

From Aeschylus to Phaedrus. Fables in tragedy, tragedy in fables*

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ABSTRACT

The genres fable and tragedy do not have much in common. The fable was understood as a means of persuasion or illustration but was not held in high esteem. Thus, it is only seldom used in tragedies. In contrast, parody of tragedy has a long literary tradition. Therefore, it is not surprising that Phaedrus offers a perfect Medea prologue in IV 7, full of intertextual references to the texts of his predecessors as well as to the literary criticism of these texts. He shows that he is aware of the literary discourse on poetry and on tragedy in particular. However, contextualizing this tragedy in his fables, he inscribes himself in the tradition of paratragodia.

KEYWORDS: Phaedrus, Fable, Tragedy, Parody

1. Introduction

At first glance, the genres fable and tragedy do not seem to have much in common. Tragedy belongs to the high style, has a very long tradition, is performed in public and has an important socio-political function. In contrast,

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the fable started out as nothing other than a means of persuasion or illustration used by orators, as we can read in Aristotle¹. The first collections of fables were meant as a repertorium or finding aid for these orators. The first literary collection of poetic fables as a literary genre was created by the Latin poet Phaedrus in the first century AD². Though he presented it proudly as a newly created Latin genre, it differs from the high genre of tragedy by belonging to low or small genres like the poems of Catullus or Martial. The socio-political function of the fable was of course completely different from the function of tragedy. It is often claimed that Phaedrus took on the voice of the ‘man from the street’, the underprivileged classes, and that he used the fable to criticise the upper classes, as he could utter his accusations in the realm of animals, in a veiled fashion and therefore without danger³. I am not convinced that this is entirely true. First, one has to consider that he talks about his recipients only as readers, and indeed it is hard to imagine that he went out to public gatherings and by chance had a fitting poem with him, which he could recite. Those poems were meant to be read and reading and having access to books was a privilege of the rich and highly educated Romans. Therefore, we have to look at those fables as artful poems, which have to be seen in the discourse of Latin poetry of the first century BC and AD. In addition, part of this discourse is the dispute between tragedy and other forms of poetry, especially the small forms.

The contrast between tragedy and comedy is already alluded to in the comedies of Aristophanes, a phenomenon called ‘paratragodia’⁴; moreover, it is used in Latin comedy, especially in Plautus⁵. The polemic statements of Lucilius aimed at tragedy, and especially at Accius⁶, are of importance here. Finally, we have to keep Horace’s words about Titius in mind (*epist.* I 3, 14)⁷:

an tragica desaevit et ampullatur in arte?
Or is he raging and thundering in tragic mode?

1. Cf. Arist. *Rb.* 1393 a 23-1394 a 8.
2. For general thoughts on Phaedrus’ poems, cf. GÄRTNER 2007, 2011, and 2015.
3. Cf. e. g. LA PENNA 1961 and 1968; CURRIE 1984; DEMANDT 1991; BLOOMER 1997; ADRADOS 1999, 120-126; OBERG 2000; BAEZA ANGULO 2011, XV-XX; RENDA 2012a; HOLZBERG 2012, 53-56. For a survey of recent literature on Phaedrus cf. GÄRTNER 2015, 21-58, esp. 37-41; GÄRTNER 2016a.
4. Cf. RAU 1967.
5. Cf. e. g. Plaut. *Pseud.* 707; Longin. 3, 1. Cf. LEFÈVRE 1982; BLÄNSDORF 1993, 57-74.
6. Lucil. 26. Cf. PUELMA 1949, 116-137; CHRISTES 1971, 103-140, esp. 119-120. Lucilius’ criticism also aims at the remoteness from reality; cf. CICHORIUS 1908, 130; CHRISTES 1971, 118. Realism and relevance to life is also one of Phaedrus’ main interests; cf. 1 prol. 3-4.
7. Cf. *sat.* I 10, 36-37: *turgidus Alpinus iugulat dum Memnona dumque | diffingit Rbeni luteum caput, haec ego ludo; ludere* can be compared with *iocorum genus* (Phaedr. IV 7, 2); cf. RENDA 2012a, 226. One could also compare Iuv. VI, 634-637: *fingimus haec altum satyrica sumente coturnum | scilicet, et finem egressi legemque priorum | grande Sophocleo carmen bacchamur biatu, | montibus ignotum Rutulis caeloque Latino?*

Parody about tragedy was widely spread⁸. Therefore, it is not surprising to find reflections about tragedy in fables, as I will show in the main part of my lecture.

2. Fable in Tragedy

First, a few words on fables in tragedy. This will be a very short chapter as traces of fables in tragedy are rare. Only three examples are of relevance to our question⁹:

In his *Agamemnon* Aeschylus lets the choir reflect on the question of what happens, when you let someone enter your house and family (the choir thinks about Helen in Troy who caused grief and destruction); here we find a longer passage, telling of a time when ‘someone once’ took a baby lion into his family which later caused a bloodbath. It is not really a fable and reminds one more of the longer similes in Homer, but it comes close. In a fragment from the *Myrmidones* (138-139 RADT), the example is more obvious: It is Achilles who mourns the death of his friend Patroclus, asking Antilochus to mourn him, the living, more and then citing ‘Libyan words’¹⁰, where an eagle is hit by an arrow and, seeing the feathered weapon, says that he is hit not by others, but by his own feathers.

In his *Aias*, Sophocles lets Menelaus and Teucrus argue. Menelaus says that he ‘once knew’ a man who was brave only in words but was later a coward, and Teucrus answers that he once knew a man who was stupid to gloat about fallen warriors. Again, for me these are not real fables. It is just the beginning ‘someone once did’ that seems related.

The reason for this result is quite obvious: Even as means of arguments, fables were thought of as inferior; Aristotle stresses that; and later other authors thought fables were more fitting for less gifted minds such as those of farmers¹¹. High literature more or less avoided fables.

3. Tragedy in Fable

It is interesting to see how fables were a great means to parody tragedy. No examples can be found in Greek literature. However, we can already find an example in the first literary Latin fables we have, the fables of Phaedrus.

8. One could also compare Petronius, who lets his characters cite poems, which seem to parody; though of course he knows how to write iambic trimeters (cf. 89), the burlesque poem 55, 6 is written in iambic senars. Cf. BENDZ 1941, 55; PANAYOTAKIS 1995, 87-88; SKUTSCH 1959, 1924. For the relationship between Phaedrus and Petron cf. GÄRTNER 2015, 55-56; 2016a.

9. Cf. HOLZBERG 2012, 14; VAN DIJK 1997.

10. *Fr.* 139, 1: ὄδ’ ἐστὶ μύθων τῶν Λιβυστικῶν κλέος. Cf. Arist. *Rh.* 1393 a 30: λόγοι, οἷον οἱ Αἰσώπειοι καὶ Λιβυκοί.

