fairy Tale titled the “The History of Tom Thumb”, raven at one point helps Tom. Tom’s father made him a whip of a barley straw to drive the cattle with, and having one day
gone into the fields; he slipped a foot and rolled into the furrow. A raven, which was flying over, picked him up, and flew with him to the top of a giant’s castle that was near the seaside, and there left him (Green Volume 3 2008:23).

The scolding mother in the Grimms' original manuscript of "The Three Ravens" becomes a Rabenmutter (in German both an "unnatural mother" and a "mother of ravens"). As she denounces her three sons for their frivolous ways, they turn into black ravens and fly into the distance (Tatar 1987:80). In "Twelve Brothers," it is the sister of the twelve boys who bears the blame for their transformation into ravens, though some versions implicate the children's stepmother in the guilty act (Tatar 1987:141).

“The Tapestry Room” is an 1879 fairy tale. It is set in an old house in Normandy where Jeanne and Hugh find themselves in the tapestry that hangs in Hugh's bedroom. Their guide in their adventures there is Dudu, the autocratic old raven who belongs to the house (Zipes 2000:323).

In Andrew Lang’s 1894 “The Yellow Fairy Book,” he tells the tale of a boy trying to save the kingdom from the Dragon of the North. The boy is riding an iron horse which a sorcerer said he must stay upon in order to defeat the dragon. But he is unable to move the horse and can not get off to push the heavy creature without risking his life and the kingdom. A raven comes and unexpectedly gives him advice: “Ride upon the horse and push the spear against the ground, as if you were pushing off a boat from the land” (Lang 1894).

In a Sicilian fairy tale a boy named Joseph leaves his peasant mother and father to go out into the world. In one of his adventures he is tasked with killing a giant. In order to kill the giant he must first kill the dragon with the seven heads that lives in the mountains behind the castle. If he manages to cut off his seventh head, he must split it in two. A raven will fly out, and he must grab hold of it and kill it. Then he must cut out the egg in its body. If he hits the giant right in the middle of his forehead with this egg, he will die (Zipes 2004:159).

