THE FUNCTION OF FABLES IN GRAECO-ROMAN ROMANCE*)

BY

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Paradoxically, the multitudinous fables that are embedded in Greek and Latin literature have so far received little, if any, scholarly attention. Most of the comparatively few Fabelforscher traditionally concentrate on the extant fable collections and on Aesop, the legendary pater fabulae. The present writer, whose forthcoming dissertation aims to fill this fabula rasa to some extent, here submits as a sample a study of the fables that occur in one ancient genre, viz. the Graeco-Roman novel. More specifically, this paper presents an analysis of the intertextual function of these fables, both when told at length and when only alluded to. The present paper is tripartite: its first section deals with those passages that have mistakenly been termed fables elsewhere, the second section discusses the allusions to fables, and the third section focuses on complete fables. Naturally, the fables in the Greek Life of Aesop will be highlighted, for this text contains a far larger number of fables than any other extant ancient romance. For the sake of convenience, the passages that will hereafter pass under separate review are first listed in a synopsis.

*) This paper is a revised and enlarged version of a Gastvortrag delivered to members of the Petronian Society at the University of Munich on February 22, 1995, at the invitation of Prof. Dr. Niklas Holzberg. I wish to thank Prof. Dr. A.H.M. Kessels for helpfully lending me many relevant books from his private library, Marjo Lensen for kindly correcting the English, Dr. I.J.F. de Jong for useful criticism, Rev. (Prof. Dr.) G.I. Carlson, S.J. (Creighton University) for his friendly willingness to revise the text, and Dr. Stefan Merkle, who offered me his hospitality (somewhat like die Maus dem Frosch) and helped me explore the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

Synopsis

Non-Fables (1), Allusions (2), and Fables (3) in Ancient Novels

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¹) Throughout this paper, this abbreviation is used for: B.E. Perry, Aesopica, I: Greek and Latin Texts (Urbana, Illinois 1952; repr. New York 1980), the standard reference work of fable scholarship.
A major difficulty in the discussion of fable is the exact definition of the corpus, for the genre of the fable is heterogeneous and elusive. The transitions from fables on the one hand to proverbs and comparisons on the other, and vice versa, are manifold; fables may borrow their subject matter from anecdotes or myths, or the other way round. This is not to say that anything which resembles a fable is a fable. However divergent their conceptions of the genre may be, few fable scholars disagree on its narrative and metaphorical qualities. This rudimentary theoretical basis makes it easier to distinguish fables from related genres, although borderline cases of course remain, as any theorizing tends to oversimplify a more complex practice. Proverbs and comparisons may be metaphors but are definitely not past tense stories; anecdotes and myths are past tense stories but not metaphors. These introductory considerations may serve as a background to the first section of this paper, which aims to substantiate in brief the exclusion from my discussion of those passages that others would have included.

2) Perry did not include this motif in his *Aesopica* but did consider it a fable, witness his *An Aesopic Fable in Photius*, ByzaZ 46 (1953), 308-313; see the present writer's *Addenda ad Aesopica. Unnoticed and Neglected Themes and Variations of Greek and Latin Fables*, Bestia 6 (1994), 96, 110 n. 5.
1.1 Petronius, Satyrica

Catherine Salles lists nine “comparaisons inintelligibles” from the Satyrica and tries to explain their alleged opacity by assuming that Petronius here refers to fables. However, seven of these passages may be interpreted more adequately as proverbial expressions. Otto wisely incorporated them in his Sprichwörter der Römer, comparing ‘the goat amidst the vetch’ (57 hircus in ervilia) to “der Storch im Salat”, the ‘dragged fox’ (58 volpis uda) to “ein begossener Pudel”, and ‘like a defrauded inn-keeper’ (62 tamquam copo compilatus) to “wie mit Hunden gejagt.” In general, utmost restraint is called for when looking for hidden fables behind common proverbs, as Helmut van Thiel has convincingly argued. The ‘mouse in the pot’ (58 mus in matella) is in a tight corner, the ‘donkey on the tiles’ (63 asinus in tegulis) is either a bungler or a spooky figure. Four expressions seem to have originated in some narrative, but the frog who became a king (77) is less likely to be the protagonist of a fable than of some version of “das Märchen vom Froschkönig” (Otto), whereas the farmer who lost his pig (45) “est peut-être empruntée à une atelane” (Salles) or rather: an “apologisches Sprichwort” of the type “Ich will hoch h'rup, saed den Büren sîn Soen un kêm an'n Galgen”, a so-called Wellerism (named after Sam Weller from The Pickwick Papers). Only in the remaining two instances is there really a snake in the grass: the puffed-up frog and the nourished viper have a serious claim to be considered as allusions to fables and will therefore be discussed in the next section (2.1).

4) A. Otto, Die Sprichwörter und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten der Römer (Leipzig 1890; repr. Hildesheim 1964), ssv. asinus (7), caupo, hircus (2), modo, mus (2), rana, vipera (1), vulpes (5); cf. R. Häussler, Nachträge... (Hildesheim 1968), ssv.
6) See H.J. Rose, Asinus in tegulis, Folk-Lore (1922), 34-56.
1.2 Pseudo-Lucian, Asinus

1.3 Apuleius, Metamorphoses

These Eselsromane are treated together since they are birds of a feather. Quellenforscher have observed that certain vicissitudes of the metamorphosed protagonist have Aesopic parallels. H.J. Mason even maintains that this source is indicated by the phrase \textit{fabula Graecanica} in Apuleius' proem. But this postulated literary-historical connection does not automatically imply that the actual fables are alluded to. Unmistakably, there are common motifs, but their development differs. Elements that are crucial in the fable are absent from the romance. The ass of the novel may go through the muddy water but he does not carry first salt and then sponges (as he does in the fable); he just quenches the fire. The romantic donkey may carry an idol, but he does not, unlike his Aesopic cousin, fancy that \textit{he} is idolized. The ass may interrupt the banquet, but he does not imitate his master's lap dog; he just fears for his life. The ass may have lousy jobs in the service of a gardener and a Gallus, but does not recall longingly his former life when the new masters he has asked for turn out to be even worse, and he does not die with the latter. Three ass episodes are comparable to fables about other


9) \textit{Fabula Graecanica: Apuleius and his Greek sources}, in: Hijmans-Van der Paardt, 10.