11. Cf. Arist. *Rh.* 1393 a 23-1394 a 8; Quint. *inst.* V 11, 19; Prisc. *preaex.* 1 (= III 430-431 KEIL); Liv. II 23, 8: *prisco illo dicendi et horrido modo*; Hor. *sat.* II 6, 77.

3.1. Phaedrus IV 7: Introduction

It is the fable IV 7, which is the most interesting poem in this context¹². The narrator, the 'I' of the fable, defends his poetry against a critic by delivering a prologue of a Medea tragedy¹³.

*Tu qui, nasute, scripta destringis mea
et hoc iocorum legere fastidis genus,
parua libellum sustine patientia,
seueritatem frontis dum placo tuae
et in cothurnis prodit Aesopus nouis.* 5

*Utinam nec umquam Pelii nemoris iugo
pinus bipenni concidisset Thessala,
nec ad professae mortis audacem uiam
fabricasset Argus opere Palladio ratem,
inhospitalis prima quae ponti sinus
patefecit in perniciem Graium et barbarum!* 10

*Namque et superbi luget Aetae domus,
et regna Peliae scelere Medeae iacent,
quae saeuum ingenium uariis inuoluens modis
illic per artus fratris explicuit fugam,
hic caede patris Peliadum infecit manus.* 15

*Quid tibi uidetur? «Hoc quoque insulsum est» ait
«Falsoque dictum; longe quia uetustior
Aegaea Minos classe perdomuit freta
iustoque uindicauit exemplo impetum».* 20

*Quid ergo possum facere tibi, lector Cato,
si nec fabellae te iuuant nec fabulae?
Noli molestus esse omnino litteris,
maiolem exhibeant ne tibi molestiam.*

*Hoc illis dictum est, qui stultitia nauseant
et ut putentur sapere caelum uituperant.* 25

You who turn up your nose at my writings and censure them, you, Mr. Critic, who disdain to read jokes of this kind, have patience to put up with my book a little longer, while I try to appease the stern look on your face by bringing Aesop on the stage for the first time in tragic buskins: O, would that never on Mt. Pelion's forest height The pine beneath the stroke had fallen of Thessalian axe, Nor Argus for that voyage bold, defying death,

12. Cf. CAVARZERE 1973/4; LUZZATTO 1976, 45-51; GÄRTNER 2000; OBERG 2000, 174-177; SOLIMANO 2005, 246-249; PELLUCCHI 2008; DUNSCH 2010; BAEZA ANGELO 2011, 99-101; RENDA 2012a, 222-235.

13. Whether the narrator is Phaedrus himself, is another question. When I speak of 'Phaedrus', I mean the *persona* of the poem.

With Pallas' aid had wrought to build the fatal ship
 That first explored the Euxine's hostile shore,
 The source of woe for Greeks and foreigners alike.
 Aye, deeply now the house of proud Aeetes mourns,
 And Pelias' realm lies stricken by Medea's crime,
 Whose savage will was subtly cloaked in many ways.
 The murdered limbs of her own brother paved her flight
 From Colchis, then on Grecian soil she stained the hands
 Of Pelias' daughters with the blood of parricide.
 What think you of this? «That, too, is tasteless,» says he, «and, besides,
 it's not true history, since long before that time Minos with his fleet had
 tamed the Aegean seas and so set up the model of an empire govern-
 ing by law.» What, then, can I possibly do for you, reader Cato, if nei-
 ther fables nor tragedies suit your taste? Don't meddle with literature at
 all, lest it confront you with greater annoyance than you bring upon it.
 This is said to those who become squeamish on account of their own
 folly, then in order to get credit for good taste, rail against heaven.
 [Translation by PERRY]

It is not hard to see that the poem is structured in a way often used by Phae-
 drus: We find an *expositio* 1-5, an *actio* (6-16), a *reactio* (17-20), a conclusion
 (21-24) and an *epimythium* (25-26). As usual, the poet includes no distinct
 local or temporal information. Moreover, the fable is confined to one action,
 one place and one time: all elements, which are characteristic of fables. But
 instead of a real fable, the reader finds something about literary criticism, a
 topic Phaedrus often talks about in his pro- and epilogues. The *expositio*
 starts with Phaedrus asking a critic to accept his new little book (*libellus* 3)
 with a little patience (*parua ... patientia* 3)¹⁴. The critic must have uttered
 harsh criticism about Phaedrus' poems before. It is important to see that
 these first lines are not only the *expositio*, but that they refute possible accu-
 sations of poor poetry. The first line shows that Phaedrus does not really
 want to discuss literature with his opponent. The harsh address *tu qui*, and
 especially the following vocative *nasute* make that clear¹⁵. At the same time,
 the object of that criticism (*scripta destringis mea* 1) is marked by a penthem-
 imeres; and the hyperbaton illustrates the *destringere*, which literally means

14. Phaedrus uses the form *libellus* alluding to the Callimachean program found in Catull. 1 as he did in I prol. 3; cf. GÄRTNER 2015, 63. Here it is used as a further argument that it will not bother the reader too much; but this has also already become a topos; cf. Ov. *am. praef.*
15. That this is a vocative rather than an adverb seems obvious if one compares similar addresses (cf. III 11, 6; III 15, 2; IV 11, 7). The exact meaning of *nasute* is controversial; BERNARDI PERINI 1966/7, 259-261, preferred «tu, critico accigliato e feroce», cf. Hor. *sat.* I 6, 5; cf. CAVARZERE 1973/4, 115-116; RENDA 2012a, 223-224. But if one looks at Hor. *epist.* I 5, 23; I 19, 45; Sen. *suas.* VII 12; Mart. I 3, 5-6; XII 37, 1-2; XIII 2, 1-4; Quint. *inst.* XI 3, 80, Perry's translation 'you who turn up your nose' or the German 'Naserümpfen' seem adequate translations. Cf. MORGAN 1992, 280: 'disdainful'; DUNSCH 2010, 40.

to tear apart and metaphorically to scathe¹⁶. This is emphasised by the position of *tu* and *mea* at the beginning and end of the line. In the next line, the critic's aversion to reading (*legere fastidis 2*)¹⁷ is equally marked, as it is almost crushed by its object through a hyperbaton (*hoc iocorum ... genus 2*). Furthermore, the immediate sequence of three short and three long syllables (*legere fāstīdīs*) emphasises hasty reading and long distaste¹⁸. The first five lines of the expositio are just one long sentence; the first two lines — a relative clause — concern the critic, the last two lines — a *dum* clause — the poet, while the main clause with the plea for patient acceptance takes on a central position. Thus, the first lines turn out to be a very artistic and elaborate miniature of a *captatio benevolentiae*.