In an E. Brothers Grimm fairy tale called “The Little Farmer,” about a poor farmer and his wife who lived in a village full of rich farmers. Through trickery the little farmer gained a cow that he slaughtered for food. He decided to take the hide to town and sell it. On the way he came to a mill, where a raven with broken wings was sitting. Out of pity he took it and wrapped it in the hide. But because the weather turned very bad and it stormed with wind and rain, he could go no further, stopped at the mill, and asked for shelter. The miller’s wife was home alone and said to the little farmer, “Lie down there on the straw,” and gave him bread and cheese. The little farmer ate and lay down, with the hide next to him, and the wife thought, “He is tired and asleep.” In the meantime the village priest came; the miller’s wife received him well and said, “My husband is out, so we will ply ourselves with food.” Little Farmer perked his ears, and when he heard about plying, he grew angry that he had to make do with bread and cheese. Then the wife brought over and served up items of four sorts: roast, salad, cake, and wine. When they now sat down and wanted to eat, there was a knocking outside. The wife said, “Oh, God, that is my husband!” Quickly she stuck the roast in the tile oven, the wine under the pillow, the salad on the bed, the cake under the bed, and the village priest in the cupboard in the entrance hall. Then she opened the front door for her husband and said, “Praise be to God that you are back here! It is storming as if the world were coming to an end.” The miller saw the little farmer lying on the hay and asked, “What is that fellow doing there?” “Ah,” said the wife, “the poor rascal came in the storm and rain and asked for shelter, and so I gave him bread and cheese and pointed out the hay to him.” The man said, “I have nothing against that, but put together something for me to eat right away.” The wife said, “But I have nothing except bread and
cheese.” “I will be content with anything,” answered the husband, “with bread and cheese, as far as I am concerned”; he looked at the little farmer and called out, “Come on and eat again with me.” Little Farmer did not make him say that twice; he got up and ate with him. Then the miller saw lying on the ground the hide where the raven was, and asked, “What do you have there?” The little farmer answered, “I have a fortune teller in there.” “Can he tell my fortune too?” said the miller. “Why not?” answered the little farmer. “But he tells only four things and the fifth he keeps to himself.” The miller was curious and said, “Have him tell my fortune, will you?” Then Little Farmer pushed the raven on the head, so that it cawed and made a “krrr krrr” sound. The miller said, “What did he say?” Little Farmer answered, “First, he said that there is wine under the pillow.” “By dickens!” shouted the miller, who went over and found the wine. “Go on now,” said the miller. The little farmer caused the raven to caw again and said, “Second, he said that there was a roast in the tile oven.” “By dickens!” shouted the miller, who went over and found the roast. Little Farmer had the raven tell his fortune once again and said, “Third, he said that there is salad on the bed.” “That would be a sight to behold!” shouted the miller, who went over and found the salad. Finally the little farmer pushed the raven once again (so that it growled), and said, “Fourth, he said that there was a cake under the bed.” “That would be a sight to behold!” shouted the miller, who went over and found the cake. Now the two of them took a seat together at the table, but the miller’s wife grew anxious for her life, laid down in bed, and took all the keys with her. The miller would have gladly known the fifth prediction, but Little Farmer said, “First we want to eat the four other things in peace, since the fifth is something bad.” So they ate, and afterward they negotiated over how much the miller would give for the fifth prediction, until they reached an agreement on three hundred talers. Then the little farmer pressed the raven once again on the head, so that he cawed loudly. The miller asked, “What did he say?” The little farmer answered, “He said that out there in the cupboard in the corridor is the Devil.” The miller said, “The Devil must get out of there,” and opened wide the front door, but his wife had to turn over the key, and Little Farmer unlocked the cupboard. Then the village priest ran out as best he could, and the miller said, “I have seen the black fellow with my own eyes: the prediction was correct” (Ziolkowski 2009:304). In the Grimms’ fairy tale about the German emperor Friedrich Barbarossa at Mount Kyffhausen, a shepherd was also led into the mountain by a dwarf. The emperor asked him, “Are the ravens still flying around the mountain?” The shepherd assured him that they were, to which he replied, “Now I am going to have to sleep for another hundred years” (Mercatante 2009:153).

In Christian art the raven symbolizes God’s providence, an allusion to the ravens that fed Elijah (Mercatante 2009:827). Paul the Hermit was born around 230 near Thebes in Egypt. He grew up in a wealthy Christian family, although his parents died when he was fifteen. Paul fled into the Theban desert to escape the persecution of Christians under the Roman emperor Decius (249–51). His brother also conspired against him in order to gain possession of his property. Paul lived as a desert
hermit for the remainder of his 113-year life, living a life of prayer and penitence, and wearing only leaves or nothing at all. It is said that he survived by consuming only fruit and water, although legend also describes how a raven provided bread for his nourishment (Mackley 2008:215).

St. Vincent was born in Saragossa, Spain. During the persecution by the emperor Diocletian he was about 20 and a deacon in the church. The proconsul Dacian rounded up all of the Christians of Saragossa, promised them immunity, and then ordered them massacred. Vincent was brought before the tribunal along with Bishop Valerius. When they were accused, Valerius answered, but his reply was not heard because he had a speech impediment. “Can you not speak loudly and defy this pagan dog?” Vincent asked the bishop. “Speak that the world may hear, or allow me, thy servant, to speak in your stead.” Vincent then spoke of the joys of being a Christian. Dacian was unmoved and ordered Vincent tortured. He was torn with iron forks and thrown into a dungeon. Nearly dead, he was miraculously sustained by angels. Dacian then tried to destroy Vincent by other means. He gave the saint every comfort, including a bed of roses. Finally, the saint died. Dacian, however, was still not satisfied. He had the dead body thrown into a garbage ditch. There it was left unburied, to be eaten by wild beasts and birds of prey. However, God sent a raven to watch over the body and to ward off wolves. On being told of this, Dacian had the body wrapped in ox hide, heavily weighted with stones, and cast into the sea. The body was carried out to sea but later appeared on the beach and was buried in the sand. Not long afterward the saint appeared to a widow and told her where he was buried. The widow went to the spot, found the body, and carried it to Valencia. When the Christians in Valencia were fleeing the Moors in the eighth century, they took the body of the saint with them. Their ship was driven onto a promontory on the coast of Portugal. There they buried the body of the saint, naming the place Cape Saint Vincent, and two ravens guarded the remains. Part of the cape is called El Monte de las Cuervas in memory of the event. In 1147 King Alonzo I removed the saint’s remains to Lisbon. This time two crows accompanied the vessel, one at the prow and one at the stern. The crows multiplied at such a rate in Lisbon that taxes were collected to support them. In medieval Christian art St. Vincent is portrayed as a deacon with a raven nearby. An old missal printed in 1504 contains this proverb for the feast day of the saint (Mercatante 2009:1005):

