



Mythic care and the sacred act of listening in a post secular narrative

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Abstract

This research paper addresses how *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories* offers a gentle yet deep vision of healing through mythic care and listening. The featured story is on an elderly man and a little crow who share a quiet companionship that becomes a space where vulnerability, gentleness, and spiritual meaning can unfold. By close reading and an integrative theoretical approach, this paper will explore how phenomenology, care ethics, narrative therapy, post-secular theory, mythopoesis, and Persian mystical literature can shed light on the emotional and symbolic nuances of the story. This paper will demonstrate how the story offers a vision of care as a reciprocal and transformative practice that is rooted in humility and presence. It will also demonstrate how the story offers a vision of listening as a sacred act that makes possible the unfolding of spiritual meaning that does not require institutional religion. This paper will argue that integrating these theoretical perspectives the story offers a contemporary vision of compassion of both ancient and intimate. It will argue that in a secular age, the sacred can be found in small acts, shared stories, and the willingness to listen with sincerity.

Keywords: Mythic care, post secular listening, phenomenology, ethics of care, mythopoesis, Persian mysticism

Introduction

The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories is a quiet and deeply humane narrative that brings together myth, tenderness and act of listening. At its center is the relationship between an aging man who lives in near silence and a small crow who enters his life with a gentle voice and a lineage that extends beyond the visible world. Their relationship grows slowly and with great care. The old man provides shelter and warmth to the delicate bird he discovers under the leaves, and the bird provides stories that are rich in emotional and cosmic meaning. It is through this process that the narrative creates a world in which healing is possible through presence and vulnerability. *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories* is a narrative work composed in sustained iambic pentameter, blending poetic form with storytelling to create a unified, rhythmic tale.

This research paper will contend that the narrative offers two related ideas. The first is the idea of mythic care, an ethical kind of attention that arises from humility, reciprocity, and suffering. The second is the idea of post-secular listening, a kind of hearing that enables spiritual significance to appear without the aid of religious institutions. Didacticism is avoided in the narrative and brings the reader to witness how two lonely souls slowly learn to care for one another through shared stories, quiet moments and the gentle companionship that grows between them.

To address these ideas, the paper draws on several theoretical traditions. Phenomenology offers insight into how meaning arises through lived experience and careful attention to the world Husserl, Merleau Ponty. The ethics of care provides a framework for understanding the moral significance of responsiveness and relational presence Noddings. Narrative therapy explains how stories reshape identity and allow individuals to reinterpret their own suffering White and Epston. Post secular theory describes the persistence of spiritual longing in a world where institutional religion no longer holds the same authority Habermas, Taylor. Mythopoesis reveals how invented

symbolic structures can express deep truths about human life Frye, Tolkien. Persian mystical literature offers a comparative tradition in which birds often serve as guides, companions, and bearers of spiritual insight Attar, Rumi, Saadi, Hafez, Ferdowsi.

By bringing these frameworks together, the paper demonstrates how *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories* forms a narrative space in which myth and care intersect to heal a wounded life through restoring dignity. The presented narrative does not revolve around any spectacular events or revelations. But illustrates how healing can be achieved through small actions and the desire to listen. In this way the narrative provides a paradigm of compassion both ancient and modern simultaneously. It addresses the desire for meaning that continues to exist in a secular world.

Methodology

This paper uses both qualitative as well as interpretive methodology which is common in literary and philosophical studies. First method is close reading which allows the analysis to focus on the emotional, symbolic and ethical textures of *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories*. Close reading makes it possible to trace how small gestures, quiet moments, and mythic images shape the narrative's deeper meanings.

The paper then uses a comparative approach. The narrative is placed in conversation with several theoretical traditions such as phenomenology, narrative therapy, post secular theory, ethics of care, mythopoesis and Persian mystical literature. These frameworks were selected because they illuminate central concerns of the narrative, such as attention, spiritual resonance, and compassion and especially due to the symbolic role of bird as a guide.

Method being used brings elements together with an equal footing than arranging them in a top-down order of importance. Each theoretical approach is used to add depth to the narrative without being the only voice. This is because literary studies are an interdisciplinary field in which meaning is often found at the intersection of several

approaches. The aim is not to impose a structure on the narrative but to uncover the depths of meaning that are found when myth, care, and listening are considered together.

