

The Uses of Fable: Three Eighteenth-Century Versions of the *Phædri Fabulæ*

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O suavis anima! qualem te dicam bonam

Antehac fuisse, tales cum sint reliquæ?

[Oh sweet soul (in this cask of wine) ! How delicious must your contents have been previously
when even their remains are thus?]¹

Phaedrus, Lib. III, Fab. I²

(Stirling 1738, 36)

Introduction

Fables, whether transmitted orally or through the written word, have always held a special place in cultures worldwide, both ancient and modern, by offering moral guidance in the form of an entertaining story. In what is frequently described as the Western classical tradition³, the earliest recorded fables are attributed to Aesop, a slave who is generally thought to have lived between c. 620 and 564 B.C.E. in Delphi, Greece. Like Homer, another figure to whom a considerable literary output has been ascribed, Aesop may or may not have been a genuine historical individual. Even if he was, it seems unlikely that he is responsible for all of the stories attached to his name, and may have simply been a convenient catch-all. There is, after all, something narratologically compelling in the idea of a member of the perceived lowest order of society offering wisdom and moral lessons to those nominally above⁴.

A name less known to readers today and yet of similar status to that of Aesop in the early modern period⁵ is Gaius Julius Phaedrus (c. 15 B.C.E.-c. 50 C.E.), whose work as both a writer and collector of fables seems to have been undertaken during the first century C.E. His *Fabularum Aesopiarum Libri Quinque* [The Fables of Aesop in Five Books] is known today through a ninth-century manuscript, first made widely accessible to an early modern audience in a 1596 edition by the French scholar Pierre Pithou (1539-1596), and containing some ninety-four fables of varying length and complexity. Since then, a number of others have been added to the canon, until, as of the time of writing, the total number stands at a little over one hundred and fifty.

Details of the life of Phaedrus are scarce and, as is often the case with figures from so long ago, somewhat conflicting. Whilst he has traditionally been understood to have been a former slave like Aesop, Edward Champlin convincingly overturns the work of earlier scholars, including the twentieth-century researchers Ben Perry and John Henderson, by suggesting that there is no real evidence for Phaedrus having been enslaved and freed save via the title *Phædri Augusti Liberti Fabularum Aesopiarum* [Aesopic Fables by Phaedrus, the Freed Slave of Augustus] which is occasionally attached to manuscripts of his works. This title is itself of dubious origin (99).

Beyond this, and some evidence of Phaedrus having been working in the first century, Champlin offers the following summary of attempts to pin down specific details about the life of the fabulist:

Phaedrus disappears down the rabbit-hole. His genre is by its nature oblique and elusive, his text a quicksand, his true life obscured by an elaborate mask. (108)

Whatever the specifics of his life might or might not have been, however, it is known that Phaedrus translated fables by Aesop directly into Latin, as well as modifying some and creating others of his own. He appears to have been the first author to do so (Perry xiv) or is, at least, the earliest of which current scholarship is aware. The original parts of his text are often less concerned with the Aesopic exploits of animals acting in a human way and more with human protagonists. He explains his intention and relationship to the work of Aesop in his Prologue to Book One:

*Æsopus auctor quam materiam repperit,
Hanc ego polivi versibus senariis.
Duplex libelli dos est: quod risum movet,
Et quod prudenti vitam consilio monet.* (Stirling 1738, 1)
[Aesop is the author of the material found here,
But I have polished it into senarian verse.
This book has two gifts: that it causes laughter,
And advises the prudent to a better life.]

In later books, however, this relationship begins to change, and it becomes clear that he is creating his own works. At the start of Book Two, Phaedrus notes that he will begin to add his own materials here and there. This is reiterated in the longer Prologue to Book Three, addressed to Eutychus. By the Prologue to Book Five, Phaedrus uses the phrase “*Æsopeas non Æsopi nomen*” [the Aesopic is not named as Aesop] to describe the remainder of his work (Stirling 1738, 77). This represents the endpoint of a gradual departure from his role as faithful translator to

fabulist in his own right, although clearly still seeing himself as writing within an established literary tradition and style.

