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URSULA GÄRTNER

Phaedrus. Ein Interpretationskommentar zum ersten Buch der Fabeln

München, Beck. 2015. 303 S. Gr.-8°
(*Zetemata*, 149.)

This insightful commentary on the first book of Phaedrus' fables partially addresses a long-standing *desideratum* of Latin literary studies. Only partially, that is, because Gärtner's book is concerned only with the first book of the collection and because it is not organized as a conventional, lemma commentary. Rather, it is a kind of hybrid of a traditional, line-by-line commentary and a more expansive, monographic mode of literary analysis, a format which the title describes as an "Interpretationskommentar," i.e., "ein Hybrid zweier wissenschaftlicher Textgattungen" (10). Thus, each of the thirty-one fables in Book 1 receives its own focused essay, with commentary unfolding in paragraph form, as Gärtner proceeds linearly through each verse, usually commenting on every single line, exploring prominent themes, literary *topoi*, intra- and inter-texts. In practical terms, this essay-style arrangement means that it is often easier (and more pleasurable) to read through the entire discussion of a particular fable than it is to find commentary on specific lemmata divorced from context.

This is not, then, the systematic, authoritative commentary on Phaedrus for which Latinists will continue to wait.¹ But it is undeniably a vital and indispensable step in the right direction. The unconventional format allows Gärtner to address a number of historically-underappreciated literary dimensions of Phaedrian fable. Within fable studies, Phaedrus has too often been viewed merely as a quarry for text-critical projects and the work of sifting through and cataloguing story types and motifs. To the extent that non-specialists have asked literary or cultural questions of the fables, there has been a surplus of

¹ In addition to Eberhard Oberg, *Phaedrus-Kommentar*, Stuttgart 2000, our only serviceable, modern commentary on Phaedrus, useful notes on individual fables can also be found in E. Angulo Baeza, *Fedro. Fábulas esópicas, introducción, edición crítica, traducción y notas*, Madrid 2011; A. Guaglianone, *I favolisti latini*, Napoli 2000; and G. Solimano, *Fedro. Favole, introduzione, traduzione e note*, Milano 1996.

interest in Phaedrus' life (about which we have no external evidence) and his apparent status as a "freedman of Augustus" (a quasi-fact established only in the later manuscript tradition), which has led to some facile assumptions regarding the work's socio-political outlook (e.g., as Gärtner puts it, that Phaedrus represents "die Stimme des 'Kleinen Mannes'", 10). Thus there has been perhaps too much energy devoted to aspects of Phaedrus' work that seem to reflect socio-political concerns and too little scholarly attention given to those elements of Phaedrus' work that would place him more in the mainstream of Latin literary history, including his rather complex construction of a poetic *persona*, a rich intertextual program, and numerous self-reflexive comments on his chosen genre and on poetic composition itself. Indeed, the historic lack of attention to poetics, intertextuality, and allusivity in Phaedrus has partly contributed to the widely-held and uncritical assumption that the poet himself must have occupied a marginal position outside the mainstream of Roman literary culture.

Gärtner's hybrid *Interpretationskommentar* aims above all at demonstrating that Phaedrus is a complex, sophisticated poet, one whose work is filled with the same amount of artistry and design we are accustomed to encounter in other Latin poets.² As a commentary, it is full of the type of intricate analysis of vocabulary, word order, versification, and narrative techniques, which will convince any skeptical Latinist that Phaedrus' fables are worthy of their serious attention. As a series of interrelated, analytical essays, it also has the space to explore Phaedrian fable as an ambiguous art form, simple in aspect but concealing multiple meanings, some of which may be impossible to pin down. The format is a great success: the word-by-word analyses bring to light all of the humor and dramatic tension that earlier generations of critics were wont to ignore, not only in Phaedrus but in fabulistic literature generally. Gärtner's Phaedrus is a *doctus poeta* whose every decision is deliberate and carefully considered; he is also playful and ironic, constantly exploiting the indirection and

² This aim is articulated most clearly on p. 10: "Lässt man sich aber auf die Fabeln ein, lernt man Texte kennen, die sich spielerisch, witzig und eigenwillig in die literarische Tradition und den Diskurs ihrer Zeit einreihen und so selbstreflektiert auch zu Fabeln über die Dichtung werden."

ambiguity of fable in order to pose questions about the status and function of the genre itself.