If on St. Vincent’s Day the sky is clear,
More wind than water will crown the year.

**Mysticism, Metaphor, and Magic**
In Old Babylonian incantations, the raven is used; the role of the raven in these incantations remains unclear. The incantations are broken, missing texts, but what remains reads like this:

May Nanna, the first-born son
    decide the fate
for the raven, the fledgling of Su"en
    in the beautiful canebrake […].

And in Old Babylonian incantation to catch a raven:

May Asarluhi, resident of Eridug […]
The raven, fledging of […]
    all those who were seen
may their wings drop, may their feathers […]. (Veldhuis 2004:301)

These same texts list a fledgling raven as being valued at 16 grains of silver. The Sumerian “Drehem Text” records the delivery of 180 ravens during the Sumerian years Sulgi 30-33 (Veldhuis 2004:301).

Sybil Leek was quite fond of birds and snakes. Her animal familiars were a jackdaw (a relative of the raven) named Mr. Hotfoot Jackson, and a pair of pet boa constrictors. Mr. Hotfoot Jackson was said to have accompanied Leek to all of her coven meetings and excursions to investigate haunted houses. She described him as “an exceptional bird” whose “awareness of any psychic phenomenon was amazing” (Dunwich 2001:182).
The raven sees the gaping mouths of the chicks, but first wishes their bodies to be covered in black plumage, and so the careful teacher does not provide the inner mysteries to the minds of those whom he considers to have in no way yet removed themselves from this world. And in so far as they do not purge themselves of worldly glory, so they hunger for spiritual refreshment (Clark 1992:177).

Raven chicks are sometimes compared to pupils seeking to be fed knowledge by their teachers. Like the mother raven takes more care to feed the dominant chick, the teacher takes care to feed those pupils that he/she recognizes by certain signs will provide for others after themselves (Clark 1992:179).

Across Siberia, many tribes say that such mother spirits appear in animal or therianthropic form to abduct the souls of future shamans when they are born and bring them to a huge tree in the spirit world that stands at the foot of a mountain called Jokuo. The shamans themselves usually say that a raven appears as teacher, which sits on the branches of this tree and educates the souls (Hancock 2007:151).

At a great distance, a hungry hunter scents out bread, and the raven scents carrion their brains being long clarified by the high and subtle air, will observe a very small change in a trice (Stewart 1990:30).

Augures (watchers of birds) belonged to an ancient Roman cult. They were a group of priests established, according to tradition, by Romulus. Their function, important in Roman life, was not to predict the future but, by observing natural signs, to determine if the gods approved of a specific action. They wore a state dress with a purple border and carried a staff without knots and curled at the top. Roman augury was based chiefly on written works such as the Libri Augurales, a book on the techniques of augury, and the Commentarii Augurales, a collection of answers given to inquiries of the Roman senate. Magistrates would commission augurs to provide answers to specific questions by observing omens of birds. They would consecrate the observation place with the following rite: Immediately after midnight or at dawn, the augur, in the presence of the magistrate, selected an elevated spot with a view as wide as possible. Taking his station, he drew with his staff two straight lines crossing one another—one north to south, the other east to west. He then enclosed this cross in a rectangle, forming four smaller rectangles. The augur then spoke the ritual words consecrating the marked space. This space within the rectangle as well as the space upward to the sky was called the templum. At the point of the intersection in the center of the rectangle was erected the tabernaculum, which was a square tent with its entrance looking south. Here the augur, facing south, sat down, asked the gods for a sign according to a prescribed formula, and waited for an answer. Complete quiet, a clear sky, and an absence of wind were necessary conditions for the rite. The least noise was sufficient to disturb it, unless noise was an omen of terror, called diroe. The Romans regarded signs on the left side as propitious omens, signs on the right side as unlucky. The east was the region of light, and the west was that of darkness. The reverse was the case in ancient Greece, where the observer looked northward. The augur watched the birds for omens. Eagles and vultures gave signs by their manner of flying; ravens, owls, and crows by their cry as well as their flight. Some bird species were held sacred to particular gods and the appearance of those birds were omens of good or evil. The augur’s report was expressed in the words “the birds allow it” or “on another day,” meaning postponement (Mercatante 2009:130).