Phaedrus has a tone which tends towards the satiric rather than the sententiously moralistic, and his Latin, with its copious usage of the iambic *senarius* metre mentioned above, has a light, almost avuncular touch that both entertains and informs. On this metre, also discussed in Horace (65-8 B.C.E.) and Terentianus Maurus (fl. 2nd Century C.E.), Quintilian (c. 35-c. 100 C.E.) offers his imagined oratorical disciple the statement “trimetrum et senarium promiscue dicere licet: sex enim pedes, tres percussiones habet” [the names trimeter and senarius can be used interchangeably, for there are three beats and six feet] (9.4.75, Butler 548). It is the predominant metre used in Roman comedy, and appears frequently in the surviving works of Plautus (254-184 B.C.E.) and Terence (c. 190-c. 158 B.C.E.). Thus, the aim of creating a text “quod risum movet” [that causes laughter] claimed by Phaedrus would seem to be well-served by such a choice.

This discussion aims to explore some different ways in which the work of Phaedrus was received and consumed in the early modern period, focussing particularly on three texts from Britain in the early eighteenth century. It will consider the fables of Phaedrus as education, looking at a Latin textbook for schools by John Stirling (d. 1777), as social satire, considering an anonymous political pamphlet of 1714, and as reading purely for pleasure, exploring an English translation for children by Thomas Dyche (c. 1695-c. 1727). Along the way, the context of each version will be examined in order to create a more cohesive picture of how something as simple as fable can reveal a considerable amount about the social issues and ideals of the time in which it appears.

The *Fabularum* in the Early Modern Period

As noted above, it was the lawyer and noted classicist Pierre Pithou who produced the first early modern accessible edition of Phaedrus in 1596, and this was to provide the model for a majority of the subsequent versions and various translations that appeared in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. The Pithou edition is a small, neatly-printed book which presents the fables directly and without translation or commentary beyond a brief dedicatory poem and a short introduction, both in Latin.

There was another manuscript even earlier than Pithou’s version, but it followed a difficult road to public delectation. What has come to be known as the *Appendix Perottina*, a 1470 collection of fables by the Italian humanist Niccolò Perotti (1429-1480), was lost in the forest of that worthy’s papers and only rediscovered in 1727 by a Dutch philologist called Jacques Philippe D’Orville (1696-1751). This appendix contained around thirty extra stories that could be added to the Phaedrus canon. However, it soon vanished from sight, and did not emerge again until the

early nineteenth century, being finally edited into a useable scholarly text for the very first time by “[the Abbé] C. Iannelli at Naples in 1809” (Perry xcvi). Thus, the Pithou version remained authoritative for longer than was perhaps strictly necessary, and certainly had primacy throughout the early modern period.

For many throughout Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Latin was accessible to both students and many general readers⁶, and thus Phaedrus' modified versions of Aesop became very popular with a wide variety of audiences. There were also several translated editions in different languages. In English, for example, there is a version by “H.P.” This is possibly Henry Peacham the Younger (1578-c. 1644). It was published in 1646 (and thus could have been done so posthumously), and combines the fables of Aesop and Phaedrus, “translated verbatim, according to the Latine,” seeming to take its tales from Pithou. The version feels somewhat free in style, however, and, where the translator offers “Phaedrus friend to Augustus,” a previous owner of the volume owned by the British Library [12304 a.24] has somewhat censoriously crossed out the word “friend” and replaced it neatly with the lumpen – although decidedly more correct – “freedman” (40). Both the original printing and the correction are now legible, as the ink has faded considerably. How a competent translator might mistake “liberti” [freed] for “friend” is something of a mystery, but the most likely cause is perhaps a simple error made in transcribing from a handwritten manuscript.

