

**Univ.-Prof. Dr. Ursula Gärtner**

***Sonuere tactae*. Ancient Fable Collections as Resonant Narratives**

The advantage to investigate the interaction of narrative and ritual with a combination of traditional literary-narratological approaches with heuristic usage of the concept of resonance has been outlined in the first paragraph of the showcase above. It might be surprising to examine ancient fables in the context of socio-religious practices. But the topics the IGDK focussed on in the second phase can be examined in this genre very clearly. It must be said first that on the one hand against common opinion not only animals act in ancient fables, but also men and gods and that we find depictions of ritual practices, and that on the other hand socio-religious actions are visualised in animal fables and are interpreted or judged in the pro- or epimythia.

In the Latin fable collections of Phaedrus and Avian or in the Greek collection of 'Aesop' or Babrius one can examine resonant relationships in different ways: How and what religious/ritual practices are described or restaged? Can we find contemporary influences? Are there any traces of social contextualisations? How do the characters use these religious/ritual practices to experience resonant self–world relations? How is all this reflected on – by the characters themselves, the intra- and extradiegetic narrators or the author and in the pro- or epimythia? How is the recipient invited to reflect on it or to relive resonant experiences, viz. how do fables make 'offers of resonance'? How is this used on the levels of production and reception to locate the implied author and recipient?

The four topics 'repetition', 'second-order resonance', 'power, agency and resonance' and 'materiality' can be treated in a twofold strategy. First, one can examine if and how these aspects are treated in the texts themselves. Second (and more interesting) one can show that fables are a genre where all of these topics are important or even constituting. Fables are means of argumentation relying on visualisation and figuralisation. They belong in a didactic context and are (allegedly) supposed to be *repeated*, i.e. retold. Often, we find in fables themselves settings where fables are told to recipients experiencing existential situations of self–world relations. The *re*-telling, transmission and modification of those fables becomes part of the collective memory. Thus, fables can be – perhaps more than other genres as they are meant to be adaptable – a field of *second order resonance* by making 'offers of resonance'. As one of the main topics in fables is power, the negotiation of *power, agency and resonance* is more or less intrinsic, and the questions can be how fables themselves are instrumentalised to serve these negotiations. Finally, materiality plays an important role in the world of fables; on the other hand, every text and book as material becomes essential in the diagonal dimension and at the same time opens up certain spaces of resonance for cultural communities.

In the end one could ask how (implied) statements about resonance become statements about poetology. In Phaedrus (app. 14) an ass finds a lyre but complains that he is no artist and so the discovery is lost to the world – no resonance in whatever dimension. The playing of music has lost its role in social (and maybe also religious) practice. But at least he tried the chords with his hoof and they did resonate just like a poem of a poet (who disguises himself as a poet as bad as an unmusical ass) can make an offer of resonance: *sonuere tactae*.

The PhD student could e.g. examine these questions in one of the fables collections or follow one of these topics through the various collections. Scholarship has long neglected ancient fables (for an introduction cf. Holzberg 2012; for Phaedrus cf. Gärtner 2015; Gärtner 2015 [2017]; for Babrios cf. Holzberg 2019), and all of these questions have not yet been exhaustively researched (for some aspects cf. Morgan 2013 and 2015).

### References

Gärtner, Ursula 2015. *Phaedrus. Ein Interpretationskommentar zum ersten Buch der Fabeln*. Zetemata 149. München.

Gärtner, Ursula 2015 [2017]. 'Phaedrus 1975-2014', in: *Lustrum* 57. 7-89.

Holzberg, Niklas 2012. *Die antike Fabel. Eine Einführung*. Darmstadt.

Holzberg, Niklas 2019. *Babrios. Fabeln. Griechisch-deutsch*. Berlin/Boston.

Morgan, Teresa 2013. 'Divine-Human Relations in the Aesopic Corpus', in: *Journal of Ancient History* 1. 3-26.

Morgan, Teresa 2015. 'Living with the Gods in Fables of the Early Roman Empire', in: *Religion in the Roman Empire* 1. 378-402.

#