Limitations

The nature of this research is interpretive. The findings are derived from thematic and philosophical inquiry than empirical observation. The discussion will concentrate on specific elements of *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories* story and its myth, care, and listening. Elements of the story, such as its stylistic elements or cultural significance are not examined in depth.

The comparative framework focuses on western phenomenology, contemporary ethical theory and Persian mystical literature. Although they offer meaningful insights, but do not represent the full range of possible interpretive approaches. Separate broader study on addressing additional cultural or historical perspectives.

Finally, the narrative here is a contemporary work and its long-term critical reception has not yet fully developed. The interpretations offered here reflect the present moment and may evolve as the work enters wider scholarly and literary conversations.

Mythopoesis and the Renewal of Wonder

Myth served as a way for literature to restore depth to the world. It makes readers see ordinary life through a lens that reveals hidden meaning. *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories* participates in this tradition by creating a mythic cosmology that feels both intimate and expansive. The narrative does not depend on inherited mythological systems. Forming its own symbolic universe, one that expands naturally from emotional landscape of the story. This approach reflects Frye's understanding of the mythic imagination. I.e. mode of storytelling that shapes human experience through symbolic patterns and archetypal figures Frye

The preface sets the tone for this mythic vision. It describes stories as drifting through the world, waiting for someone who is ready to notice them. Idea is such that meaning is already present in the world, but it requires a receptive heart to bring it into view. Tolkien writes that myth allows us to recover a sense of wonder that has been dulled by habit and familiarity Tolkien. *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories* follows this idea closely. It takes a simple scene where an old man finding a small bird beneath the leaves and reveals it as the beginning of a cosmic encounter.

The mythic elements of the narrative emerge gradually. The crow speaks of Shanni, the Judge of Night, whose justice is described as silent and steady. He also speaks of the Kaaka Lord, a guardian whose wings are shaped by discipline and night. These figures are not presented as distant gods. They are woven into the crow's own lineage, which makes the mythic realm feel close to the human world. The old man does not travel to another dimension. Instead, the mythic dimension comes to him through the presence of the crow.

This blending of the ordinary and the mythic reminds the structure of many classical epics, including Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, where cosmic forces shape the lives of human characters without removing them from their familiar surroundings Ferdowsi. In *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories*, the mythic realm does not overshadow the human world. It illuminates it. When the crow tells the old man that

Shanni smiles upon gentle hearts, the statement does not feel like a supernatural proclamation. It feels like a recognition of the old man's quiet dignity.

Unique wonder in the narrative also comes from the way the little crow gathers stories. Stories brought to light by humility and patience. Such as forgotten moments of wanderers, the small griefs of strangers, and the quiet hopes that people often leave behind. This act of gathering echoes the work of myth itself. Myth is known to collect the fragments of human experience and re-arrange to reveal deeper truths. The little crow becomes a mythic figure in the story not because he performs miracles, but because he pays attention to what others did not by using memory here.

This approach shows a similarity with Attar's vision in *The Conference of the Birds*, where the birds discover that the divine is not found in distant realms but in the truths, they uncover through their own journey Attar. In *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories*, the mythic realm is not a place to escape to. It is a way of seeing. It is a way of recognizing that even the smallest life carries meaning.

Through these elements, *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories* renews the reader's sense of wonder. Myth here is not a relic or artifact of the past. Myth can be treated as a living language which reveals the depth as well as beauty of world. The narrative invites readers to look again at the ordinary, to notice the quiet moments that hold emotional weight, and to understand that myth can emerge from the simplest acts of care.

Phenomenology and the Ethics of Attention

Phenomenology is the study of meaning in relation to experience and the sort of constant, careful presence that we bring to the world. It is the examination of the moments at which perception becomes relationship and the act of noticing becomes a form of care. This is the emotional movement of *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories*. Though there is no dramatic action in the story. It is the small actions that show the richness of human experience.