There are other renditions with Latin, English, or both, including one by William Willymott (c. 1670-1737), a “Fellow of King’s-College in Cambridge,” who published a version intended for students of Latin. First brought to press in 1706, with several subsequent editions, it appears to have been somewhat hastily printed, and seems to have needed further proofreading. Even the title-page of the “Sixth Edition, Corrected” from 1728 lists the place of publication as “Lodon” rather than “London.”

These represent a small part of many similar versions, such as the Daniel Bellamy (1715-1788) selection of 1734 with fifty selected fables and illustrations, an anonymous Latin and English copy published in Edinburgh in 1755, a (possibly pirated⁷) Latin and English edition by [Benjamin?] Hoadley and largely unspecified others published in Dublin in 1761, an octosyllabic English poetic translation by Christopher Smart (1722-1771) from 1765, and yet another Latin and English version with “a discourse on the doctrine of language” appended by Francis Fowke⁸ (1753-1819) from 1776. A full listing of all editions, translations, and partial versions from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries alone would be considerably longer and is certainly beyond the scope of the present discussion.

An examination of these different versions of the *Fabularum* reveals that each of the three

main approaches to the fables noted at the conclusion of the previous section – namely education, satire, and pleasure⁹ – are in evidence. Many versions balance these to a certain degree, but this discussion will now turn to three which are each particularly representative of the uses of Phaedrus in the early modern period. Rather than examine the entirety of each text, the focus shall be on the background to the editions, their context, and on their deployment of the same fable each time. This will be “Vacca, Capella, Ovis, et Leo” [The cow, the goat, the sheep, and the lion], which is Fable V from Book I. The reason that this particular fable has been chosen is that one text in particular foregrounds it for reasons which will become clear. The original Latin is given here for reference:

Numquam est fidelis cum potente societas:
 Testatur hæc fabella propositum meum.
 Vacca & Capella, & patiens Ovis injuriæ,
 Socii fuere cum Leone in saltibus.
 Hi quum cepissent Cervum vasti corporis,
 Sic est locutus, partibus factis, Leo:
 Ego primam tollo, nominor quia Leo;
 Secundam, quia sum fortis, tribuetis mihi;
 Tum, quia plus valeo, me sequetur tertia;
 Malo adficietur si quis quartam tetigerit.
 Sic totam prædam sola improbitas abstulit. (Stirling 1738, 5)

A relatively literal prose translation of this short fable into modern English might be rendered line by line as follows:

The mighty do not keep faith when in company:
 The fable I shall tell here supports my proposition.
 The Cow, the Goat, and the Sheep, patient with injury,
 Were partnered with the Lion in the forest.
 When they captured a stag of prodigious size,
 The Lion spoke as follows once the parts were divided:
 “I shall take the first part for myself, as I am named the Lion;
 The second part you shall give to me as a tribute to my bravery;
 The third part is mine because I am the strongest;
 Bad things shall happen to any who dare to touch the fourth part.”
 Thus, the whole of the prey was taken away by improbity.

The *Fabularum* as Education

There were, as has already been discussed, several editions of the *Fabularum* in Latin with a pedagogic intent in use through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The majority of the fables make particularly good pieces for Latin study, as they are generally short, relatively simple to understand, and considerably more entertaining to read than dry orations or lengthy historical tracts. Of the many textbook authors and editors who chose to make use of Phaedrus in this way, John Stirling might be perhaps the most interesting in terms of the methodology he employed.

Details of Stirling's life are scanty, and this is not the place in which to undertake a full biography¹⁰, but the basic facts are that he seems to have been born somewhere around 1700 and spent his early years in the household of the Earl of Strathmore, probably as a companion to the youthful James Lyon (c. 1702-1735), the future 7th Earl.