10) Water: [Luc.] As. 31, Apu. \textit{Met.} 7.20 vs. Babr. 111, \textit{fab. aes.} 191 Hausrath,
(one vulpine and two equine) species, but for these the same critique applies as I directed just above to their asinine colleagues. The novelistic ass carrying kindled flax may remind one of the fox in the fable, but he is not sent to set the neighbouring enemy's lands on fire; he is simply maltreated. Likewise, the ass may be robbed of his own barley by the wife of his groom, but he is not, unlike the fable horse, rubbed down and curried at the same time. The ass in the mill may be comparable to a horse in a fable, but his present Sisyphean task is not contrasted with some glorious past on the racecourse. The same holds again—mutatis mutandis—for two parallels dealing with other animals than asses. Both Apuleius and Babrius describe a husband giving his wife's lover a taste of his own medicine, but adultery and triangles are ordinary novella themes. L.A. Post connected the phrase 'from the dog's bottom' (Ps.-Luc. As. 59 ἐκ κυνὸς προκτοῦ) with a fable about a dog trying to answer nature's call over a bunch of reeds. This, however, is a medieval fable, whereas the phrase in question appears to have been proverbial already in Aristophanes. Therefore, τὸ τοῦ λόγου is far more likely to mean of the proverb than (as MacLeod translates) 'of the


fable'. Finally, there are two connections with non-fabulistic Aesopica. The self-mutilation of the castor in Apuleius admittedly occurs also in the fable collections, but is there one of the few odd texts that is not a story but just a present tense description of curious animal behaviour from ancient natural history. The alleged theft of a golden bowl in both Eselsromane has of course a parallel in the Life of Aesop, but the episode is not metaphorical and therefore not a fable.15)

1.4 Vita Alexandri

The eminent Spanish Fabelforscher Francisco Rodríguez Adrados mistakenly includes three passages from the Alexander Romance in his Inventario y documentación de la fábula greco-latina.16) It is true that the episode in which Alexander pushes Nectanebo into a well when he plays the star-gazer (1.14.4) derives from the wide-spread anecdote on Thales seeing stars, which has, in its turn, ended up in the fable collections.17) But the passage under discussion is not a metaphorical story but a legendary episode from Alexander’s life (and Nectanebo’s death), although it may symbolize Alexander’s succession to the throne.18) In the fable versions Thales and Nectanebo have typically been replaced with an anonymous astronomer, who metaphorically represents any wool-gathering person, whereas Necta-


nebo stands (and falls) just for himself; likewise, Alexander’s questionable part, first perpetrating and then criticising his father’s fatal accident, is played by an outsider who happens to pass (the subvenant\(^{19}\)) in the fable. The two other passages from the Alexander Romance are not past tense stories, *casu quo* fables, but quite ordinary present tense comparisons drawn from nature, about wasps chasing myriads of flies (2.16.3) and the wind disturbing the sea (3.6.13). It is true that the latter motif occurs also in a fable\(^{20}\), whereas the former does not have a parallel in extant fable literature, but the comparisons do not presuppose some story alluded to, as they are perfectly understandable in themselves: they are used by Alexander to illustrate that his troops need not fear the Persians’ superiority in numbers, and that each human act has a divine origin, respectively.

1.5 Vita Aesopi

Keith Hopkins\(^{21}\) has recently stated that Aesop informs Xanthos about his wife’s tenfold adultery “in the form of a fable”. However, Aesop’s story about ten apples knocked off a tree by the throw of one stone (76W) is not a fable, but an allegorical tale, encoding the Casanova-like bargain Aesop has struck with his master’s spouse. Furthermore, the exclusion of three other passages that many scholars\(^{22}\) consider as fables needs to be accounted for here.

19) For the term see M. Nejgaard, *La fable antique*, I: *La fable grecque avant Phèdre* (København 1964), 159-160.
Two\(^{23}\) (37W, 125) are similes, and one (48) is a description of animal behaviour; all three significantly use the present tense—the two aorist forms (37W εὑρε, 125G ηὗραμεν) occurring in the similes are gnomic. In other words, these passages are not fables; the similes are metaphors but not stories, and the biological description is neither metaphor nor story. Nor are they obvious allusions to particular fables, as the passages from the *Vita Aesopi*—like the two from the *Vita Alexandri* discussed in the previous subsection—are perfectly understandable in themselves. This is not to say that these passages are not comparable to fables. They are so in two respects. First, they have the same functions as the fables in the *Vita Aesopi* (which will be discussed later on): the first two are aetiological, explaining why wild plants thrive but garden plants do not (37W), and why a pig cannot be led like a lamb to the slaughter (48); in the third Aesop expresses his contempt for the Delphians by comparing them to miserable drift-wood at sea (125). Secondly, their contents are roughly similar to particular fables in the collections. But these parallels are less striking than they seem to be. In the first passage Aesop compares nature to a remarried woman; in the corresponding fable it is the reverse. In the second passage both the meek lamb and the squealing pig are cattle raised for their meat, but in the corresponding fable the former belongs to the dairy and wool-producing livestock. The similarity between the third passage and a fable about two travellers watching firewood washing ashore is only superficial. Therefore, the third passage from *Aesop's Life* is in itself, as a matter of fact, an apt image for the alleged similarity between these comparisons and those fables: at first sight the correspondence, like drift-wood at sea, looks impressive but on closer inspection it turns out to be disappointingly slight.

it might be noted that Adrados (1990, 224) compares *Vit. Aesop.* 51-52 to a rabbinical fable.

23) Not all three, as I erroneously stated in my review (388) referred to below (n. 55).
2. Allusions

2.1 Petronius, Satyrific

There is a reasonable chance (but no absolute certainty) that two proverbial expressions from the Satyrifica allude to fables: that of the frog who, motivated by either infanticide or sheer jealousy, so dearly wanted to equal an ox in size that she inflated herself until she burst (74 inflat se tamquam rana), and that of the viper who repaid with lethal poison the man (either farmer or traveller) who had warmed him in his bosom (77 tu viperam sub ala nutricas). Both fables seem to have been quite popular, to judge from the many extant versions—allowing for minor variations—, among others Phaedrus' versions of both fables, those by Horace and Martial of the former, and a Greek proverb abbreviating the latter. Both fables seem to have been quite popular, to judge from the many extant versions—allowing for minor variations—, among others Phaedrus' versions of both fables, those by Horace and Martial of the former, and a Greek proverb abbreviating the latter. It does not seem too far-fetched to interpret the animal metaphors at hand as allusions to these particular fables in view of their contexts. The ox as the frog's unattainable ideal is evoked by two similar metaphorical contrasts that Trimalchio subsequently draws from architecture and the monetary system: 'But if you were born in a hut you cannot dream of a palace. (...) And I might have married ten million, two-penny fool that I was!'. The man the viper was obliged to is called up by Serapa's preceding clairvoyant statement: 'No one is ever as grateful to you as you deserve'. One allusion is applied by, the other to, Trimalchio. The latter cuts the overblown Fortunata down to size, whereas Serapa shows insight into his viperish friends' ungrate-
fulness. Building on P.G. Walsh’s analyses\(^{27}\), one might say that the allusions not only portray those to whom they are applied but also those who apply them: the image of the frog is typical of the “graphic turns of phrase” of the host’s *lingua vulgaris*, while that of the viper typifies the Greek astrologer’s cryptic utterances.

