This volume is a collection of papers read during a colloquium on the Aesop Romance in 1991/1992. This colloquium was initiated by Niklas Holzberg, the editor of the present volume and organised by the Petronian Society at the Department of Classics of the University of Munich. The plan of the volume is tripartite: five essays on the Greek *Life of Aesop* are flanked by two studies on its "Vor-" and "Nachleben" respectively. An annotated bibliography and indices conclude the volume.

In his informative "Vorwort" (pp. IX-XV), Holzberg classes the Βίος Αἰσώπου together with Petronius’ *Satyricon* and Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* as a picaresque novel; it is curious that the fundamental problem whether this *Vita* can best be considered a (biographic) romance or a (romantic) biography is never even formulated in this volume. Holzberg summarizes the textual history of the *Life* and subsumes the results of the colloquium in two hypotheses: (1) the anonymous who wrote the *Life of Aesop* did not merely compile already existing material but had a specific narrative concept, creatively combining various traditions — on, among others, the Seven Sages, Achiqar and Aesop — to a well thought-out unity; (2) the fables in the *Life of Aesop* are not told for their own sake, but have a specific function in their context.

The first study, by Norbert Oettinger, "Achikars Weisheitssprüche im Licht alterer Fabeldichtung" (pp. 3-22), is extremely interesting because of its discussion of a bilingual Hurritic-Hittite cuneiform clay tablet (KBo 32.14 II ff.), dating from 1400 B.C., which contains seven fables. Oettinger shows — in particular by analysing the recurrent theme of loyalty to one’s father and king — that these fables are the ultimate predecessors of the wisdom sayings and fables told by Achiqar to Nadan in the Achiqar Romance (fragmentarily preserved on Aramaic papyri from the 5th cent. B.C.), from which, in its turn, the wisdom sayings in the Greek *Life of Aesop* (109-110; P. Oxy. 3720) are derived.
Rolf Kussl, “Achikar, Tinuphis und Äsop” (pp. 23-30), demonstrates that a number of difficulties in the interpretation of a fragment of the Tinuphis Romance (P. Turner 8) can be solved by the plausible assumption that it is a conscious imitation of the same episode of the Achiqar Romance that was transformed by the anonymous writer of the Aesop Romance into his account of Aesop being saved by the executioner from capital punishment in a subterranean hiding place.

The pièce de résistance, in length as well as in depth, is Holzberg’s “Der Äsop-Roman. Eine strukturanalytische Interpretation” (pp. 33-75). By a thorough and careful structural analysis, Holzberg points out numerous cross references and recurrent motifs as well as authorial remarks at key passages and the connection of the tragic and comic elements in the Life of Aesop by a satiric view of the world. Thus he circumstantiates the first hypothesis formulated above. A keen observer, Holzberg reveals a crucial thematic inversion in the opening and closing capita of the Vita Aesopi: in both places, Aesop, falsely accused of theft, is under threat of being put to death, but, while initially he is able to save his life notwithstanding his dumbness, ultimately he is not, in spite of the many fables he tells. The Life is generally divided into three sections (1-100, 101-123, 124-142); Holzberg proposes to subdivide the first section into three subsections (1-19, 20-91, 92-100). The author of the Aesop Romance must have been fond of the number three—as was the author of Der Äsop-Romance, with its symmetrical structure—, since Holzberg reveals many structural tripartitions and motifs occurring thrice within each of the three sections or subsections; mostly he is right, in some cases he may not be. Thus, Holzberg (p. 42) distinguishes three types of λόγοι Άισώπου, viz. direct teaching, problem solving, and applied fables; however, it is not possible to draw so clear a distinction, since a fable can for instance be followed by a direct lesson (e.g. 97) and an applied fable can be told to give a solution (the aetiological fables in 33G, [67, 68]). Further, it is most probably right to regard W50a (p. 56) and W77ab (pp. 59-60) as spurious, but to suggest athetising 65-67 because they do not fit in the (tripartite) structure seems a circular argument: it might just be conceivable that the inner structure that can no doubt be observed in the Life of Aesop is slightly less neat than we would like it to be. Conversely, the triple occurrence of the motif of suicide could be added (85, 110, 142).

Elisa Mignogna, “Aesopus bucolicus. Come si ‘mette in scena’