A Master of Arts was awarded to a "Johannes Stirling" by the University of Glasgow in 1721, and this is likely to have been the same person. After graduation, the young scholar and divine appears to have lived and worked for a time in Carlisle, then moved to St. Andrew's School in Holbourn, where he was employed as a Master. From at least 1738, he served as Chaplain to the Duke of Gordon and, in 1740, he was appointed the Vicar of St. John the Baptist Church in Great Gaddesden. Stirling began using the title of Doctor of Divinity by 1749, although it is not known by which institution this was granted. He died in his post as Vicar on August 18th, 1777.

Stirling published at least twenty-four distinct works, most of which ran to multiple editions and many of which stayed in print well into the next century after his death. His works were generally either editions of Latin texts or pedagogic discussions of grammar and rhetoric, two of the three roads of the traditional *trivium* of classical education.

A version of the fables of Phaedrus is, in fact, the first known work published by Stirling. It appeared in Edinburgh in 1727, and was printed for the author. It offers an early example of the educational approach that he was to develop over the next few years and present to the public as "a method intirely [sic] new." In essence, he combined the original text with a simplified Latin version, as well as other elements, such as a vocabulary list, footnotes pointing out rhetorical figures (defined in the end matter), and an index of useful names and places.

The simplified Latin was called by Stirling the "Ordo," short for *ordo verborum* [order of words]¹¹. The idea was that a student would begin with this, translating it to English. Then, they would translate the English back to Latin. Finally, they would tackle the original text. To see this in action, consider the selected example from the *Phædri Fabulæ*. Stirling's entire Ordo for Fable

V from Book I runs thus:

Societas nunquam est fidelis cum potente: hæc fabella testatur meum propositum. Vacca & Capella, & patiens Ovis injuriæ fuere socii cum Leone in saltibus. Quum hi cepissent Cervum vasti corporis, Leo est locutus sic, partibus factis: ego tollo primam, quia nominor Leo; tribue-tis secundam mihi, quia sum fortis; tum tertia sequetur me, quia valeo plus: si quis tetigerit quartam, adficietur malo. Sic improbitas sola abstulit totam prædam. (Stirling 1738, 5)

The following opening sentence appears in the original (Stirling 1738, 5):

“Nunquam est fidelis cum potente societas”

[Never is (faithful/trustworthy) when [in] powerful company]

One might, in a strictly literal translation, naively render this into English as “ (He is) never faithful (?) when (he is) in powerful company.” In Stirling’s rearranged Ordo, however, one finds:

“Societas nunquam est fidelis cum potente”

[Company never keeps faith when powerful]

This might make more sense rendered into English as “The mighty do not keep faith when in company,” which is precisely how the present author has translated the first line of this fable at the end of the previous section of this discussion.

As this example of modified Latin shows, the Ordo thus makes the moral of the story more apparent to the intended target audience for the volume, such as young student translators; the exact sense of “fidelis” intended, for example, becomes clearer in the new phrasing of the first line at the outset, rather than in the context of the whole fable. Rather than describing a person who is untrustworthy when in powerful company, it becomes a warning that the powerful are generally unscrupulous allies.

Stirling’s first self-published attempt at the fables of Phaedrus, titled *Phædri Augusti Cæsaris Liberti, Fabularum Æsopiarum Libri Quinque: Cum Ordine Verborum, & Vocabulario Anexo, Etymologiam Grammaticalem, Syntaxin, & Significationem Indicante, Illustrati*, seems only to have had a single print run, but a subsequent revised and expanded rendering of the same text, as *Phædri Fabulæ: or, Phædrus’s Fables, with the Following Improvements; in a Method Intirely New*, was published by Thomas Astley in London and was considerably more successful. The first (c. 1733¹²) and second editions of this version have not yet been located, as many of the copies of early Stirling works do not seem to have survived or are missing, but a third edition appeared in 1738. From there, it went to at least a sixteenth edition of 1814 and its influence doubtless continued in the work of other pedagogic editors for decades afterwards¹³.