The Introduction opens with an overview of the Greek fable tradition and the survival of texts (13–21), before moving on to discuss Phaedrus' life and work (21–58), including the labeling of Phaedrus as a “freedman of Augustus” in the title of a manuscript and other issues relating to names and naming – including Gärtner's speculation that Phaedrus' name is itself a playful allusion to the Platonic Phaedrus (29–30) – and the names of his (otherwise unknown) addressees and patrons. The Introduction also effectively focuses attention on the concepts and terms that surface throughout the commentary that follows, especially the following: themes and keywords that link Phaedrus' project to the mainstream of Augustan poetics (43–47); basic structural elements typical of the genre and the terminology (using Greek, Latin, and German) widely accepted by fable scholars for the constituent parts, e.g., *promythion*, Exposition (“setting”), *Handlung* (“plot”), *actio* (“action”), *reactio* (“response”), *Ergebnis* (“conclusion”), and *epimythion*; and links between Phaedrus' fables and extant Greek versions, which, in keeping with the agenda of the commentary as a whole, are treated not simply as differences in characterization or motifs, but also approached with an emphasis on the artistry, playfulness, and distinctly Roman character of Phaedrus' choices vis-à-vis Greek versions. The entire Introduction is well-annotated, including complete Greek texts and translations were relevant in the footnotes.

The commentary itself begins with detailed treatment of the programmatic and allusive prologue to Book 1 (1. *Prol.*) (59–68). This brief, seven-line poem forms part of a network of framing poems (there are five prologues and three epilogues in the collection), which provide the most allusive and explicitly self-referential verses in the corpus. Because Gärtner's commentary covers only the first book, there is perhaps not enough space to attend to the ways in which these pro- and epilogues constitute a complex and coherent a set of interrelated poems; this is a problem of which Gärtner is acutely aware (cf. 59–60), so a number of references to the later pro- and epilogues are therefore woven into the discussion. Gärtner starts with the overall design of 1. *Prol.*, which she views as tripartite (59): dependence on Aesop and the question of Phaedrus' originality (1. *Prol.* 1–2); the function and purpose of the fables (1. *Prol.* 3–4); and the negotiation of reception, which consists of an anticipation of criticism and

a *captatio benevolentiae* (1. Prol. 5–7). Practically every word in the poem receives some comment here, as Gärtner explores Phaedrus' motivations in drawing together Aesop, Callimachus, Catullus, and Horace. The first words of Phaedrus' work are *Aesopus auctor est* (1. Prol. 1), and so the first matter to address is the poet's perspective on his place in the tradition and the originality of his project: on the one hand, the work is a genuine innovation, being the first verse collection of fables and the first fable collection of any kind in Latin; on the other hand, Phaedrus hits some ironic notes by claiming Aesop is the *real* author of his work and that he has merely "polished" (*polivi*, 1. Prol. 2) pre-existing material with his *iambic senarii* (1. Prol. 2). As in other matters, Phaedrus appears to want to have it both ways. An apparent duplicity is also evident in Phaedrus' claim that his fables come with a "double dowry" (*duplex libellidos est*, 3), a double reference to Catullus and Horace further developed in the allusion to Horatian satire in the following lines: *quod risum movet / et quod prudentis vitam consilio monet* (1. Prol. 3–4). Gärtner is particularly interested in the relative length and positioning of the "serious" part of this claim at the center of the poem. For Gärtner, the coupling of a serious claim with a gesture that undercuts it generates a playful ambiguity that she views as central to Phaedrian poetics. In the closing verse of the poem, in which Phaedrus anticipates criticism with the defense that he merely plays with made-up stories (*fic-tis iocari...fabulis*, 1. Prol. 7), Gärtner identifies a programmatic function ("programmatische Funktion," 67); for Gärtner, these words, perhaps more than any other in the collection, encourage us to read the entire prologue as something less than serious, indeed, to read all of Phaedrus, including any apparent reflections on historical events or people, as always involving some degree of joking and playfulness.

The lion's share of Gärtner's book (69–272) consists of close readings of each of the 31 fables of the first book. A brief look at one example will give an impression of Gärtner's approach and method. Phaedrus 1.11 (*Asinus et leo venantes*) opens with a *promythium* (*virtutis expers, verbis iactans gloriam, / ignotos fallit, notis est derisui*, 1.11.1–2). It tells the story of a hunting adventure involving a lion and a donkey, in which the lion hides the donkey in the bushes and asks him to bray at just the right moment. The plan works, as the donkey's strange sounds frighten the wild animals and sets them fleeing right into the lion's clutches. When the donkey asks the lion for a review of his performance