However, the poet does not only demonstrate his art, but plays with the accusation of the critic against the *genus iocorum*¹⁹, for the critic's address as a *nasute* ridicules the opponent and reveals the satiric character of the whole poem²⁰. This is underlined by the contrast between the exaggerated humbleness of the poet and the severity of the critic. But most hilarious is the picture of an old Aesop whom Phaedrus brings on the stage with new²¹ *cothurni*²², with which he is unfamiliar. The contrast between Aesop the former slave as an actor in a tragedy, the high genre, is burlesque; but in the imperial period, these *cothurni* became so high, that they were ridiculous because you could hardly walk²³. Just imagine old Aesop in those shoes! Furthermore, the height

16. Cf. Phaedr. I 29, 1-2; Ov. *trist.* 2, 563: *non ego mordaci destrinxi carmine quemquam*; cf. DUNSCH 2010, 40; GÄRTNER 2015, 257.
17. For *fastidire* cf. Quint. *inst.* V 13, 22: *ut quae dicendo refutare non possumus, quasi fastidendo calcemus*.
18. At the same time the author plays with the reception situation. While the recipient is always described as a reader (cf. here: *legere 2*, *lector 21*) and while the author asks for a little patience for his book (3), intradiegetically (while we are reading) he starts to *talk* to his 'reader' not to put away the book because Aesop now 'enters the stage'. Cf. GÄRTNER 2015, 35-36.
19. Phaedrus calls his poems *fabellae*, *fabulae*, *ioci*, *neniae*, *argutiae* and thereby alludes to the refined polished poetry of the Augustan period; for *ioci* cf. I prol. 7; I 21, 2; II prol 5; III prol. 37. *iocus* is used already in I prol. 7 in a programmatic way, characterising the whole work as a poetological game. The defence against critics has been a topos in Latin literature since the time of Terence and becomes prevalent in the poetry of the 1st century BC and AD; but no other poet has to fight as hard as Phaedrus — a witty exaggeration of a well-trodden path; cf. GÄRTNER 2015, 43-5 and 66-67; see below.
20. Cf. CAVARZERE 1973/4, 115-116.
21. *nouis* is a conjecture by PRITHOU for the transmitted *nobis*, usually accepted. DUNSCH 2010, 41, tried to keep *nobis*, explaining it as a *dativus ethicus*, and rejected *nouis* as spoiling the point and being pedantic. Still it seems hard to keep, especially as Phaedrus himself acts as Aesop while *nouis* just creates suspense; it does not spoil the point, as the outcome of the experience is open. In addition, *nouis* provides another ironic accent, as tragedy itself was an old genre; cf. OBERG 2000, 175-176. It is Phaedrus giving tragedy a new outfit as he does with the fables, like he said before in 4 prol. 13: *usus uetusto genere, sed rebus nouis*.
22. The *cothurni* being the characteristic accessories of tragedy become synonyms for tragedy itself (cf. Hor. *carm.* II 1, 9-16; Verg. *ecl.* 8, 9-10; Ov. *trist.* II 553-554; Quint. *inst.* X 2, 22).
23. Cf. Luc. *JTr.* 41; Philostr. *VA* V 9, p. 89; Mart. III 20, 7; V 30, 1; XI 9, 1; Iuv. VI 634-637; VII 71-73. – SOLIMANO 2005, 246, suggested that this could be another joke as Phaedrus may be alluding to the actor Clodius Aesopus mentioned by Cicero (*div.* I 80; *Tusc.* II 39). This is

could also be an allusion to the high genre the fable writer is about to perform²⁴. Therefore, these first lines fulfil one purpose of the fable as Phaedrus had declared himself in the prologue of the first book: *quod risum mouet* (1 prol. 3) and what the critic had disliked in IV 7, 2. We almost expect the ‘actor’ to fall, the experiment to fail.

Out of the blue, the declamation of tragic verses starts, which we can at once recognize as the prologue of a Medea tragedy. This sudden start and change to the high style of tragedy is funny itself but is also significant for the character of parody. Every well-read recipient would expect these lines to be spoken by Medea’s nurse²⁵. Therefore, the declamation-situation doubles as Phaedrus (as a *persona* in communication with the critic) seems to let Aesop speak who in turn lets the nurse speak²⁶. The ‘nurse’ might also be a subtle allusion to the genre of the fables as they were sometimes called *fabulae nutricularum*²⁷.

Their rhetorical refinement means that these verses are even more elaborate than the *expositio* — in terms of both structure and stylistic ornaments. There are eleven lines comprising just two sentences (6-11; 12-16). The first sentence, an unrealisable wish in the past tense, has a strict structure of three times two lines (*nec ... nec ...* relative clause). Some of the many stylistic features include the accumulation of *u*, the alliteration and the homoioteleuton in 6 (*utinam [...] umquam*); the accumulation of *i* combined with a play with consonants and a hyperbaton in 7 (*pinus bipenni concidisset Thessala*), the stress on *inhospitalis prima* before the relative pronoun in 10, which is further stressed by penthemimeres and hyperbaton and finally the *i* and *e* accumulation in *patefecit in perniciem* (10), which presents the main statement of these six lines: If the wishes could have been fulfilled, this would not have happened: the opening of the *inhospitalis pontus* that caused disaster for the Greeks and barbarians.

The structure of the second sentence is different. *namque* marks it as an explanation. The disaster for the Greeks (12) and barbarians (13) is described in strict parallel²⁸. Medea caused it, and her destructive mind holds the pivotal line in the middle (14)²⁹. The following lines explain this, taking up lines 12 and 13 in the same order — what Medea did to the barbarians (*illic* 15; 12) and to the Greeks (*hic* 16; 13). Both lines have a strikingly parallel structure³⁰.

possible and a pun for the well-read recipient, even though most of them will have thought of Phaedrus’ predecessor.

24. MATTIACCI 2010 showed how Martial and Apuleius defended their works in a very similar way.

25. Cf. Cic. *nat. deor.* III 75: *illa anus*.

26. Cf. DUNSCH 2010, 42-43.

27. Quint. *inst.* I 9, 2; cf. Hor. *sat.* II 6, 77-78: *fabulae aniles*; Str. I 2, 8; cf. fn. 11. Cf. DUNSCH 2010, 41-42.

28. *Graium et barbarum* is taken up from 11 in reverse order.

29. It is clear to the reader that Medea’s *saevum ingenium* takes centre stage; but her action is veiled, as shown by the accumulation of *u* and the hyperbaton in *uariis inuoluens modis*.