2.2 Heliodorus, *Aethiopica*

The *Aethiopica* contain an allusion to the fable of the eagle who was shot by an arrow which he noticed was equipped with his own feathers (2.33 τοῖς ἐμοῖς...κατ’ ἐμοῦ κέχρηται πτεροῖς). It is known, thanks to a scholiast commenting on a passage of comic paratragedy of Aristophanes’ *Birds*, that this fable originally occurred in Aeschylus’ *Myrmidons\(^ {28} \)\); Aeschylus probably had the fable told by Achilles when kneeling down at his beloved Patroclus’ dead body. The fable soon became proverbial (τὸ τὸν λόγον), witness more than fifty references in later Greek literature\(^ {29} \). What might be significant here is the fact that Aeschylus termed it a Libyan fable; it is the only extant specimen of this subspecies. Heliodorus’ reference to a Libyan fable in his *Ethiopian Tale* set in Egypt seems pertinent: it adds to the African *couleur locale*. The application of the fable to its context is sophisticated in yet another respect. Heliodorus has Calasiris put the allusion into Charicles’ mouth, to illustrate that the priest’s education of Charicleia turns against him: he cannot dissuade her from idolizing chastity. Heliodorus says Calasiris says Charicles says Charicleia dedicates herself to the virginal Artemis and keeps on hunting all the time and ‘practises archery’\(^ {30} \). The reader seems to be invited to connect Charicleia’s leisure activities and the fable alluded to shortly thereafter: the context insinuates that she is the very hunter from whose bow came the arrow.

30) θήρας τὰ πολλὰ σχολάζει καὶ ἀσκεῖ τοξείαν. The sentence in which the allusion occurs contains yet another reference to both a Bowman (‘Ἐρωτα) and a bird (ἀποσκορακίζουσα), but this connection is less obvious.
equipped with the wings of the eagle to which Charicles compares himself! Thus, the passage under discussion is a delicate step in the gradual explanation of the enigmatic opening tableau, depicting a strand strewn with bodies. The brigands observed that most were killed by bowshots, and found Charicleia armed with bow and arrow. The allusion to the fable might be taken as a subtle clue to the murder, which is solved only in Book Five: any reading detective\(^3\) will consider Charicleia the chief suspect, now that her arrows have appeared to be lethal.

2.3 Achilles Tatius, Leucippe and Clitophon

There is yet another so-called 'ideal' Greek novel containing an allusion to a fable in which a bird’s feathers play a dominant part. Both birds are *Pechvögel*, but the relation between bird and feathers is just the opposite. For whereas the eagle’s quills boomeranged against their legitimate owner, Achilles Tatius alludes to the widespread fable (τοῦ μύθου) of the jackdaw who strutted with borrowed plumes but was disgracefully unmasked (2.38.2 κολοιφι γεγυμνωμένῳ τῶν...πτερῶν). The allusion occurs in the famous (infamous, some\(^3\)) would say) discussion of the pros and cons of the love of women and boys, glowingly championed by Clitophon and Menelaos respectively. The latter contrasts the natural beauty of boys with female artificial pulchritude. He compares the variegated make-up women doll themselves up with to the jackdaw’s misappropriated plumage: he drives home that both are humiliated when stripped of their sham adornment. The fable alluded to fits its context extremely well, since in most versions\(^3\) the jackdaw’s travesty

\(^3\) This clue seems to have escaped J.J. Winkler’s notice (*The mendacity of Kalasiris and the narrative strategy of Heliodoros*’ *Aithiopika*, YCS 27 (1982), 98-99). 1.5 οί δὲ πλείστοι βελῶν ἔργον καὶ τοξείας γεγενημένοι. 2.2 φορέτραν τῶν ὄμων ἐξῆπτο καὶ τῷ λαῖφῳ βραχύον τῷ τόξον ὑπεστηρίζει. Cf. 5.32. Prof. Kessels suggested to me the relevance of the introductory scene for my argument.

\(^3\) Witness S. Gaselee’s translation *ad usum Delphini* in the Loeb series (1917), 129, 131, 133.

was occasioned by a beauty contest. But, although the jackdaw lost face and Menelaos has, as Tomas Hägg\(^{34}\) has it, "the last word" in the erotic debate, the hero of the novel is not dissuaded from desiring the heroine; Achilles did not call his novel Τὰ κατὰ Λεύκιππον καὶ Κλειτοφώντα after all.

3. Fables

3.1 Achilles Tatius, Leucippe and Clitophon

Apart from the allusion discussed above, the second book of Leucippe and Clitophon contains two fables narrated in extenso, which follow one another immediately. The first (2.21) is about a lion who complains to Prometheus about a congenital defect: he has a phobia about cocks (as ancient natural history teaches\(^{35}\)). Prometheus, however, does not feel responsible, since the lion's disorder, he objects, is psychological. The lion then falls victim to existential despair, but an elephant who happens to pass unintentionally cheers him up by admitting openly his mortal fear of gnats. The lion now counts himself lucky, for he realizes his Angstgegner is far more respectable than the mighty elephant's. The second fable (ib.22) again features a gnat and a lion. This time the former is his own trumpeter, detracting from the latter's alleged strength and beauty. The gnat suits the action to the word and goes onto the offensive. He flies into his eyes, buzzes around his head, bites his lips and swoops through his mane, thus driving the lion insane, but the triumphant insect flies unawares into a spider web, where he curses his recklessness. Both fables are included also in the anonymous prose fable collections, the first one in full, the second one in abbreviated form\(^{36}\). Both are variations on two common fable patterns. In the first, an animal complains to its creator and finds that sor-

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\(^{34}\) *The Novel in Antiquity* (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1983), 45.


row shared is sorrow halved. In the second, the cheater is cheated and in dying exercises self-criticism. The second contains the typically fabulistic vague introductory time adjunct ποτε

37). With these fables Conops, the troublesome servant of Leucippe, and Satyrus, Clitophon’s shrewd slave, duel teasingly, obviously (as the author himself explains

38)) punning on Conops’ name; nomen est omen indeed, for Conops’ vices—meddlesomeness, garrulity, gluttony (2.20.1)—are just right for a gnat, as Corinne Delhay rightly observes. Both narrators formulate the Aussage of their fable in an epimythium

39). By the first fable Conops drives home that a κόνως (a gnat, in this case he himself) is not insignificant, for he is able to terrify an elephant

40). But Mr. Gnat gets beaten at his own game, for the fable by which Satyrus retorts shows that gnats, in their turn, have cause for arachnophobia. Ironically

41), the cobweb which will eliminate the midge (usually causing insomnia; cf. 2.20.1 νύκτωρ, διενυκτέρευε) soon turns out to be a sleeping draught (2.23.1-2). The only extant parallel for this fable fight is the violent exchange of fables between Menelaos and Teucer in the so-called burial debates in Sophocles’ Ajax. As Teucer outdoes the Sophoclean

54 derive these from Achilles; J.-Ph. Garnaud Achille Tatius d’Alexandrie. Le Roman de Leucippe et Clitophon (Paris 1991), 56, n. 1 states it is the other way round (cf. Th. Bergk, Babriana, Philologus 47 (1889), 393-395); Adrados (1987, 269, where “έλαφρος...CERVΟ” seems to be an error for “έλεφρος...ELEFANTE”) derives both from a lost model; cf. S. Jedrkiewicz, Sapore e paradosso nell’ Antichità: Esopo e la favola (Roma 1989), 429, n. 20; C. Delhay, Achille Tatius fabuliste?, Pallas 36 (1990), 118-120 (I wish to thank Elisa Mignogna for kindly drawing my attention to this article in Munich and sending it from Genova).