The old man's transformation begins with a simple act of attention. When he discovers a weakening bird beneath the leaves. He kneels and helps the fragile body. He holds it with tenderness that surprises even himself. This moment is quiet and embodied. It reflects what Merleau Ponty describes as the intertwining of self and world, where perception is active and in a form of engagement with the other Merleau Ponty. The old man does not simply see the bird. He enters a relationship with it through the act of noticing.

The crow responds with the same kind of attention. He listens to the old man's fears, memories, and long buried grief. He does not interrupt or correct. He simply listens. This mutual attention forms the basis of what Noddings calls the ethics of care, a moral framework that grows out of responsiveness and presence rather than rules or abstract principles Noddings. In this sense, the narrative shows care not as a duty but as a lived practice that emerges naturally when two beings allow themselves to be present with one another.

Phenomenology also helps explain the emotional clarity in the old man's reflections in our story. When he recalls a lost love, he admits that he buried the memory to protect himself. The crow's presence allows the memory to surface gently. The old man describes it as rising softly, almost like a sigh. This description reflects Husserl's idea that meaning

is revealed through intentional consciousness, where memories and emotions come into view when the mind is ready to receive them Husserl. The crow does not force the old man to confront his past. Instead, his quiet companionship creates the conditions for the old man to see himself more clearly.

The narrative also shows how attention turns into healing. The old man's loneliness is not erased by grand revelations. It is softened by the crow's steady presence. When the crow tells him to slow his breathing and simply listen, the instruction is not mystical. It is phenomenological. It brings the old man to return to his own body, to his own breath, and to the present moment. This is the kind of foundation that phenomenology values. Meaning is found not in distant abstractions but in the lived experience of the here and now. Through these moments, *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories* presents attention as an ethical and emotional practice. It shows that healing can begin when someone is willing to notice another being with sincerity. It also shows that listening is an active act. It is a mode that both the listener and the speaker rediscover themselves. In this mode, phenomenology and the ethics of care work together to illuminate the quiet transformation at the heart of the narrative.

Post Secular Listening

Post secular theory helps explain how spiritual meaning continues to shape human experience even when traditional religious structures lose authority. Habermas describes the post secular condition as a cultural moment in which societies no longer assume that religion will fade away. Instead, spiritual questions persist in new and unexpected forms Habermas. Taylor similarly argues that modern individuals seek experiences of fullness that cannot be reduced to material explanations Taylor. These ideas provide a useful framework for understanding the quiet spirituality that emerges within *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories*.

The narrative does not rely on religious doctrine. It does not represent a system with beliefs or a set of commandments. Instead, it creates a spiritual atmosphere through the simple acts of listening, remembering, and caring. Shanni, the Judge of Night, is not a figure of institutional religion. He is a presence of truth and balance. His justice is described as calm and silent, which gives him a moral authority that does not depend on ritual or dogma. The crow does not preach. He does not claim to speak for a divine institution. He speaks from experience, memory, and a lineage that carries meaning without requiring formal belief.

This approach reflects the essence of post secular spirituality. Meaning arises not from doctrine but from relationship. The old man does not undergo a conversion. He does not adopt a new creed. Instead, he learns to listen. When the crow tells him to slow his breathing and simply be present, the instruction is gentle and grounded. It brings the old man to return to himself and to the world around him. This moment echoes Rumi's teaching that truth is often heard in silence and Saadi's belief that compassion is the highest form of worship Rumi; Saadi.

Listening becomes the most important spiritual act in the story. It is through listening that the old man can comprehend his own sorrow. It is the listening that makes him hear the tales that the crow brings. Through that listening he can feel a connection that had been absent from

his life for a long time. This listening is not passive. It is active, receptive and open.

The crow's stories also reflect a post secular sensibility. They speak of cosmic justice, wandering souls and the quiet dignity of ordinary lives. Stories do not demand beliefs. They invite reflection. They offer a way of understanding the world that is spiritual without being tied to a specific religious tradition. In this sense, the narrative aligns with Taylor's idea that modern spirituality often takes the form of personal resonance rather than institutional commitment Taylor.