(“*Qualis videtur opera tibi vocis meae?*” 1.11.13), the lion closes the fable with sarcastic praise (“*insignis*” inquit “*sic ut nisi nossem tuum / animum genusque, simili fugissem metu*”, 1.11.14–15). Gärtner begins with a map of the fable’s structure, drawing on the terms and templates described in the Introduction (47–48): 1–2 *promythion*; 3–6a *introduction* (Einleitung); 6b–8, 9–10 *actio* and *reactio*; 11–12a *second introduction* (zweite Einleitung); 12b–13, 14–15 *actio* and *reactio*. Moving through the poem verse by verse, the analysis concentrates on the intersection of *virtus*, *gloria*, *animus*, and *genus*, with Gärtner exploring the ways in which Phaedrus’ version of the fable appears to connect *virtus* and *gloria* to birth and status – in the end, the lower-born donkey never had a chance at *gloria*, as his attempt at performing a praiseworthy deed is dismissed and derided. Comparison with a Greek version in the *Collectio Augustana* further demonstrates some distinctly Roman elements: the Greek donkey exhibits a degree of courage, but Phaedrus’ needy and presumptuous *asinus* is laughed off the stage (*derisui*, 1.11.2). As Gärtner notes, the description of the miraculous sounds of the donkey (*novoque...miraculo*, 1.11.8) may also involve a metapoetic allusion to Callimachus (154), ironically aligning Phaedrus’ own project – and, potentially, his own social status – with the animal’s musical failings. The discussion of 1.11 closes with some attention to reception in La Fontaine and Lessing (154).

In its insistence that we shift our gaze toward the literary dimensions of Phaedrian fable, Gärtner’s excellent book is in good company. The Introduction (13–58), which itself is invaluable as a concise and well-documented overview of the state of Phaedrian studies, written with Gärtner’s characteristic clarity and incisiveness, stands as a kind of mission statement for the current wave of international Phaedrian studies. Indeed, Gärtner’s studies over the last two decades have been foundational for the ongoing work of critical re-evaluation of Phaedrus,³ and the remarkably wide-ranging study she has produced here

³ E.g., U. Gärtner, “Phaedrus tragicus. Zu Phaedr. 4, 7 und seinem Selbstverständnis als Dichter”, in *Dramatische Wäldchen. Festschrift für E. Lefèvre zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. E. Stärk, G. Vogt-Spira, Hildesheim-Zürich-New York 2000, 661–682; id., “*Consulto involvit veritatem antiquita*. Zu den Werten bei Phaedrus”, *Gymnasium* 114, 2007, 405–434; id., “*Levi calamo ludimus*. Zum poetologischen Spiel bei Phaedrus”, *Hermes* 135, 2007, 429–459; id., “Von Esel und Zikade. Überlegungen zu Phaedrus”, *Latein und Griechisch in Berlin und Brandenburg* 51, 2007, 23–31; id., “Maske, Perle, Feile, Lyra. Phaedrus, die literarische Gattung und die

ought to be required reading for anyone undertaking study of Phaedrus – one hopes there is even more to come.

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ROLAND GLAESSER

Lucan lesen – ein Gang durch das „Bellum Civile“

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A distanza di quarantadue anni dalla pubblicazione dell'ormai storica *Introduction* di Frederick M. Ahl¹, l'agile volume di Roland Glaesser propone ora un *Einführungsgang* attraverso il poema di Lucano, dagli intenti tuttavia completamente diversi da quelli dello studioso anglosassone. Come Glaesser (= G.) precisa nella premessa, infatti, la sua monografia non è rivolta tanto alla comunità degli studiosi quanto a insegnanti, studenti e semplici appassionati di letteratura; in questo senso essa può essere più propriamente accostata alla fortunata collana *Very Short Introductions* della Oxford University Press o ancora alle "Introduzioni" della casa editrice Laterza, ben note al pubblico italiano e concepite per la stessa platea di lettori cui si rivolge idealmente G.

Il volume è diviso in due sezioni: la prima – il *Gang* vero e proprio – propone una sinossi ragionata del *Bellum Civile*, che dopo una brevissima sezione introduttiva sulla vita di Lucano e sul soggetto del poema si snoda lungo i dieci libri che lo compongono; la seconda, più breve, si sofferma su alcuni temi di

klassische Bildung", *Hermes* 139, 2011, 216–248; id., "Palam muttire plebeio piaculum est. Die Fabeln des Phaedrus als literarische Kommunikationsform in der frühen Kaiserzeit", in *Römische Literatur im frühen Prinzipat*, eds. A. Haltenhoff, A. Heil, F.-H. Mutschler, Berlin-New York 2011, 253–277; id., "De lusu et severitate. Zum Wert des Spiels bei Phaedrus", in *Noctes Sinenses. Festschrift für F.-H. Mutschler zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. A. Heil, M. Korn, J. Sauer, Heidelberg 2011, 294–302.

¹ F. M. Ahl, *Lucan. An Introduction*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca (NY) 1976.