Different types of divination were frequently combined, as is clear from a remark by Suetonius about Augustus: “Again, as he was taking the auspices in his first consulship, twelve vultures appeared to him, as to Romulus, and when he slew the victims, the liver within all of
them was found to be doubled inward at the lower end, which all those who were skilled in such matters unanimously declared to be an omen of a great and happy future”. Such combinations of omens based on living animals with omens based on dead animals suggest that the living animals had a similar status to those that had been sacrificed. Both categories were normally regarded as ignorant of the message they were transmitting. However, according to Pliny, one exception is ravens, which “are the only birds who in the auspices understand the message that they convey” (Gilhus 2006:27).

Joshua Tree National Park is an easy drive from Los Angeles and is an excellent place to experience the primal forces of nature. It attracts a wide range of people seeking to experience the paranormal, supernatural, and beautiful scenery. Lately, a white raven, by all accounts a good omen, has been seen in the area (Lankford 2006:45).

All birds—particularly birds of prey—are capable of providing portents, and eventually the very word for bird (ornis) came to mean “portent.” Four species above all are esteemed for their prophetic significance: the eagle and vulture of Zeus, Apollo’s raven, and Hera’s crow (Zell-Ravenheart 2004:228). Edgar Allen Poe’s celebrated poem, “The Raven,” equates the raven with destiny and omen (Holzer 2003:49).

Several of the “Seventy-Two Spirits of the Brass Vessel” found in Solomon’s Magick contain either the head or body of a raven: Amon, Stolas, and Andras (Runyon 146).

In order to break a love spell or release married couple, take bile from a raven and essence in equal parts and let the man smear his entire body and write the Pentecost hymn so that he can keep it on him. It breaks the binding spell and cools the flame and so forth. And then let him lie with his woman and the spell is dissolved (Petropoulos 2008:77).

The raven is a symbol thought to protect against black magic (Stevens 2003:116).

In the “Soror Mystica” of alchemy pictured in the Hermetic Museum, the raven represents the planet Saturn and the element lead (Goddard 1999:241). The so-called “Raven’s Head” of alchemist is also called “material cruda” (Helmond 1996:28).

The raven can be a healer, as told in this lady’s story who was diagnosed with cancer: “Ten years ago, I had a malignant melanoma. It was there too long, before surgical removal; time enough to get dangerously under my skin. I imaged my body as a winter tree, bare branches covered with crows. And as the Morrigan, with her Raven, the Death Bird, perched on my left shoulder. This was the cancer’s site. Melanoma’s darkness, swiftness, lethality, even a terrible death, is Hers, as they are mine: I couldn’t hate the "black cancer," or fight it with swords of light. I asked the multitude of crows to fly up and away, leave my branches clear of death for awhile. I asked the Raven to take off, circle the universe, and see the world: give me a chance to get some work done before She returned, if She must, to perch on my bones again. Death, too, is Our Mother. I sweat black birds, out stared many moons of depression, grief and sheer terror. But I'm still here (Caputi 1993:272).

Of course, it is almost impossible, within a scientific framework, to accept the strict worldview of healers who battle illness by invoking the power of Christ, Thoth or Asclepios; by searching for lost souls in the underworld; by fighting evil sorcerers with magical weapons; by enlisting the aid of spirit doctors; or by application of animal magnetism and radionics. Yet, within the past fifteen years, many researchers have recognized a common thread in almost all shamanistic/spiritual healing -- the use of mental imagery. Contemporary researchers might well lose their jobs for seriously considering that a shaman became a raven, for example, and flew into the nether realms to fight for the soul of the healee. But to accept that the shaman mediated a
healing process through the use of vivid mental imagery is a viable research hypothesis which is bearing fruit (Mishlove 1997:104).