Through these elements, *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories* presents a model of spirituality that is relational, experiential and deeply human. It shows that spiritual meaning can arise from the simple act of listening to another being with sincerity. It also suggests that healing can occur when individuals allow themselves to be present with their own memories and emotions. The narrative embodies the heart of post secular listening here. Meaning is sacred can be found in a secular age, not through doctrine, but through attention, compassion, and shared stories.

Persian Mysticism and the Bird as Guide

Persian mystical literature holds a rich enduring tradition where birds serve as guides, companions and bearers of spiritual insight. This tradition provides a meaningful comparative lens for this work thus allowing us to understand the symbolic and emotional work performed by the crow in *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories*. Important fact is that the narrative here does not imitate Persian sources. But it resonates with them in its use of the bird as a figure who carries wisdom, listens with patience, and leads a wounded human being toward a deeper understanding of himself. Thus, providing a mode of literary similarity for philosophical, scholastic tradition where wisdom is conveyed.

Important significant parallels appear in Attar's *Conference of the Birds*. In Attar's work, the birds undertake a spiritual journey guided by the hoopoe, who encourages them to confront their fears and illusions Attar. The hoopoe does not command the birds. He guides them through stories, metaphors, and gentle instruction. The crow in *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories* performs a similar role. Little crow does not impose authority on the old man. What little crow offered is companionship and stories that help the old man see his own life with greater clarity. Both narratives use the bird as a symbol of insight that emerges through humility rather than power.

Rumi's writings also illuminate the emotional tone of the crow's presence. Rumi often describes love as a force that heals through tenderness and presence rather than argument or doctrine Rumi. The crow's interactions with the old man reflect this spirit allowing listening without judgment. With kindness little crow encourages the old man to breathe, rest and allow his memories to surface gently. The approach here closely aligns with Rumi's belief that spiritual transformation begins with openness and compassion.

Saadi's *Gulistan* offers another point of connection. Saadi teaches that compassion is the highest form of moral life and that kindness toward the vulnerable reveals the true character of a person Saadi. In *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories*, the old man's decision to shelter the injured crow becomes the first step in his own healing. The act of care opens a path for the little crow to share stories

that restore dignity. It is this reciprocity that reflects Saadi's view that compassion creates a bond which enriches both giver and receiver.

Hafez adds yet another dimension. His poetry often explores the idea of self-erasure, where the ego softens and the heart becomes receptive to truth Hafez. The narrative's motif of nameless authorship echoes this idea. The crow does not seek recognition. He carries stories for those who need them. His humility mirrors the mystical tradition in which the guide does not claim ownership of wisdom. Rather, it serves as a vessel through which insight flows.

Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* contributes a final layer of resonance. Ferdowsi presents a universe governed by moral balance, where justice is not loud or violent but steady and inevitable Ferdowsi. Shanni, the Judge of Night in *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories*, reflects this same moral atmosphere. His justice is described as calm and silent. It does not rely on fear. It relies on truth. This connection places the narrative within a lineage of stories that understand justice as a cosmic force that restores harmony rather than punishes.

Through these parallels, *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories* enters a global tradition of mystical storytelling. It does not replicate Persian literature, but it shares its spirit. It uses the bird as a guide who leads through gentleness. It treats compassion as a sacred act. It presents justice as a quiet force. Story shows that spiritual insight here emerges from simple encounters and shared stories. Though this story is different narrative aligns here with Persian mysticism, where the journey toward truth begins with humility, companionship, and the willingness to listen.

Mythic Care as an Ethical Model

A distinctive ethical vision that can be understood as mythic care between the old man and the little crow. This form of care is formed in humility, reciprocity, and a shared recognition of vulnerability. It is not presented as a moral duty or a philosophical principle. It arises naturally through the lived experiences of two beings who find comfort and meaning in one another's presence. In this way, mythic care becomes a way of understanding how compassion can take on a spiritual dimension without relying on formal doctrine.

The old man's first act of care is simple. He lifts the injured crow from the ground and shelters him. This gesture is not heroic. It is quiet and instinctive. But it becomes the foundation for a relationship that transforms both characters. Noddings describes care as a mutual relational practice that the one who cares and the one who receives care are both changed by the encounter Noddings. Noddings idea is reflected within the narrative in this story. The old man's kindness allows the crow to heal physically, and the crow's companionship allows the old man to heal emotionally.