30. *illic* – *hic* (place), *per artus* – *caede* (means), *fratris* – *patris* (killed relative; stressed by unison at the same position in the verse), *explicuit fugam* – *infecit manus* (action; predi-

Therefore, the disaster Medea causes is described with increasing intensity: first in general (11), then the crime itself (12-13) and finally the results (15-16)³¹. In contrast to Euripides' or Ennius' version (see below) Medea becomes the destructing force here³². At the same time, it becomes clear that it is no longer possible to think of the nurse as the speaker, as the nurse might be afraid but should remain loyal to Medea. The well-read recipient will be surprised about this new opening but will never learn who is talking because the critic does not notice this important change, as we will see³³.

Phaedrus used two different kinds of composition to structure his 'prologue': in the first part, a serial composition with the main statement at the end, in the second, a 'ringkomposition' with Medea's wild mind in the middle as the driving force. As sudden as this prologue started it stops. This immediate transgression in 17 and the simple style of the remaining lines, where the critic is asked what he thinks, underline the effective contrast to the 'tragedy'³⁴.

3.2. Phaedrus IV 7: Dramatic Intertextuality

The poet's ability to write an elaborate tragedy becomes even more obvious when we look at the intertextual references. They prompt us to think of similar Medea prologues³⁵. The most famous is of course the Medea from Euripides.

Εἴθ' ὄφελ' Ἄργουζ μὴ διαπτάσθαι σκάφος
 Κόλχων ἐς αἶαν κυανέας Συμπληγάδας,
 μηδ' ἐν νάπαισι Πηλίου πεσεῖν ποτε
 τμηθεῖσα πεύκη, μηδ' ἐρετμῶσαι χέρας
 ἀνδρῶν ἀριστεῶν οἳ τὸ πάγχρυσον δέρος
 Πελῖαι μετῆλθον. οὐ γὰρ ἄν δέσποιν' ἐμῆ

cate-object; play with *u-a*, *a-u* in the final words); there is no exact correspondence only to *Peliadum*, which refers to *patris* as to *manus*. One should further observe the *f*-alliteration in 15 and the *p*-alliteration in 16.

31. Cf. LUZZATTO 1976, 49.

32. It is not convincing that the Argonauts should here be made responsible for everything, as RENDA 2012a, 229, argues. RENDA stresses *audacia* and *professa mors* (8). But that makes the Argonauts responsible for death on sea which is a well-known topos of the *πρῶτος εὐρετής*; cf. GÄRTNER 2009. What Medea does is that she reacts to that for which she alone is responsible. Therefore, the role of Medea does change regarding the Ennian model, as RENDA points out, but in a different way (cf. Hor. *ars* 123: *sit Medea ferox inuictaque*; see below).

33. Cf. DUNSCH 2010, 44.

34. I will discuss these lines below; here one should note the anapher *quid* (17; 21), connecting both the following sections (the question and answer of poet and critic as well as the last utterance of the poet) and the effective final line 24 (hyperbaton and accumulation of *m: maiorem* [...] *molestiam*).

35. For close comparisons, cf. CAVARZERE 1973/4; GÄRTNER 2000; OBERG 2000, 174-177; PELLUCCHI 2008; RENDA 2012a, 222-235.

Μήδεια πύργους γῆς ἔπλευσ' Ἴωλκίας
 ἔρωτι θυμὸν ἐκπλαγεῖσ' Ἰάσονος·
 οὐδ' ἂν κτανεῖν πείσασα Πελιάδας κόρας
 πατέρα κατώκει τήνδε γῆν Κορινθίαν 10

Would God that Argo's hull had never flown
 Through those blue Clashing Rocks to Colchis-land,
 Nor that the axe-hewn pine in Pelion's glens
 Ever had fallen, nor filled with oars the hands
 Of hero-princes, who at Pelias' hest
 Quested the Golden Fleece! My mistress then
 Medea never had sailed to Iolcos' towers
 With love for Jason thrilled through all her soul
 Nor had on Pelias' daughters wrought to slay
 Their sire, nor now in this Corinthian land
 Dwelt... [Translation by MAIR]

But in Rome Ennius' Medea was no less famous; and especially its prologue was often cited (*frg.* 103)³⁶:

*utinam ne in nemore Pelio securibus
 caesa accidisset abiegna ad terram trabes,
 neue inde nauis inchoandi exordium 210
 cepisset, quae nunc nominatur nomine
 Argo, quia Argiui in ea delecti uiri
 uecti petebant pellem inauratam arietis
 Colchis, imperio regis Peliae, per dolum.
 nam numquam era errans mea domo efferret pedem 215
 Medea animo aegro amore saeuo saucia.*

Would that in the woods of Pelion the fir trunks
 Had never come down to the earth, cut with the ax,
 Or that the first building of the ship had never started
 To commence, that ship which is called by the name
 Argo because of the chosen Argives who sailed in her
 And sought to carry away the golden fleece of the ram
 Of Colchis by the command of King Pelias, through a trick.
 For never would my mistress Medea, going astray, sick in her soul,
 Wounded by savage love, have stepped foot from her house. [Translation by COLAVITO]

36. PELLUCCHI 2008 stresses that the choice of Ennius is (after the criticism of Horace) rather unusual, as one preferred Accius and Pacuvius; but this prologue was well known all the time as PELLUCCHI shows herself. For the quotations, cf. fn. 58 and 61.

It is obvious that Phaedrus dealt with both prologues. I just want to point out the most important references³⁷. As these are more notable in the version of Ennius, I will take this as my starting point. The parallels in the first sentences are striking (*utinam ne* [...] *neue* [...] *quae* Enn. 208-212 – *utinam nec* [...] *nec* [...] *quae* Phaedr. 6-11); but we should notice that Phaedrus ‘improves’ this because he changes the construction by Euripides and Ennius: μή – μηδ’ and *ne* – *neue* to *nec* – *nec* and thereby indicates that at least two wishes are to be expected³⁸. In addition, every *nec* sentence is allocated two lines as well as the relative clause, gaining the strict structure I mentioned before³⁹. The many verbal references show that Phaedrus wants to create clear differences, for example: *Pelii nemoris iugo* (Phaedr. 6) instead of *in nemore Pelio* (Enn. 208); *bipenni* (7) – *securibus* (208); *pinus* (7) – *abiegna trabes* (209); *concidisset* (7) – *accidisset* (209). It is interesting that he does not mention the ship’s name *Argo* as Ennius does; although he does mention her builder *Argus*, thereby alluding to Ennius’ explanation of the ship’s name, but at the same time making it clear that he himself prefers another explanation (9)⁴⁰. Finally, I want to point out that he avoids pleonasm and periphrases, which Ennius uses frequently and which were already criticised by ancient commentators⁴¹. One could go on here⁴².