The work of John Stirling offers a useful snapshot of the type of text with which eighteenth-century grammar school students were expected to wrestle on a daily basis. Even with

the simplified Ordo, a great deal of hard work must have been required, and it might well be that many pupils found their exercises dull. Even so, a close study of the *Fabularum* would have provided them with a decent grasp of elementary Latin, some skill in translation, the beginnings of etymological knowledge, a chance to see rhetorical figures in use, and the (admittedly broad, but no less useful for being so) moral lessons attendant upon the reading of fables in general.

The *Fabularum* as Satire

The text of the *Fabularum* in its original form has an element of *satira naturalis* that seems to approach the Menippean; at least, to a reader examining each fable in a context centuries removed this appears to be the case. It may well be that one or another of the fables raised a wry chuckle from those intimately acquainted with political and other notable figures of Phaedrus' time, as they saw connections that the passing of time has made obscure.

The re-application of fables in the early modern period could be somewhat more pointed to contemporary readers of them, however, especially if the translation was positioned just so and the title adjusted to make the object of satire clear. This was the case with an anonymous pamphlet published in 1714 entitled *A Fable Translated out of Phædrus. Humbly Inscribed to the Directors and Members of the South-Sea Company*. It consists of a single sheet with a fable given first in Latin and then translated loosely into English verse. The fable is, once again, "Vacca, Capella, Ovis, et Leo" [The ox, the goat, the sheep, and the lion], however the author conflates the foolishly submissive collaborators as "other Beasts" versus their antagonist "the Lion." The translation (including the title here) is rendered thus:

The Lion and other Beasts

*To avoid being Partners with those that are mighty,
You may learn from the Fable which here I indite ye.*

The Lion, with three silly Beasts of the Wood,
One Day went a hunting in quest of some Food.
They ran down a Buck, and then they expected
In four equal Quarters to see him dissected.

The Lion was Carver; and rolling his Eyes,
One Part, as your King, I claim for my Prize.

Another Division is due to my Merit,
'Cause no other Beast has so noble a Spirit.

A third Part I challenge, and 'tis but small Gains
For one that in Hunting has took so much Pains.

The fourth Part is mine; if any bold Prater
 Dare question my Right, I Proclaim him a Traytor.
 The Beasts said they all were his Servants most humble,
 And made him their Honours, not daring to Grumble.

Unlike the original Latin where each animal is named, in this version, as noted, the goat, sheep, and cow are simply grouped together as “silly Beasts,” suggesting that, despite their superficial external differences, they are united in and defined by their foolishness. In a satire which is the exact opposite of “humbly inscribed,” these unwise animals are directly compared to the Directors of the South Sea Company. The ending is quite different from the Latin, which has “malo” [bad] instead of “Traytor,” and the last couplet of the English satire changes the focus from the unjust actions of the Lion to the cowardly obeisance of the Beasts. The fact that the Latin is printed directly above makes such changes quite obvious to anyone with a classical education, and serves to focus the satire more sharply.

The South Sea Company was founded in 1711 and lasted until 1853, but, following feverish speculation and an unsustainable rise in share prices on the part of a large number of investors, it most famously suffered a massive financial collapse in 1720, ruining many and leading to re-criminations and penalties being levelled against some of those most directly involved. The resulting inquiry revealed corruption on a massive scale, reaching to the highest levels of government.

The establishing charter of 8 September, 1711, shows that it was initially created to create a monopoly for trade over:

...the kingdoms, lands etc of America, on the east side from the river Aranoca, to the most southern part of the Terra del Fuego, on the west side thereof, from the said most southern part through the South Seas to the most northern part of America, and into unto and from all countries in the same limits reputed to belong to the Crown of Spain, or which shall hereafter be discovered. (qtd. in Dale 40)

The primary cargo was enslaved African people, intended for Spanish plantations. Spain was reluctant to be involved directly in the procurement of slaves itself, and thus generally purchased them from other countries. Britain was, at this time, heavily involved in the slave trade.

