
This is a truly inspiring book. The lively introduction to an unduly neglected literary genre draws attention to so many scholarly *desiderata* that it cannot but stimulate future *Fabelforscher* to get to work. One important *desideratum* is already fulfilled by the book itself: a one-volume introduction to the field did thus far not exist.

In the *Einleitung* of his *Einführung*, Holzberg states his modest but honest aim: to show that fables are the daily bread\(^1\) of world literature. He first gives a clear overview of the complex fable tradition, as well as a fair *Beurteilung* of available text editions. Then he describes the “desolaten Zustand” (8) of modern fable scholarship, either utterly neglecting the fable corpus or focusing exclusively on the history and reconstruction of extant fable collections. *En passant* he pleads both for an *endgültige Beseitigung* of Halm’s Teubner text, outdated but still *en vogue*\(^2\), and for a rehabilitation of Nørgaard’s underestimated but outstanding interpretational analyses\(^3\).

The first chapter concentrates on fables occurring *outside* collections. Holzberg’s overview of the evidence is both incomplete and overcomplete, as many passages are absent from his list, whereas others\(^4\) are unjustly included; admittedly, the same must be said of previous synopses. Holzberg rightly remarks: “Die Gruppe der außerhalb von Fabelbüchern erscheinenden Fabeln bzw. Fabelanspielungen ist besonders schwer zu erschließen, weil diese Texte weder jemals in einer den modernen Ansprüchen genügenden Gesamtausgabe vereinigt noch in einem zuverlässigen und bequem benutzbaren Repertorium aufgelistet wurden.” The present reviewer’s dissertation\(^5\) aims at filling this lacuna to some extent.

Holzberg favours a monogenetic genre theory, viewing Mesopotamia as the “Heimat der Gattung”. In this connection, he interprets the figure of Aesop, the genre’s legendary founding father, as a symbol of the Hellenized oriental fabulists who transferred fabulous materials to Greece. He rightly opposes modern theorists who confine the genre’s functions, narrative types, or characters, and draws attention to its remarkable multiplicity in these respects. Fables may have persuasive, philosophical, and satirical functions; collections unite typically short, didactic stories, aetologies, and

© Koninklijke Brill, Leiden, 1997  
Rangstreite, characters may be of all kinds. In itself, Holzberg is entirely right when challenging monistic genre descriptions and pointing to fable’s elusive diversity. However, his general remarks allow for some corrections. Firstly, his functional tripartition is too schematic; for example, philosophers may use fables with additional persuasive (e.g. Pl. Phdr. 259b-d) and satirical functions (e.g. Arist. Mete. 2.3, 356b13-15). Secondly, aetologies are myths rather than Sagas; Callimachus’ “Lydian” dispute (Iamb. 4, fr. 194 Pfeiffer) may be a subtle reference to Aesop, whom the librarian previously (Iamb. 2, fr. 192 Pfeiffer) had said to be “of Sardis”. Thirdly, the idea that fables “in denen ausschließlich Tiere agieren die weitaus größte Gruppe [bilden]—und dies gilt dann auch für die Fabeln späterer Epochen der Antike” is widespread but untrue. Finally, Holzberg may be right in proclaiming—in Perry’s wake—Theon’s definition “am überzeugendsten”, his translation of μῦθος ἐστι λόγος πευκῆς εἰκονιζόν ἀλήθειαν (Prog. 3) by “‘eine Fabel ist eine fiktionale Erzählung, die eine Wahrheit abbildet’, d.h. aus der sich eine Wahrheit (= Lehre) entnehmen läßt” is based on a debatable interpretation of the second half of the definition; εἰκονιζόν ἀλήθειαν points to the genre’s desired verisimilitude, which should compensate for its obvious fictitiousness.

The aforesaid plurality, Holzberg observes, contrasts with the genre’s formal unity, both structurally and linguistically. Its typical narrative structure is tripartite (“Exposition—Aktion—Schlußwort [Nojgaard’s réplique finale]”), while the link with the context has a quasi-formular introduction (οὕτω δὲ καί...). Again, this is correct, but some minor points may be made. Holzberg considers Aristophanes’ second Sybaritic fable (V. 1435-1440) to be tripartite and a scolion (9, fr. 892 PMG) to be bipartite; however, the former’s alleged second stage is just a comically instantaneous incorporation of the addressee’s interjection, whereas the latter is not completely self-contained. Holzberg’s inclusion of Aeschylus’ Agamemnon fable (717-736) among those featuring the typical fable-context formula mentioned above apparently presupposes a debatable interpretation of πάροικος.

Holzberg discusses Perry’s plausible theory that the fable collection by Demetrius of Phalerum (ap. D.L. 5.80-81 = fr. 112 Wehrli) was a primeur, and he cautions that speculations about its quondam contents tend to obscure the fact that its only remnants are its title. Still, an impression may be gained from PRyl. 493 (and perhaps PKöln 2.64): promythia served as handy indexes for writers search-