The parallels between Ennius and Phaedrus are much closer than those between Phaedrus and Euripides. As Ennius follows Euripides quite closely, this could explain the parallels between Phaedrus and the Greek author. However, it seems clear that Phaedrus also alludes to the Greek original itself. One just has to look at the beginning *utinam nec umquam* (Phaedr. 6) – Εἶθ’ ὄφελ’ ... μηδ’ ... ποτε (1-3)⁴³. In addition, he changes the wood ‘back’ to pine, while Ennius describes the *Argo* as being built out of fir (*abiegna* [...] *trabes* (Enn. 209) – *pinus* (Phaedr. 7) – πεύκη (Eur. 4))⁴⁴. Further allusions

37. Cf. CAVARZERE 1973/4; LUZZATTO 1976, 45-51; PELLUCCHI 2008.

38. *nec* (6) is an emendation by BONGARS for the transmitted *ne* which cannot be kept because of the metre.

39. Cf. CAVARZERE 1973/4, 101.

40. Cf. Catull. 64, 1-46, where we can find a similar procedure; cf. THOMAS 1982. We do not find Ennius’ version elsewhere; perhaps he invented it; for Ennius as *interpres* or *aemulator*, cf. LENNARZ 1994, who stressed Ennius’ role as a translator, and LEFÈVRE 2013, who thought that Ennius used Euripides scholia as «Anregungen aus der Euripides-Literatur für das eigene Schaffen». Phaedrus suggests the common explanation of the ship’s name after its builder. Cf. CAVARZERE 1973/4, 105-107; PELLUCCHI 2008, 239.

41. For example *nominatur nomine, abiegna* [...] *trabes, inchoandi exordium cepisset, efferret pedem*. For ancient criticism on these lines, cf. fn. 58.

42. Further parallels: *regna Peliae* (Phaedr. 13) – *regis Peliae* (Enn. 214); *saeuum ingenium* (14) – *amore saeuo* (216). Cf. CAVARZERE 1973/4; PELLUCCHI 2008. As these references to Ennius are obvious and Phaedrus shows elsewhere that he is familiar with Ennius’ tragedies (III epil. 34), it is astonishing that in his own genre, the fable, he does not refer to Ennius (as far as we can conclude from the textual transmission) though Ennius continued to have an effect with his fable of the crested lark (Gell. II 29); cf. Müller 1976.

43. Cf. CAVARZERE 1973/4, 101; PELLUCCHI 2008, 239.

44. Cf. Eur. *Andr.* 863; Catull. 64, 1-10; Hor. *epod.* 16, 57-58; Prop. III 22, 11-14; Ov. *am.* II 11, 2; *met.* I 94-95. It seems that it was Ennius, who changed this; cf. JOCELYN 1967, 352-353.

can be found, e.g. to Catullus⁴⁵, and there are allusions to other authors who do not focus on the myth⁴⁶. And of course, we lost Ovid's Medea, so Phaedrus may have alluded to that prologue too⁴⁷.

So far, we can already see that Phaedrus shows himself to be a *poeta doctus*, who refers to the technique of the Augustan poets⁴⁸. Nevertheless, it is possible to detect even more, and more subtle, kinds of allusions.

One can see that Phaedrus also plays with the metre. His fables are, as he says himself in his first prologue, written in iambic *senarii* where a long syllable or two short syllables are allowed to replace the second and fourth short one⁴⁹. Horace had criticised Ennius' tragic iambs because of these long syllables⁵⁰.

And indeed one can feel the *magnum pondus* in the Medea prologue of Ennius. In six out of nine verses, the second or fourth short syllable is replaced by a long or two short syllables. These replacements can also be found in Phaedrus' fables⁵¹. In our poem, such changes occur in every second line⁵². However, when Phaedrus switches to tragedy, only two out of eleven verses have a long syllable instead of a short one. This is no coincidence. Phaedrus put more *cura* and *ars* in his poetry. But do the two mistakes mean that changes were not made to a sufficient extent? Or were the mistakes included for the purpose of being found⁵³? It is necessary to examine the location of

45. Catull. 64, 1-11: *Peliaco [...] uertice pinus* (1); *fines Aeetaeos* (3); *diua [...] ipsa [...] fecit* (8); *pineae texta* (9); cf. OBERG 2000, 176.

46. Cf. e. g. Verg. *Aen.* V 448-449: *concidit [...] pinus*.

47. Medea was a prominent theme in Ovid's work and traces of Ennius' prologue can be found quite often; for a short survey, cf. PELLUCCHI 2008, 237-238. Phaedrus was very familiar with Ovid's works, as one can see even in IV 7 itself; cf. CAVARZERE 1973/4; PELLUCCHI 2008; e. g. *prima malas docuit mirantibus aequoris undis | Peliaco pinus uertice caesa uias* (Ov. *am.* II 11, 1-2); *quaque uiam fecit Thessala pinus* (Ov. *epist.* 18, 158); *barbara me tellus et inhospita litora Ponti (trist. III 11, 7) sed uetus huic nomen, positaque antiquius urbe, | constat ab Absyrti caede fuisse loco. | nam rate, quae cura pugnacis facta Mineruae | per non temptatas prima cucurrit aquas, | impia desertum fugiens Medea parentem | dicitur his remos applicuisse uadis* (trist. III 9, 5-10 and passim); *alta iacet Calydon: lugent iuuenesque senesque* (met. VIII 526). Therefore, it is possible that there was a similar prologue at the beginning of Ovid's tragedy and Phaedrus referred to it. This could explain the parallels to Seneca's Medea, if one does not want to assume that the philosopher read Phaedrus' fables; for example: *audax nimium qui freta primus | rate tam fragili perfida rupit* (Med. 301-302); *traxit in unum Thessala pinus* (Med. 336); *Paladia compacta manu [...]* *Argo* (Med. 365-367); cf. LUZZATTO 1976, 48. The relationship between Seneca and Phaedrus is much discussed; for a short survey, cf. GÄRTNER 2015, 56-58.

48. Cf. CAVARZERE 1973/4; DAMS 1970; LAMBERTI 1980; GÄRTNER 2007 and 2015, esp. 43-48.

49. Cf. AXELSON 1949; PIGHI 1954; GUAGLIANONE 1965; KORZENIEWSKI 1970; BARABINO 1981; CAVARZERE 2001; GLAUCHIER 2009, 262.

50. Cf. *ars* 251-262, bes. 259-262: *et Enni | in scaenam missos cum magno pondere uersus | aut operae celeris nimium curaue carentis | aut ignoratae premit artis crimine turpi*.

51. BARABINO 1981, gives the percentage for every book. The second short syllable is, for example, replaced by a long (or two short syllables) in almost half of the lines.