The crow's care for the old man takes a different form. He listens. He speaks gently. He shares stories that help the old man reinterpret his memories and fears. His care is not expressed through physical action but through presence and attention. This aligns with Rumi's belief that healing often begins with love expressed through quiet companionship rather than instruction or argument Rumi. The crow does not claim authority. He does not position himself as a teacher. He becomes a companion who walks with the old man through his inner landscape.

Mythic care also carries a cosmological dimension. The crow's lineage connects him to Shanni, the Judge of Night,

whose justice is described as calm and balanced. This connection does not elevate the crow above the old man. Instead, it places their relationship within a larger moral universe. Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* presents a similar vision, where justice is a cosmic force that restores harmony rather than punishes wrongdoing Ferdowsi. In *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories*, the presence of Shanni suggests that acts of care participate in this larger harmony. When the crow tells the old man that Shanni smiles upon gentle hearts, the statement affirms that compassion has cosmic significance.

The reciprocity between the old man and the crow is central to the idea of mythic care. The old man rescues the crow from physical harm. The crow rescues the old man from emotional isolation. Their care for one another is not hierarchical. It is mutual. Mutuality reflects the structure of many mystical traditions. This is the case including the teachings of Saadi, who writes that kindness binds people together in a shared moral fabric Saadi. In the story of this narrative, it is this bond that becomes a source of strength for both characters.

Mythic care also reveals how stories can serve as ethical tools. The crow's stories are not merely tales. They are acts of care. Stories help the old man see his life with new clarity and new perspective. They do offer comfort, guidance, and a sense of belonging. White and Epston describe storytelling as a way of re authoring the self, where individuals reshape their identities through the narratives they embrace White and Epston. The crow's stories allow the old man to reframe his loneliness and grief within a larger mythic context. This reframing becomes a form of healing.

Through these elements, *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories* presents mythic care as an ethical model that blends compassion, presence, and spiritual resonance. That means that care can be both practical and metaphysical. It can heal the body and the heart. It can restore dignity to a wounded life. Most importantly, it shows that care becomes transformative when it is shared. Mythic care is not only an ethical practice. It is a way of understanding the world. A way that honors the quiet power of tenderness and the sacredness of listening.

Conclusion

The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories brings myth, care, and listening in a way that feels both gentle and profound. Featured narrative does not rely on any sort of dramatic twisting as novellas usually do. Instead, it builds its emotional and philosophical depth through small gestures, shared stories, and the quiet companionship between an old man and a crow. This simplicity is not a limitation. But a deliberate artistic choice that allows the narrative to explore the deeper layers of human experience.

From the analysis in this paper, it has been made clear that the work engages with a number of significant theoretical traditions. In its use of mythopoesis, it returns a sense of wonder to the everyday world and constructs a sense of a symbolic universe that is both intimate and expansive. In its use of phenomenology and the ethics of care, it uncovers the ways in which meaning is made through attention, presence, and the desire to notice another with sincerity. In its use of narrative therapy, it illustrates the ways in which stories can be used to reconstruct identity and give people back the ability to make sense of their own suffering. In its use of post-secular theory, it illustrates the ways in which spiritual

meaning can be made without the need for institutional religion. In its use of Persian mystical literature, it connects itself to a global tradition in which birds are used as guides who lead through humility and compassion.

Frameworks show that the essence of the story is to be found in the concept of mythic care. This type of care is a combination of tenderness, reciprocity, and spiritual depth. It demonstrates that the process of healing can take place when two individuals share their weaknesses and allow themselves to be changed by the presence of the other. It also demonstrates that the process of listening is not a passive process. It is a process of ethical and emotional engagement that can heal a wounded life by restoring dignity to it.

The story *The Little Crow Who Gathered Stories* offers more than a touching one. Thus, offers a mode of understanding the world. Story reveals that compassion has cosmic significance and that stories carry the power to heal. Story tells us that sacred can be found in any age at the quiet moments during one being listens to another. The narrative thus invites readers to slow down to notice small details of their own lives. Further recognize that meaning often appears in the places where tenderness and attention meet.

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