The foundation of the Company took place during the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713). At the time, the government was deeply in debt to the tune of some £9 million, and the establishment of the Company was a kind of debt conversion policy, or an exchange of debt for equity, in an attempt to stabilize the economy. It was also a Tory attempt to generate income on a massive scale in the same way that the Whig-dominated companies of the Bank of England and the East India Company had managed so successfully in the past (Dale 42). Robert Harley (1661-

1724), Earl of Oxford and Mortimer, Lord High Treasurer, and essentially the Prime Minister in all but name at the time¹⁴, was thus positively-disposed towards the undertaking.

When the Treaty of Utrecht was negotiated in 1713, Great Britain gained the right to trade enslaved African people in Spanish territories through the granting of a contract called the *Asiento de Negros* (literally “the agreement regarding negroes”). This increased the public profile of the South Sea Company and encouraged greater investment. However, Great Britain was competing with the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the French, and the market was not sufficiently great to justify the amounts being spent on shares in the Company. Taxes and royalties were imposed by the Court of Madrid. In addition, the domestic terms of the *Asiento* were hardly favourable to the Company itself as, in early 1714, the government made the announcement that 25 per cent of the profits would go to the Queen’s Civil List, and another 7 ½ percent would go to Manuel Manasses Gilligan (d.1728), a financial advisor of dubious origins, and most likely from him to Henry St. John, 1st Viscount Bolingbroke (1678-1751), with the two of them being “tarred with the brush of corruption” (Storrs 363). All of this meant that, after allowing for the share taken by the King of Spain, the Company would receive somewhat less than half of the direct trade profits (Carswell 67).

In such a climate of intrigue and corruption, the objects for satire are numerous, but, given the date of publication, the author of the *Phædrus* pamphlet might well have had one of three targets in mind beyond the Directors of the Company, with one being somewhat vague, and the other two much closer to home and painfully specific. In general terms, the choice of fable might be read as a Horatian caution to the British Directors against involvement with European powers such as Spain and Portugal, following the events contingent upon the conclusion of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, as well as the British Government itself. Privations included the usurious royalties required by Madrid and the Queen’s Civil List, which made the eventual realization of profit for investors an unlikely proposition.

The author may, however, have had a more specific and Juvenalian satiric focus, and, given the atmosphere of scandal and the resulting fallout in political terms, this seems by far the more likely choice. The pamphlet may be a direct admonition of one of two figures. The first of these could be Bolingbroke, who, as mentioned, seems to have taken some 7 ½ percent of the profits for himself through a mysterious financial advisor. Bolingbroke had joined Parliament in 1701 as the Member for Wootton Bassett and distinguished himself early as a strong debater and a prominent member of the Tories. Not long after the events surrounding his likely acquisition of a large share of South Sea revenue, Queen Anne died and Bolingbroke fell from political favour. He supported the Jacobite rebellion of 1715 and was subsequently exiled. Although he returned to Brit-

ain following an official pardon in 1723, his political ambitions were never quite to be fully realized.

The second possibility is one Arthur Moore (c. 1666-1730), a Director of the Company, with the fable advising the other Directors to be cautious in their relationship with him. Arthur Moore was a politician of Irish extraction who was the Member for Grimsby from 1695-1715. Despite being the low-born son of either the gaoler or the prison-gate publican in Monaghan (accounts vary), he became a wealthy man and married fortunately. He had a history of connection with the East India Company and the Royal Africa Company, having served as the director of the former in 1706 and the latter in 1710. He was also the Commissioner of Trade in 1710 (Carswell 282). Moore was brought into the South Sea Company by Robert Harley and became a Director, but suffered disgrace when it was discovered that he was using their facilities for his own purposes. He was caught out trying to move some 60 tonnes of his own merchandise via one of the Company's direct trade vessels and was censured and "declared incapable of further employment" by the Company in July of 1714. For Harley, the exposure of this corruption signalled the beginning of his fall from both political and financial favour (Carswell 67).