52. In the opening lines (1-5) twice, at the end (17-26) seven times. This is the average; cf. BARABINO 1981.

53. KOSTER 1991, 84, rejected this hypothesis, as one could excuse at most one deliberate mistake as a joke.

these long syllables. The first example is the final line of the first part (11). As I have shown before, this line is the climax of the first part: *patefecit in perniciem Graium et barbarum*. The ‘wrong’ long syllable does not only give the line more weight but stresses the most important word *perniciem*. And it is this disaster that will be explained in the following lines. In line 14 there are even two ‘wrong’ long syllables: *quae saeuum ingenium uariis inuoluens modis*. This is stressed as we also find two short syllables instead of a long one in the arsis of each of these words. As I have shown before, this is the most important line of the second part, and this time, it is placed in the centre: Medea’s mind is veiled in different ways but it is the cause of all disaster; hereby it becomes clear that Phaedrus’ Medea is not the vulnerable young women Ennius shows, but *ferox inuictaque* as Horace insisted (*ars* 123)⁵⁴. What Phaedrus does is create a literary joke: He knows of course that tragic iambs differ from the *senarii*. Therefore, he writes better lines than Ennius, showing that he read his Horace. However, the two ‘mistakes’ make us aware of the metre; they are certainly no mistakes but are purposely placed at pivotal points.⁵⁵ Therefore, Phaedrus’ metre is ‘polished’ as he claims in his first prologue.

Perhaps we can also find another improvement on Ennius. Unfortunately, the rest of Ennius’ prologue has been lost; but as he follows Euripides⁵⁶ on the whole we can assume that Medea’s nurse also talks about how Medea induced Pelias’ daughters to kill, cut and cook their father to rejuvenate him (which of course does not work). Phaedrus left out the reason for the voyage given by Ennius and instead related the motive behind Pelias’ death in an elaborate way (as I have shown). Therefore, he does without things too well known in favour of a shorter and polished version. Thus, he obeys the laws of *breuitas* he himself demands⁵⁷ as well as the Horatian laws of *limae labor* and *mora* (*ars* 291). By doing so, he demonstrates that he is familiar with the literary critical discussion about these lines of Ennius. One of the reasons the prologue survived was that it was cited in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (II 34) as a bad example because poets should not revert to something too far back (*nimum longe*). Later in the rhetorical discourse, these lines become the classic example of an introduction referring to aspect too far back⁵⁸.

54. Cf. ftn. 32. RENDA 2012a, 230, rightly points out that this Medea shows similarity to the characters of the fables; cf. IV 2, where the old weasel veils itself to catch mice; the fable is told as an example for the *persona*, who claims that one has to look at the fables carefully as more than one expects is hidden there (*conditit cura* 7).

55. Cf. PELLUCCHI 2008, 23-24.

56. For Ennius’ treatment of Euripides’ text, cf. LEO 1912, 97-99; GRILLI 1965, 186-191; ARKINS 1982; CLASSEN 1992, esp. 124-126; CLASSEN shows how Ennius taking his recipient into consideration changed the order, reduced some things and added others; thereby, his aim was more clarity and comprehensibility and therefore greater effect; cf. LEFÈVRE 1997; FUHRMANN 1999.

57. Cf. II prol. 12; III 10, 60; III epil. 8; IV epil. 7; cf. GALLI 1983, 195-196; GÄRTNER 2015, 46-47.

58. Cf. Cic. *fat.* 34-35; *inv.* I 91; *top.* 61; Quint. *inst.* V 10, 83-84; Iul. Vict. *rhet.* p. 415 HALM; other grammarians cited these lines because of the antiquated language and style; cf. PELLUCCHI 2008, 233-234; for Euripides’ prologue cf. Clem. Al. *Strom.* VIII 9, 27.

However, the scholia to Euripides show that his Medea prologue was thought to be exemplary⁵⁹. Nevertheless, even these lines were criticised, because the hysteron proteron of the first lines displeased some critics (First the pine should fall on Mount Pelion and then the Argo could be built and then fly through the Symplegades)⁶⁰. Something that Phaedrus did reverse! So we can conclude that in antiquity there was a literary dispute about the prologues of Euripides and Ennius, and that Phaedrus avoided what was criticised in each case.

Of course, one can ask why Phaedrus chose a Medea prologue to demonstrate his art. The myth of Medea is one that has been focussed on particularly frequently, and Ennius' verses were quoted exceptionally often, probably becoming a benchmark for every Roman tragedian⁶¹.

And of course one can ask why Phaedrus includes tragic lines in his fables at all. A first explanation could be the metre, as the iambic it does not allow much else. A sample of epic or didactic poetry in iambus would never have convinced a critic such as the *lector Cato*. Moreover, a parody — and this is what we have here — will work only if the contrast to the genre is as great as possible⁶²; and the parody of tragedy had a long tradition as I mentioned before.

However, it is not only a parody of tragedy⁶³. It is also a witty caricature of literary criticism. We have seen that Phaedrus' fable is 'better' than Euripides' and Ennius' as he corrects what had been scathed by literary criticism. This could be meant seriously⁶⁴, but we have to look at the remaining lines.

59. schol. p. 140, 8-9 SCHWARTZ.

60. Cf. schol. p. 140, 10-11 SCHWARTZ. Of course, this criticism does not do justice to the Euripidean prologue; cf. PAGE 1938, 61: it «is not a hysteron-proteron, but a logical sequence of thoughts». Whether grammarians influenced Ennius, cf. LEO 1912, 97-99; GRILLI 1965, 186-187; RÖSER 1939, 4-8, tried to explain the transposition in Ennius' prologue using stoic thoughts on cause and effect; CLASSEN 1992, 125, rightly rejected elaborate hypotheses like these; cf. JOCELYN 1967, 351.

61. Cf. Cic. *Cael.* 18; *fin.* I 4; *Tusc.* I 45; *nat. deor.* III 75; *top.* 61; Varro *ling.* VII 33; Don. *Ter. Phorm.* 157; Hieron. *epist.* 127, 5, 2; Prisc. *gramm.* VII 40 (=II 320, 15-18 KEIL); *metr. Ter.* 14 (=III 423, 35-424, 8); cf. JOCELYN 1967, 113-118 and 342-356; cf. fn. 58.