38) 2.20 κόνωςα ἐκάλει καὶ ἔσκυπτε τοῦνομα σὺν γέλωτι. (...) Ἐπειδὴ καταμωκό̣ μον καὶ τοῦνομα, φέρε σοι μύθον ὀπό κόνωνος εἴπω.

39) 2.21.4 ὁδός, δοῦν ἵσυος ὁ κόνων ἔχει, ὡς καὶ ἐλέφαντα φοβεῖν. 2.22.7 ὁρα τοῦνν...καὶ σε τὰς ὀράχνας ροβεῖσθαι.

40) Delhay’s statement (118) that this “morale” “n’a aucun lien logique avec l’ensemble qui précède” is a hyperbole.

41) A. A. 892-893; M. Davies - J. Kathirithamby, Greek Insects (London 1986), 166; Delhay 127-128.
Menelaos, so Satyrus outstrips Conops: the latter’s straightforward narrative compares poorly to Satyrus’ fable, both in length—Satyrus’ fable is more than twice as long as Conops’ (34:16)—and in rhetorical colouring, notably the abundant use of (especially musical and military) metaphors and some tropes. Satyrus subtly presents his fable as more trustworthy than Conops’ by terming his own fable λόγος but Conops’ μύθος. Parallels of this use of fable terminology can be found in Aristophanes’ Peace and Plato’s Phaedo. Erwin Rohde included the two lengthy fables among the “Beiwerke” which have become “Hauptsache”, but this is a priori unlikely. On the contrary, the fables are connected to their context at a higher level in two respects, one general, the other more concrete. As the gnat obviously stands for Conops, it is natural to take the lion, his antagonist, as Clitophon’s metaphorical alter ego. The description of the lion’s emotions recalls Clitophon’s pangs of love, whereas the wounds the gnat inflicts on the lion have a striking parallel (also as far as form is concerned) in the physical wounds inflicted by a swine, which Clitophon uses later on as a

42) κόμαι, ὅσπερ ἐσθήτες, ὡς...ἐνδύομαι, ὅργανον, μετά...σάλπιγγος, σάλπιγγες, βέλος, αὐλητής καὶ τοξότης, ὀίστος καὶ τόξον, τοξεύει, ὡς ἀπὸ βέλους, περιπετείων, καταλόγων, ὅσπερ παιλαίτης, ἐκροταλίζον, ἐπηύλει μέλος ἐπινίκιον, χιτών; cf. Delhay 122, 124, 127 (comparing Batr. 199-200).

43) παρών οὗ πάρεμιμ, ὁμοῦ δὲ καὶ φεύγω καὶ μένω. λανθάνει...ἐμπλακεῖς,...οὐκ ἔλαβεν ἐμπεσών.

44) 2.20.3 θέρη σοι μέθον ἀπὸ κόνωτος εἰπὼ. 2.21.5 "Ἀκουσον κάμοι τινα λόγον...ἀπὸ κόνωτος καὶ λέοντος... χαρίζωμαι δὲ σοι τοῦ μέθον τὸν ἔλεφαντα. Cf. Ar. Pax 127-134, Pl. Phd. 60c-61b; see the present author’s Theory and Terminology of the Greek Fable, Reinardus 6 (1993), 173, n. 14; id., De theorie van de fabel in de Griekse Oudheid, in: W.L. Idema et al. (red.), Mijn naam is haas. Dierenverhalen in verschillende culturen (Baarn 1993), 27.

45) Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer (Leipzig 1914), 511-513.

46) 2.21.2 ἐκλαίειν ~ 3.10.1 κλαίειν ἤργον τὴν Λευκίππην, 3.10.4 τὰ σὰ δὲ, Λευκίππη...ποιεῖ τις ὄμμας δακρύσω; 4.10.5 ἐκλαύνον παρακοθήμενος, 5.7.8 τῷ σώματι περιυλεμένης ἐκλάνε, 7.4.3 ἥλε δὲ μοι τὸ δάκρυα καὶ τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς τὴν λύπην ἀπεδίδουν, 7.7.5-6 ἐμὲ δ’ ὁ ἐρώτης εὐθὺς ἤμονατο: ὡς γὰρ ἐμθόν ἀνηρμένην...ἐκλάνε. For the tears shed by Leucippe and other dramatis personae, see J.N. O'Sullivan, A Lexicon to Achilles Tatius (Berlin/New York 1980); svv. δάκρυα, δακρύω, κλαίω. 47) 2.22.3 βέλος, τοξότης, ὀίστος καὶ τόξον, τοξεύει, βέλους, τραύμα, παταχθείς ἐξαίφνης...τὸν τετερωκότα ζητεῖ, τραύμασιν, ib.4 ἐπίτραπε, ib.5 τοῦ τραύματος ἢ πληγή, 7.4.4 (secundum) πληγηγίας, παταχθείς εὐθὺς...ζητεῖ τὸ τραύμα, πληγής, ib.5 (primum) παταχθείσα, βέλει, τοξεύσαντος, τέτραται, τραύμα, τραύματος bis.
metaphor—analysed by Dorit Sedelmeier—48—for psychic traumas (7.4.4-5). But there is more to it. On closer inspection, both fables can be shown (again by striking verbal parallels) to refer to key passages in the romance. The lion’s longing for death prefigures Clitophon’s intended suicide (3.16-17)49), and the wound the gnat inflicts on the lion’s lips echoes the simulated insect bite in Clitophon’s lips, whose cure by Leucippe is the prelude to the lovers’ first kiss (2.7)50).

3.2 Vita Alexandri

Recension Γ (3.19 (ed. Parthe); E 40,2) contains a fable about someone who was fleeing from a lion; desperately he climbed a tree at the bank of a lake, but there a large viper slithered down towards him; so he plunged into the lake, but there a crocodile came to the surface and wolfed him down. Typical fable ingredients are the three vague phrases ‘once upon a time, someone; along some lake’ (ἐντεύτε τις; παρὰ τινα λῦμνην) and the tripartition of the story. Noteworthy in this rather paranoid fable are the opposite linear movements, indicating that fate will catch up with the man wherever he goes: when he climbs up, the snake slides down from the top (ἀνελθόν... καταδραμὼν... ἀναβας... ἐκ τῶν ἄνωθεν); when he jumps down, the crocodile comes up from the depth (ἀπηκόντισε... τῶν κάτωθεν ἀναδύος). When we compare this to the other extant versions51) of this fable, three differences leap to our eye: in the other versions the man is a fugitive murderer, or, even worse, a parricide, whereas the anonymous writer does not motivate the