The rune ‘Ansz’ symbolizes the planet Mercury in the negative phase, the Tarot card death, the color dark blue, and the polarity male. It also relates to the ash tree, the fly agaric toadstool, the wolf and the raven (Arcarti 1999).

In North America the Kwakiutl treat the afterbirth differently according to the sex of the child. That of a boy is put out to be eaten by the ravens in the belief that this will endow the child with the power to read the future; that of a girl is buried on the shore to ensure that she will become expert at digging up clams, a useful accomplishment in the coastal area of British Columbia (Coleman 2007:28).

A raven-spirit might question a werewolf who demands to learn a Gift about why she has not shown the basic curiosity needed to identify the ability that he wants, or more likely will deny all knowledge of such a Gift’s existence. That’s not to say that ignorance of a specific Gift will always slow a werewolf down. All too often, she must bribe or threaten spirits not to turn on her, and a werewolf who makes her needs known directly will have her own way in the end. On the other hand, a spirit subjected to unnecessary cruelty will not soon change its opinion of the Uratha, and a werewolf who relies on her claws to get by in the Shadow Realm has even more reason to watch her back (Comer, Dembski-Bowden, Peacock, and Wilson 99).

Whether cleaving their enemies’ skulls or smashing their bones clean through, speaking with the spirit of a skull or chilling the very marrow of whoever sees them, there is no doubt that the Uratha are tied to bone as a sign of fear and death. Some werewolves capitalize on this, learning Gifts that play upon their mythic links to the bones of their enemies. Spirits associated with death, including owl-spirits and raven-spirits, teach Gifts of Bone. These Gifts exploit the bone as a link to the dead as well as the integral part of a living person, giving a werewolf power over the full range of influence (Comer, Dembski-Bowden, Peacock, and Wilson 117).

In 15th century Europe a prescribed cure for “aching of a hollow tooth” was to take raven’s dung and put it in the hollow teeth and color it with the juice of pellitory of Spain so the sick person does not recognize it. Then put it in the tooth and the tooth will break and take away the pain, and some say the tooth will fall out (Watts 2007:290).

In alchemy the raven represents the color black (Warlick 2001:87).

An early 19th-century work called “The Magus,” written by Francis Barret, said that candles made of “some saturnine things, such as a man’s fat and marrow, the fat of a black cat, with the brains of a crow or raven, which being extinguished in the mouth of a man lately dead, will afterwards, as often as it shines alone, bring great horror and fear upon the spectators about it” (Dunwich 2001:95).

To make an anti-hex mojo bag, on a Saturday evening when the waning moon is visible in the sky above, light a new purple candle that has been anointed with three drops of Saturn Oil or any other occult oil designed to break and protect against hexes and curses. By the light of this candle fill a purple mojo bag with a pinch of dirt from a fresh grave; a piece of mandrake root; a bit of fur clipped from the tail of an all-black cat; a black feather from a raven, crow, or blackbird; and a Pentagram of Solomon talisman (see illustration that follows). As each of the five magickal items is added to the bag, concentrate upon the goal of your spell and repeat the following rhyming incantation of enchantment:

By the power of tetragrammaton,
By the power of this magick verse,
By the power of the pentacle,
Let toucheth me
no hex or curse.
Harming none by spell or chant,
The seeds
of magick now I plant.
As it is willed, so mote it be!

Seal the mojo bag and then anoint it with three drops of Saturn Oil. For maximum effectiveness, wear the bag on a string or chain around your neck, or carry it in your pocket or purse to keep yourself protected from the hexes of enemies (Dunwich 2001:201).

While doing “tea leaf readings,” if the image of raven appears it foretells bad news, divorce, failure in business, legacy (Ball 2007:166). As a totem animal raven indicates inner journeys, dreams, mystery, the trickster, messenger and watcher for the gods (Ball 2007:179)

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