62. Cf. KOLLER 1956; CEBE 1966; ROSE 1993; GLEI 1992; MÜLLER 1994.

63. Talking of parody does not imply that these verses were badly done (on parody through style cf. NØJGAARD 1967, 135); on the contrary: As shown elsewhere (cf. GÄRTNER, in this volume, 59-75) Phaedrus is highly acquainted with the refinements of the Callimachean tradition in Roman poetry. He takes over the claims — especially of the Augustan poets, exaggerates them and satirizes them by transforming them into an 'inappropriate' genre, the fable. The perfect prologue fits perfectly into this program; it is the context that marks it as a parody. For another point of view, cf. e. g. PELUCCI 2008, 244, who stresses the seriousness of the intention: «da adeguarlo ai canoni estetici della poetica augustea [...] una reazione sistematica a puntuali stimoli della critica oraziana»; for a similar view on the seriousness of Phaedrus' ambitions, cf. DAMS 1970; LAMBERTI 1980; HAMM 2000.

64. Cf. PELUCCI 2008; RENDA 2012a, 228; see fn. 63.

3.3. *Phaedrus IV 7: The poet and the critic*

The critic answers⁶⁵ but he is not concerned about poetry itself or does not comprehend the subtle intertextuality. What he criticises, is a factual detail⁶⁶: The Argo was not the first ship, he says, as the ship of Minos was much older (18-20)⁶⁷. Again, Phaedrus turns out to be a *poeta doctus* because the question about the oldest ship was the subject of controversial debate in ancient literature⁶⁸. Sometimes she was thought to be the first ship of all (a position mainly held in Latin literature), sometimes to be only the first ship to sail through the Symplegades and the Black Sea (the *Pontus Euxinus*)⁶⁹. Knowing this we recognize the poet's perfidy. He led the critic into a trap. Of course, we heard him recite that the Argo was the first ship to open the *inhospitalis* [...] *ponti sinus* (10); but a reader familiar with the literary tradition would understand that the expression could cover both ideas: *pontus* could mean the sea (wherever) or, written with a capital P, only the *Pontus* — the Black Sea⁷⁰. Again a literary debate was alluded to, but the critic did not notice this and exposed himself (and not Phaedrus' poem) as *insulsus* (17)⁷¹.

We have to consider that the topos of poets having to fight against criticism existed as late as Callimachus (*liuor*). As he does with many other topoi, Phaedrus seems to exaggerate this one too.⁷² His critic is extremely severe, but is also a mere caricature of a critic⁷³. Therefore, the poet dismisses him with rather harsh words (21-24); but even these lines are not free from allu-

65. Transmitted is *ait*, but one should consider PITHOU'S conjecture *ais*; cf. BURCK 1993, 724; cf. III prol. 4. The fictitiousness of the poem is stressed, as it is Phaedrus who lets the interlocutor speak. Therefore, the whole scene becomes imaginary. This is consistent with other poems where the *persona* expresses fear of not being acknowledged, though the criticism is all in his mind; cf. e. g. 2 epil.; cf. GÄRTNER 2016b.

66. This is on the same level as the assumed criticism in 1 prol. 5-7 about speaking trees; cf. LUZZATTO 1976, 50; GÄRTNER 2015, 65-66.

67. This version of the myth (cf. Thuc. I 4, 1; I 8, 2) says that Minos was the first owner of a *fleet*, that he defeated the pirates and became the first ruler of the sea.

68. It is actually still debated; cf. JACKSON 1997; DRÄGER 1999.

69. Cf. v. WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF 1962, 322 ft. 1: «Durch die Symplegaden [...] ist die Argo zuerst gefahren. So sagt es Euripides. Andr. 864 [...] Daraus ist die später verbreitete Mißdeutung entstanden, daß sie überhaupt das erste Schiff war». In Greek literature, Eratosthenes (*Cat.* 35) offers the first evidence for the Argo being the first ship of all. This version becomes dominant in Latin literature (cf. ft. 44).

70. Cf. *Pontus Euxinus antea ab inhospitali feritate Axinus appellatus* (Plin. *nat.* VI 1); Ov. *trist.* IV 4, 55-56. Phaedrus purposefully differentiates from unambiguous expressions like Catull. 64, 11; Ov. *met.* VI 721; Manil. I 412-413; Sen. *Med.* 318-319; Val. Fl. I 1-2; cf. CAVARZERE 1973/4, 108; LUZZATTO 1976, 45 and 48.

71. In addition, he thereby becomes an *exemplum* of *stultitia*. It is the characteristic of a fable to give an example, all the wittier that the critic himself talks about Minos as an *exemplum* (20) of justice.

72. For Phaedrus' use of these topoi cf. GÄRTNER 2015, 43-47; cf. in this volume 59-75.

73. He is surely the opposite of the ideal critic Horace described (*ars* 445-452); cf. RENDA 2012a, 224.

sions. One could ask which Cato⁷⁴ is meant⁷⁵, Cato censorius or Uticensis or even Valerius Cato⁷⁶? Perhaps the first because of his proverbial severity⁷⁷. Furthermore, the opposition of *fabellae* and *fabulae* (here to be translated with ‘tragedy’ though elsewhere Phaedrus does not make a distinction between those expressions) is witty. Finally, the last two lines (23-23) contain a menace alluding to a very similar statement of Terence⁷⁸ thus showing how old the topos of literary criticism is.

The *epimythium*, the last two lines, generalise the critic’s behaviour. Again rather drastic words: This is said against those who get sick (*nauseant* 25)⁷⁹ reading my poetry, because of their own stupidity and who want to criticise heaven itself (*caelum uituperant* 26). The last part is usually taken as an exaggeration expressing great annoyance and impertinence⁸⁰; but *caelum* could also mean the chisel of a builder or sculptor, meaning that it could be understood as a metaphor (like *lima*) for elaborate, polished poetry as DUNSCH convincingly showed⁸¹. Again, a double meaning seems intended — again detectable only by the highly educated reader.

This might be even more obvious if we have a look at the following fable IV 8⁸².

74. *Cato* is an emendation of PITHOU for the corrupted *lecte reato* in PVI.

75. Cato or Catones are often taken as an example of a severe critic without distinction. Cf. Petron. 132, 15, 1: *quid me constricta spectatis fronte Catones*; Mart. V 5, 15: *uultum grauem [...] similis Catoni*; X 20 (19), 21: *tum me uel rigidi legant Catones*; XI 2, 1-2: *triste supercilium durique seuera Catonis* frons; cf. CAVARZERE 1973/4, 116-119.

76. RIBBECK 1892, 28, thought of Valerius Cato. Suetonius calls him *peridoneus praeceptor maxime ad poeticam tendentibus*, quotes these anonymous lines: *Cato grammaticus Latina Siren | qui solus legit ac facit poetas* and refers to Bibaculus who compared him to Zenodots and Krates (Suet. *gramm.* 11); but these lines are much debated (cf. KASTER 1995, 148-154). Furthermore, there is no literary tradition that this Cato acted as a proverbial harsh critic so that he could be used as a caricature 100 years later. OBERG 2000, 177, thought of Cato Uticensis as an example of severe criticism. One could add the anecdote that Cato Uticensis left the theatre at the *Floralia* 55 BC; cf. Mart. I praef. 15-21; Val. Max. II 10, 8.