49) 2.21.2 ἀποθανεύειν ἥθελεν ~ 3.17.4 θέλεις ἀποθανεύειν is a perfect parallel.
50) 2.7.1 ἵπποτα, ἐπάτοτε, ib. 2 ἀναθορούσα, πληγήν, ἀθησθαι, πληγάς, ib.3 περιβουμέναια κύκλῳ... πρόσωπον παρέπτη, προσώποις, πεπλῆχθαι, ib.4 χείλους, στόμα, τῶν χειλέων, ib.5 χείλεων, ib.6 τέτρωμα, τραχύμα, στόματος, τετρώσκει, ib.7 ἀγριώνης, τραχύμα ~ 2.22.3 στόμα, τραχύμα, παταχθεῖς, τετρώσκοτα, τραχύμαστα, ib.4 προσόπων, περιπτάμενος, βόμβῳ, ἦγραλαντα, ἐπίτρασκε, χειλεστα, ib.5 τραχύματος, πληγή, ib.6 περιπτάμενος, ib.7 κύκλων.
flight of the anonymous fable character; in some other versions the first animal is a wolf instead of a lion; and in the other versions the crocodile’s habitat is a river or, more specifically, the river Nile, not a lake. In the *Alexander Romance* the fable is told by Candables (Candaules) to Alexander’s vanguards, who have caught him. In an epimythium Candables explicitly compares his present situation to the man’s (τὰ τοιῶτα σοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ συνέβη). From the preceding context it is clear on what grounds he does so. He has just reported to the vanguards that he first fled (φεύγον, like the man in the fable: φεύγοντα) for Alexander to his mother Candace; but in Amastris the eye of Euagrides, the Bebrycians’ tyrant, fell first on his wife and then on his riches and soldiers, so he had to take to his heels once again, only to fall into the vanguards’ hands. As the episode is set in Egypt, the replacement of the river with a lake is somewhat odd, although one might object that a crocodile looks Egyptian enough. But as to the other two variations mentioned above, it can be argued that the anonymous author has deliberately and felicitously adapted the fable to its context. Obviously, Candables does not want to suggest he has a bad record now that he is at the mercy of the enemy; furthermore, he is so diplomatic as to compare Alexander, his initial pursuer, not to the ever-hungry wolf (as did Alexander’s avowed enemy, Demosthenes, in another fable which will come up in the next subsection) but to the king of the animals, the classical image for the ‘Lion of Macedonia’. In this way, the fable is connected also to its context in a broader sense. Alexander was born under the constellation of the Lion, for Philip dreams that his wife’s womb is sealed with a ring with a lion’s head (1.8.2, ib.5 κεφαλὴν λέοντος); a Babylonian onirocritic explains that Olympias is expecting a lion-like child (1.8.5 ὀστερ λέων). Furthermore, the novelist describes young Alexander’s character and physical appearance as leonine (1.13.3 λεοντοκόμου, ὄρμημα λέοντος ἄγριον).

52) E.g. Demad. fr. 51 De Falco ap. Plu. Dem. 23.6; id. Alex. 13.
53) I am grateful to Prof. Kessels for drawing my attention to this passage. Van Thiel ad loc. compares Plu. Alex. 2.2 λέοντος...εἰκόνα, ib.3 λεοντωδή, Ephor. FGrHist 70 F217 ap. Tert. An. 46.
3.3 Vita Aesopi

The lion's share of the fables occurring in ancient romances has, not surprisingly, been taken by a novel whose hero (or rather: anti-hero) is the fabulist par excellence, Aesop. This biographic romance (some would say: romantic biography) is an eldorado for Fabelforscher, since it contains as many as thirteen fables. This fact has misled some scholars\(^{54}\) into regarding *Aesop's Life* as some sort of upgraded fable collection. It is one of the merits of *Der Asop-Roman*, the latest milestone in the field, to have convincingly relegated this quondam communis opinio to the realm of fantasy. The present discussion of the function of these thirteen fables in their context(s) aims only at elaborating, and perhaps modifying slightly, one of the observations of Niklas Holzberg *cum suis*\(^{55}\): the fables elucidate the *Vita Aesopi*, not vice versa.

First, the fables themselves. The following summaries\(^{56}\) of the thirteen fables may give an impression of their caleidoscopic subject matter.

1: Zeus first made Apollo a prophet, then curtailed his mantic power by sending mankind portentous dreams, but finally restored the importance of his oracle by sending deceptive dreams as well (33G).

2: A prince defecated so long that he excreted his brains (67).

3: Dionysus invented three cups of wine, causing pleasure, joy, and exhaustion respectively (68).

4: At Zeus' command Tyche (or: Prometheus) showed mankind the easy way to slavery versus the narrow path to freedom (94).

5: The wolves delegated an ambassador to the sheep to negotiate peace; the latter fulfilled their stipulation to extradite the sheepdogs, whereupon the wolves of course devoured both the sheep and the dogs (97).

6: A locust was caught by a poor man, who released the tiny crea-

\(^{54}\) See N. Holzberg, *A Lesser Known 'Picaresque' Novel of Greek Origin: The Aesop Romance and its Influence*, Groningen Colloquia on the Novel 5 (1993), 6-7. I am grateful to Dr. R.F. Regtuit for making this article available to me.

\(^{55}\) *Der Asop-Roman. Motivgeschichte und Erzählstruktur* (Tübingen 1992), XIII; see the present writer's review in Mnemosyne 47 (1994), 384-389.

\(^{56}\) Fuller versions are given by the present author in *The Fables in the Greek Life of Aesop*, Reinardus 8 (1995), 131-150.
ture after it had pointed out it would not harm a fly but would only make a pleasant sound (99).

7: The Greeks used to send a tenth part of their war booty to Apollo; so the Delphians are lineal descendants of prisoners of war (126).

8: A mourning widow was persuaded by a widower who wept crocodile tears to compensate each other for the loss of their spouses; when he discovered someone had stolen his oxen meanwhile, he had to shed real tears (129).

9: A stupid girl mistakenly thought she would fulfil her mother’s fondest wish that she might become sensible by entreating a man, who was copulating with a she-ass, to deflower her too (131).

10: A frog repaid a mouse for his hospitality by roping their feet together, jumping into a lake and... drowning him, but a crow picked up the dead mouse floating on the water and found he had killed two birds with one stone (133).

11: A hare sought refuge with a dung beetle in order to escape from an eagle, but the latter did not respect his asylum; the scarab avenged his refugee by repeatedly destroying the bird’s eggs, until Zeus separated the seasons of these species to prevent the eagles from extinction (135-139).

12: An old farmer set off for the city but was precipitated into a ravine by the very asses who were drawing his cart (140).

13: A girl was violated by her own father, much to her regret (141). The fables are recognizable as such, and thereby demarcated from their contexts, by terminology, formulae introducing fable, actiology or epimythium, typically vague temporal or local adjuncts and/or characters, tripartitions, ring composition, and kenningar57.