77. HERRMANN 2004 made it quite obvious that Cato Censorius is meant. It was he who brought Ennius to Rome; therefore, it would seem a good choice to choose Ennius to mitigate the critic Cato. Further, the critic’s observation that Minos had the first ship seems to refer to Cato Censorius as the argument is historical as well as a moralization. Finally, *maiolem* at the beginning of line 24 could be a hint. All these allusions are of a literary refinement the critic does not comprehend. Cf. RENDA 2012a, 233-234.

78. *And.* 22-23: *de(b)inc ut quiescant porro moneo et desinant | male dicere, malefacta ne noscant sua*.

79. Not without wit Phaedrus uses *nauseo*, which fits perfectly to the theme of seafaring; cf. KOSTER 1990, 84.

80. Cf. IV 21, 24: *caelum fatigas*; Sen. *epist.* 31, 5. The allusion to Hor. *carm.* I 3, 38: *caelum ipsum petimus stultitia* seems especially interesting as not only *caelum* and *stultitia* are cited together, but Horace mentions the first ship here as well and the whole poem might be interpreted poetologically; cf. RUMPF 2009.

81. DUNSCH 2010, 46-50.

82. As many fables are lost, we can only speculate about the original order of the fables in each book; cf. HENDERSON 1999; GÄRTNER 2015, 36-37 and 48-50.

*Mordaciorem qui improbo dente appetit
hoc argumento se describi sentiat.
In officinam fabri uenit uipera.
Haec cum temptaret si qua res esset cibi,
limam momordit. Illa contra contumax: 5
«Quid me» inquit «stulta, dente captas laedere,
omne assueui ferrum quae corrodere?»*

He who attacks with wicked teeth one who can bite still harder should understand that he himself is described in the substance of this fable. A viper came into a blacksmith's shop and, while exploring for something to eat, set his teeth on a file. But that file was stubborn and unyielding. «Why, you fool», it said, «do you try to wound me with your teeth? It's my habit to gnaw through every kind of iron.» [Translation by PERRY]

On first sight, the fable itself seems traditional⁸³; we find similar fables in Aesop⁸⁴. But again Phaedrus seems to allude to poetological topoi of his Augustan predecessors. One only needs to think of Horace's metaphor that a critic will harm his tooth⁸⁵. In this context, it is obvious that this fable is an allusion to the *limae labor et mora* which Horace demanded (*ars* 291) and which became a metaphor. Ovid's expression seems particularly familiar: *scilicet incipiam lima mordacior uti* (*Pont.* I 5, 19). Both poems seem to be related: poems where the file had been used cannot be offended by *stultitia* (cf. IV 7, 25 *stultitia* – IV 8, 6 *stulta*).

4. Conclusions

The genres fable and tragedy do not have much in common. The fable was understood as a means of persuasion or illustration but was not held in high esteem. Therefore, it is not astonishing, that the evidence of fables in tragedy is rare. The representation of tragedy in fables on the other hand is no less surprising. But as this article tried to demonstrate, Phaedr. IV 7 is not just a rhetorical exercise or a *declamatio* as scholars thought⁸⁶. It is part of a poetological discourse about literary criticism that we can find in the pro- and epilogues of Phaedrus. Here, he omits explicit self-defence, but lets poetry itself work for him. The parody of tragedy presents Phaedrus as a *poeta doctus*. Nevertheless, it is also to be understood programmatically: Like Lucilius, Catullus and Horace, Phaedrus opposes the large and high genres of literature such as the epic or tragedy. That Phaedrus chooses to parody tragedy may

83. Cf. OBERG 2000, 177-178; SOLIMANO 2005, 248-250; GÄRTNER 2011, 221-222.

84. Aesop. 59 and 93 PERRY.

85. *sat.* II 1, 75-78: *tamen me | cum magnis uixisse inuita fatebitur usque | inuidia et fragili quaerens inlidere dentem | offendet solido.*

86. E. g. HAUSRATH 1938, 1478.

be part of the literary tradition as I have mentioned before. However, it could also be a punch against the performing arts of his own time⁸⁷. Phaedrus seems to oppose the common practice of his own time, when it was preferred to recite just single parts from tragedies as kind of 'bravura arias'. The sudden start and end seem to indicate this⁸⁸.

However, we cannot say for sure why he ridicules tragedy. We can only notice that he does. Fable I 7 can also be interpreted as supporting the idea that he opposes the inflated old-fashioned tragedies and their empty pathos.

One of the first fables is that of the fox and the mask⁸⁹.

*Personam tragicam forte uulpes uiderat:
«o quanta species» inquit «cerebrum non habet!»
Hoc illis dictum est, quibus honorem et gloriam
fortuna tribuit, sensum communem abstulit.*

A fox, after looking by chance at a tragic actor's mask, remarked: «O what a majestic face is here, but it has no brains!»

This is a twit for those to whom Lady Luck has granted rank and renown, but denied them common sense. [Translation by PERRY]

On first inspection, the fable attacks any kind of self-importance or pomposity⁹⁰. The lesson we learn is that appearance and success like *honor* or *gloria* say nothing about intellectual abilities; but in connection with fables IV 7 and IV 8 this small fable might give the first hint that tragedy was not Phaedrus' preferred genre. Phaedrus criticises tragedy; but his own prologue is great because of all the allusions to his predecessors as well as to the literary discourse about them. However, the contextualisation shows that it is not taken seriously per se, but is a parody and thus again part of another literary discourse — the parody of tragedy.

87. Tragedies before Seneca' did not survive. Under Tiberius the production of tragedies was scarce and not without danger: Sempronius Gracchus and Marmercus Aemilius Secundus lost their lives (cf. Tac. *ann.* I 53; Ov. *Pont.* IV 16, 31; DC LVIII 24, 3-4). Tacitus and Quintilian mention P. Pomponius Secundus writing under Claudius (cf. Tac. *ann.* V 8; XI 13; XII 28; Quint. *inst.* X 1, 98). Perhaps Phaedrus was acquainted with these tragedies; but we do not know enough to recognize this poet as the aim of Phaedrus' polemic; cf. RIBBECK 1892, 28: «Man könnte an den jungen P. Pomponius Secundus (Consul vom Jahre 44) denken.»

88. Cf. Suet. *Nero* 21.

89. Cf. Aesop. 27 PERRY; Romul. *fab.* 44.

90. Cf. OBERG 2000, 53-54; SOLIMANO 2005, 150-151; GÄRTNER 2011, 216-219; RENDA 2012b; GÄRTNER 2015, 130-132.

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