The differences among the three extant Greek recensions (Grotta-ferratensis, Westermanniana, Planudea) can be explained briefly. The oneirocritic fable occurs only in G, while the kamikaze asses are not extant in G. Pl omits the fables about the Delphians and the stupid daughter, and ‘defabulizes’ the aetiology of the wine, because it is no longer a story. Most variations are slight, such as the replacement of the prince with a wise (W) or rich (Pl) man, of the locust with a cicada (W, Pl), and of the crow (G, W (manuscripts ML)) with a vulture (W (R)), a kite (W (W)) or an eagle (W (SBP), Pl). The omission of Zeus and man (W, Pl) from the fable about the crossroads, however, seems unfelicitous, for this simplification spoils the neat analogy between the fable and its context which will be explained presently.

As to the provenance of the narrative materials, Ben Edwin Perry has argued that the fables in the Life were all taken from Demetrius’ collection. But as this Ursammlung has been lost except for its title (fr. 112 Wehrli ap. D.L. 5.80), it seems safer to assume that the fables are original instead of traditional. Nearly half of the fables (those about the prince, the locust, the Delphians, the stupid girl, the old man, and the violating father) are more or less unique; all of these except for the scatological one have ended up in the fable collections (fab. aes. 298-299, 303-305 Hausrath); only the fable about the locust has a parallel (Synt. 62). Four fables are relatively original: they may be ‘fabulizations’ of heterogeneous prototypes


58) Η τρωγλονεία. The Kenning in Pre-Christian Greek Poetry (Diss. Uppsala 1951).
60) Demetrius of Phalerum and the Aesopic Fables, TAPhA 93 (1962), 298-301, 329-332.
(just as Hesiod’s myth on Pandora’s jar may have been fabulized by Babrius). The aetiologies of dreams and wine may derive from myths occurring in Euripides and Panyasis respectively, the fable about the crossroads from Prodicus’ allegory of Heracles’ choice between Virtue and Vice, and the fable about the mourning widow from a novella à la matrona Ephesia. Parallels from fable literature are hard to find or non-existent. The three cups of wine occur also in Photius’ Letters, whereas a different version of the mourning widow is extant in Phaedrus and Romulus. Only the remaining three fables seem to have been evergreens, but even here Aesop’s biographer seems to have varied, not copied, traditional material, as has recently been argued, if not einwandfrei, for the fable of the mouse cursing the frog and the dung beetle retaliating upon the eagle by, respectively, Stefan Merkle (110-127) and Peter von Möllendorff. The originality in the anonymous author’s version of the fable of the sheep who handed over their body-guards to their mortal enemies is to be found in its application: Aesop does not try to dissuade the Samians, who have already decided to extradite

63) The former does not discuss Dod. 246 Chambry, which contains the curse motif absent from Pa.Bodl. 246 Chambry and Rom. 4 Thiele, whereas the latter (Die Fabel von Adler und Mistkäfer im Asoproman, RhM 137 (1994), 141-161) blurs the fundamental distinction between Aristophanes’ three references to the fable (V. 1448, Pax 127-134, Lys. 695), which are only allusions, and the scholiasts’ full, but much more recent, versions.
him, whereas the traditional relation between audience and narrator of this fable is just the other way round: Demosthenes alleged-ly told the same fable to dissuade the Athenians from delivering him to Alexander. A typical example of *variatio in imitatione*.

The fable just mentioned may serve as an introduction to a discussion of the intertextual functions of the fables. First, a brief recapitulation of the applications of the fables to their contexts. The narrator of all these fables is identical, whereas his audience varies. Not surprisingly, all fables are narrated by Aesop. Before leaving for Babylon, he tells six fables: first one to Xanthos’ wife, then two to Xanthos himself, another two to the Samians, and finally one to Croesus. The other seven fables are told after Aesop’s return from Babylon, first one to the Delphians, then two to a friend of his and finally four to the Delphians again. The fables Aesop tells before leaving Greece are chiastically arranged (1-2-2-1) and grouped in two pairs (Xanthos vs. wife; Samians vs. Croesus); those told by Aesop after his return to Greece are chiastically arranged too (Delphians-friend-Delphians) and build up to a climax (1-2-4). Thus, the distribution of the fables in the *Life* seems well thought-out.

Next, the analogy between the fables and their contexts will be analysed. Frequently, both the narrator and his audience are represented by the fable characters. To give two examples, the locust and the hunter stand for Aesop and Croesus; the old man and the donkeys represent Aesop and the Delphians. In some fables a third party also is metaphorically depicted. Three examples: when Croesus addresses the Samians through a letter-carrier, Aesop tells a fable about Zeus delegating Tyche (according to Papathomopoulos; Prometheus according to Perry) to mankind; the mouse, the frog and the crow, as well as the hare, the eagle and the dung beetle, represent Aesop, the Delphians and his future revengers. Once even a fourth party is represented. The fable about the wolves sending one wolf to the sheep to demand the extradition of the dogs neatly corresponds to its context, in which Croesus sent an envoy to the Samians with a request for the extradition of Aesop.

These analogies between the fables and their contexts are not

only self-evident but also unmistakably indicated by linguistic means: verbal parallels remove any possible doubt as to who stands for whom. A few examples may suffice here. Both Croesus and the locust hunter are said to 'sympathize with the words' of Aesop and the insect respectively, because the former recognize the latter will do no 'harm'. Both the simple girl and Aesop 'have lost the sense' they 'had before'. The frog 'drags' the mouse and the asses throw the old man into a 'ravine', exactly as the Delphians treat Aesop. The hare 'takes refuge' with the dung beetle, like Aesop in the Muses' temple, but both refugees are 'despised', the former by the eagle, the latter by the Delphians65).

The choice of the fable characters is very appropriate for the persons they represent, which seems to imply that the selection of the fables is well-considered. Aesop drives home that he is useful and amusing by identifying with the indispensable sheep-dogs and the chirping locust respectively. Aesop anticipates his death by identifying with five underdogs; three are killed—the mouse by the frog, the hare by the eagle, and the old man by the asses—and two are violated—one by a perverted maniac and one by her own father. This telling choice of fabulae personae not only applies to the narrator but also to his audience. By the very selection of the fable characters Aesop shows that the Samians' decision to extradite him is sheepish, and that Croesus' hunger for territory is wolfish (97). Likewise, Aesop expresses his contempt for the Delphians by representing them as despicable asses, and brands them as criminals by identifying them with relentless carnivores—the frog and the eagle—and brute rapists who do not shrink from bestiality or incest (131, 141).

In some instances, however, the fable does not resemble its context, but these incongruities seem to be deliberate too. One incongruity is persuasive a maiori: the man shows mercy to the cicada he has caught, so Croesus should set Aesop free, since Aesop has voluntarily come to him. Most incongruities, however, are satirical.

65) 99 context. fable συμπαθήσας τοῖς λόγοις; c. βλάγαι - f. ἔβλαγα. 131 c. ἀπόλλεσα...καὶ ὅν πρῶτον ἔχον νοῦν - f. ἀπόλλεσας καὶ ὅν πρῶτον ἔχεις νοῦν, νοῦν sexies. 133 c. συρόμενος - f. ἔσυρεν (W: c. ἐλκὼν bis - f. ἐλκὼν, ἐφέλκεται). 135-139 c. κατέφυγεν, -ον - f. κατέφυγεν; c. καταφρονεῖτε - f. καταφρονήσαι. 140 c. κρημνόν, κρημνοῦ bis - f. κρημνώδη.
Thus Aesop cuts a sly dig at Croesus, who was fabulously rich, by comparing him to a poor man. Xanthos, the philosopher, is similarly insulted in the facetious epimythium to Aesop’s scatological fable: ‘But don’t you worry about this. There’s no danger of passing your wits, for you don’t have any’. Likewise, Aesop has the mouse become friends with the frog, whereas the Delphians could have murdered him. Exactly the same incongruity between a fable and its context can be observed in Aristophanes’ Wasps, where Philocleon insinuates in a Sybaritic fable he is a friend of someone who wants to summon him in the play. Another accuser is called a drunk in an Aesopic fable told by Philocleon, whereas it is the latter who is intoxicated in the play. These correspondences between this comedy and the Life may not be coincidental, since the analogy does not stop here: in both Vespae and Vita the protagonist tells his accusers four fables, among others that of the scarab and the eagle, which fail to dissuade them from calling him to justice. It does not seem too far-fetched to compare Philocleon, summoned for assault and battery in Athens, to Aesop, accused of the theft of a bowl in Delphi, for Aristophanes has Philocleon himself do so!

The romantic biographer has Aesop not only unmistakably indicate who is who, but also remove any possible doubt as to how the fable is to be evaluated. This may be done either explicitly after the fable has been told (in an epimythium) or more implicitly within the fable. Thus Aesop qualifies both the daughter and the sheep, and thereby, respectively, himself and the Samians, as ‘foolish’ ([μορός] ter, 97), and the asses, in this case the Delphians, as ‘contemptuous’, while adding a pejorative diminutive suffix (140 καταπτώ-στων -αρίων); moreover, when Aesop tells that the asses ‘lost their way’ (as Daly translates ἔπλανηθησαν), he insinuates to the Delphians that they are led astray (or: on the wrong track). Through some fables Aesop graphically warns his audience: ‘we will all go down together’, literally like the asses with the old man, or figura-

67) 1399-1405, 1427-1432, 1435-1440, 1446-1448 (Aes. 423, 428, 438, 3).
68) 90. Günter Poethke, *Das Leben Aṣops* (Leipzig 1974; placed at my disposal by Andreas Beschorner in Munich) retains the ambiguity: “die Esel kamen vom Wege ab” (131).
tively like the sheep with the dogs, and the frog with the mouse. Such a graphical presentation is characteristic of the genre, which typically depicts metaphorically the inevitable consequences of some proposed act.

The reactions of the audiences to Aesop’s fables diverge. His first three aetiologies are differently received by his master. Xanthos first praises Aesop to the skies (after the aetiology on dreams) but ultimately wishes him to hell (after the aetiology on wine); Xanthos’ reaction to Aesop’s scatological aetiology is not reported, but the philosopher is not likely to feel flattered by Aesop’s gibe mentioned a minute ago. The three fables Aesop tells in Samos and Lydia get a favourable reception: Aesop persuades them (94, 99), although his proposal has a different objective: they step back from their decision to extradite Aesop, but he leaves Samos of his own accord (97). The seven fables in the Delphi section get quite different responses. The two fables Aesop tells in jail make his friend feel sad (129, 131). Aesop antagonizes the Delphians by the aetiology which explains that their ancestors were slaves, whereas they are not impressed by his final four fables: they just execute his death sentence (133, 135-139, 140, 141).

The functions of the fables in their direct contexts—one might say: at the micro-level—are diverse: aetiological (33G, 67, 68, 126), persuasive (94, 99, 133, 135-139), critical (97, 129, 131) or offensive (140, 141). Some fables are multifunctional. By the aetiology on wine Aesop tries to dissuade Xanthos from excessive drinking; Aesop’s aetiology on the Delphians is a gross insult. His fable about the vindictive dung beetle is obviously persuasive but has an aetiological appendix, explaining the insect’s absence during the season in which eagles nest. These ‘mixed’ functions have parallels in classical fable literature: in Aristophanes’ Birds Pisthetaerus uses the aetiological fable about the crested lark to persuade the chorus of their primordiality, in Aristotle’s Meteorologica Aesop tells a ferry-man a teasing aetiology about Charybdis gradually gulping down the water, and in Aristotle’s Rhetoric Stesichorus dissuades the Himeraeans from giving Phalaris a body-guard by means of a fable which is also an aetiology of the domestication of the horse69). The final

69) Ar. Av. 472-475; Arist. Mete. 2.3, 356b11-17; Stesich. 104, fr. 281 (a) PMG
six fables in *Aesop's Life* may well be grouped in three pairs (Merkle 113-114), but within each pair the second fable is a *Steigerung* compared to the first one, by an extra obscene or divine dimension. On account of the taboo themes of bestiality and incest, as well as the appeal to Zeus by both the dung beetle and Aesop, these fables (131, 135-139, 141) constitute a climax after the preceding ones (129, 133, 140). The two fables Aesop tells to his friend in jail (129, 131) do not have exactly the same function either: through the first Aesop criticises his friend and through the second himself.

The fables are linked to their context also at the 'meso-level' in that they anticipate the end of *Aesop's Life*. This compositional and structural function of the fables obviously strengthens the unity of the text. It has already been observed that Aesop's death is prefigured, so to speak, by the fate of the dogs, the mouse, the hare, and the old man. Moreover, the locust's life hung in the balance too. At the same time, the killing of the sheep by the wolves, of the frog by the bird of prey, and of the unborn eaglets by the scarab forebode the final retaliatory actions by Greeks and Babylonians against the Delphians.

By way of conclusion to this paper, I will look at the manifold interconnections between the fables and their context at the macro-level, the *Life* as a whole. One noteworthy (and notorious) common theme is obscenity, which is obvious in the fables dealing with scatology (the excreta of the prince and the dung of the beetle) and with normal (heterosexual) and abnormal (bestial and incestuous) sexual relations (in connection with misogyny). Another recurrent theme is Aesop's problem-solving ability, which is apparent in his aetiological fables (explaining why false dreams exist, why men look back before flushing the toilet, why alcohol abuse results in aggressiveness, where the Delphians are from, and (secondarily) why dung beetles are absent when eagles lay their eggs). Yet another central theme is Aesop's didacticism, which is clear in the epimythia and, again, the aetiologies mentioned above. Elaborating F.R. Adrados' observation70, one may connect the rural setting of four

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fables\textsuperscript{71}) to the part Aesop plays as a scapegoat (φαρμακός) in the fertility cycle. Furthermore, the fables have the theme of Aesop’s \textit{Eulenspiegeleien} in common with their context. In his fables, Aesop plays tricks on everybody. His oneirocritic aetiology is offensive both to himself and to Apollo: Aesop tries to explain seriously why he falls short of Xanthos’ wife, and meticulously avoids calling Apollo by name but enigmatically refers to him as ‘the leader/superior of the Muses’\textsuperscript{72}); this periphrastic \textit{damnatio memoriae} is in accordance with the anti-Apolline and ‘pro-Music’ tendency of \textit{recensio} G (it may be no coincidence that this fable is absent from the other recensions of the \textit{Life}, as Antonio la Penna\textsuperscript{73}) remarks). Furthermore, Aesop pokes fun at Xanthos by adding a teasing remark to his coprological fable, and insults Croesus and the Delphians by vicious incongruities between fable and context, as has been noted above. Aesop again insults the Delphians by having them descend from slaves (whereas he was born in slavery).

Aesop even uses word plays in his fables, as he does elsewhere in the \textit{Life}. These \textit{jeux de mots} are easily missed\textsuperscript{74}) but in fact deserve our attention. When Croesus faces the Samians with the choice between tribute and war, Aesop opposes freedom to slavery by the image of two roads. In describing the latter he warns them that its τέλος is ‘harsh’ (σκληρόν) and ‘difficult’ (G δυσέκβατον) or ‘dangerous’ (W ἐπικίνδυνον). This is ambiguous, for in the fable τέλος means ‘end’ but in the context ‘tribute’. Thus Aesop uses the double entendre to encode his warning not to vote to pay tribute. It is

\textsuperscript{71} 129 ἀροτριῶν, ἐν τῇ ἀρούρῃ, ἀροτρεῶς, ἀροτήρ; 131 εἰς ἄγρον; 140 γεωργός, ἐν ἄγρῳ; 141 εἰς τὸν ἄγρον.

\textsuperscript{72} 33G τὸ προστάτηθα προστάτηθα (142G τὸν -ην)/δ᾽ μείζον τῶν Μουσῶν; cf. τοῦ πρῶτον τούτου.

\textsuperscript{73} 269; cf. B. E. Perry, \textit{Studies in the Text History of the Life and Fables of Aesop} (Haverford, Pennsylvania 1936), 14-16; Nagy 290.

\textsuperscript{74} I am not convinced by Wiechers’ assertion (9, n. 5) that 131 “beruht...auf dem Wortspiel νόος - νοῦς” (cf. Nagy 1979, 283, n. 1 and the suggestion by J.J. Winkler, \textit{Auctor & Actor. A Narratological Reading of Apuleius’s Golden Ass} (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1985), 280), but fully concur with Stefan Merkle, who, in the discussion after my paper in Munich, proposed to connect 94 ἀπόκριμον and κριμώνδες with 140 κριμώνδη and 141 ἄπο τοῦ κρήμνου; see his \textit{Fable, Anecdote and Novella} in the Vita Aesopi. \textit{The Ingredients of a Popular Novel}, in: \textit{Atti del Convegno Internazionale sulla Letteratura di Consumo} (forthcoming). The ambiguity of 140 ἐπιλανηθηκαν has already been discussed above.
perfectly plausible to assume that Aesop gives his advice covertly, as he himself had announced not to speak outright but metaphorically (γνώμην μὲν οὐ δύωσο, λόγῳ δὲ τινι λέξιω υμῖν) because the local dignitaries had already decided to obey Croesus. Another polysemous word occurs in two positive reactions of the audience to fables told by Aesop. After Aesop’s etiology of false dreams, Xanthos praises him as εὐρεσίλογος, i.e. someone who is able to find λόγοι; after Aesop has the poor man show sympathy with the cicada’s λόγοι, Croesus sympathizes with Aesop’s λόγοι. In both instances one might be inclined to render automatically ‘words’, but ‘fables’ seems an appropriate translation too, as λόγος is the common word for fable in the Life and both instances occur in the very first sentence after Aesop’s fable. This second meaning is in accordance with both contexts: Aesop’s fable on dreams may have been invented for the occasion, and subsequent to his reconciliation with Croesus Aesop makes a present of an autograph of his collected fables to the royal library. Another ambiguity may be observed in the fable of the frog ‘tied up with’ (133 συνδεδεμένον; cf. δήσας) the mouse. This is equivocal, for it calls to mind both Aesop, whom the Delphians have bound (128 δήσαντες, δέσμιον), and the Delphians, whom Aesop has previously compared to ‘men in bondage’ (126 ὄμοιος τοῖς δεδεμένοις). As a matter of fact, these chains will be the death of all!

Finally, two structurally significant instances of word play may be observed in the fable of the plowman who comforted the mourning widow and in that of the frog who gave the mouse swimming lessons. Someone untied (ἐλυσεν) the oxen of the plowman (Aesop’s alter ego), who could not find (μὴ εὑρόν) them. The mouse (Aesop’s alias) squeaked: ‘I don’t know how to (οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι) swim’, whereupon the frog croaked: ‘I’ll teach you (ἐγώ σε διδάξω)!’ These four Greek verbs, two in the affirmative (λύω; διδάσκω) and two in the negative (ἐφύρισκω; ἐπίσταμαι), seem just run-of-the-mill words. But I would suggest that their use is meaningful, especially in view of the previous occurrence of a pun on three different meanings of λύω (‘solve’, ‘dissolve’, ‘untie’)?

75) 82G: ὁ δὲ Ζάνθος...μηδὲν εὐφρίσκον κατὰ νοῦν εἰπεῖν ἔλαβεν διορίαν ὡς τὸ σημεῖον ἐπιλύσῃ. μελλοῦσης δὲ τῆς ἐκκλησίας λόγου... 83G: εἰσῆλθεν
who solved problems to which others could not find a solution and who taught what others did not know. But in Delphi, the fabulist has lost the problem-solving ability and didactic qualities which had brought him fame, and these incapacities are to be his undoing. These ambiguities might be called programmatic: they are an additional argument in favour of Holzberg’s keen observation (33-75) of the structural contrasts between the opening and final scenes of *Aesop’s Life*. In the first chapters Aesop, born as a mute, manages to exculpate himself from his fellow slaves’ trumped-up charge of the theft of figs, whereas he, for all his eloquence, is unable to disprove the Delphians’ false accusation of the theft of a golden bowl in the end.

The above search for fables in ancient romances is presented as a pilot study on the intertextual function of embedded fables, whether alluded to or told in extenso. If its first part has elucidated that thematical relationships between fables and fable-like passages are not in themselves sufficient to attach the predicate “fable” or “allusion” to the latter, and its second and third parts that the intertextual relationships between fables and allusions and their contexts can be multifarious, this study has reached its aims. In any case, the fact that one fable from section three (*Vit. Alex. G* 3.19) and all allusions but one (Petr. *Sat.* 77) from section two have never been included, let alone studied, in modern collections of ancient fables, whereas, conversely, many of the non-fables from section one have been, demonstrates the need of the kind of research here undertaken.

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