Moore's neighbour, the politician Arthur Onslow (1691-1768)¹⁵, said of him at this time "Vendit hic auro patriam" [He sold his country for gold] (Lee ed., 341, translation mine). Moore, however, continued to thrive for a time, accumulating property in Surrey and even returning for one year as Member for Grimsby from 1721 to 1722, thus proving perhaps that, whilst the public appetite for scandal might have been voracious, memories were short. Unfortunately for Moore, litigation in the last years of his life left him poor, and he "died in London on 4 May 1730, broken in all respects except in his ability and spirit" (Thompson 911). *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* notes that "the satires and pamphlets of the day often allude to his [Moore's] varied career" (Lee ed., 341).

Given the date, their status and connection with highly-influential figures, and the far-reaching political effects of both the Moore scandal, resulting in the bringing down of Harley, the leading Minister of his day, and Bolingbroke's blatant theft though an intermediary of profits that should have gone to investors, it seems likely that either Moore or Bolingbroke is therefore the true subject of the 1714 Phaedrus satiric pamphlet. Both assumed rights that were not truly theirs and both took from the Company with what appears to have been greed unfettered by the chains of prudence. Perhaps, in the charged atmosphere of the time, the reader was free to make up their own mind about which figure was being targeted¹⁶.

The *Fabularum* as Entertainment

After pedagogy and satire, the final usage of the fables of Phaedrus discussed here is as pure entertainment. There were several versions of these stories for younger readers in the early modern period, and many of the same fables have found their way into children's books today, for much the same reason. They are short, entertaining stories that illustrate a useful moral point, but do so via engaging characters and a compelling narrative structure. In a few short sentences, a whole world is constructed, complete with its own internal logic, whether of talking animals or the travels and travails of Simonides.

A volume of the fables designed for the diversion of a young British reader was usually translated into English. This was certainly the case for the edition first produced in 1712 by Thomas Dyche. Dyche appears to have been a clergyman, as well as an educator and author of pedagogic texts. In 1723, he was listed as Chaplain of the King's Bench Prison. Perhaps his most famous works are his *Guide to the English Tongue*, and his dictionary, which was finished after his death by William Pardon¹⁷. *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* states that he was a schoolmaster who was educated at the Ashbourne free school near Derbyshire. He took orders in 1708 and relocated to London, where his career in education developed. Sometime after 1710, "he obtained the mastership of the free school at Stratford Bow" (Lee ed., 282). He also appears to have been unlucky in legal terms:

In 1719 he [Ward] rashly attempted to expose in print the speculations of the notorious John Ward of Hackney 'in discharge of his trust about repairing Dagnam Breach.' Thereupon Ward sued Dyche for libel, and at the trial, 18 June 1719, was awarded 300l. damages. (Lee ed., 282)

The John Ward (1682-1755) in question was well-known for his unscrupulous business practices, as well as his unpleasant nature.

John Timbs notes that, when Ward was imprisoned, he amused himself by poisoning cats and dogs and observing how long they took to die (61). Like Moore, he was a politician and served as a Director of the East India Company, as well as attempting to prosper from the South Sea Company. A document often claimed to be in Ward's own handwriting, popularly known as *The Miser's Prayer* has become a famous example of self-serving piety:

O Lord, Thou knowest that I have nine estates in the City of London, and likewise that I have lately purchased one estate in fee simple in the county of Essex; I beseech Thee to preserve the two counties of Essex and Middlesex from fire and earthquake; and as I have a

mortgage in Hertford-shire, I beg of Thee likewise to have an eye of compassion on that county; and for the rest of the counties Thou mayest deal with them as Thou art pleased. O Lord, enable the Bank to answer their bills, and make all my debtors good men. Give a prosperous voyage and return to the 'Mermaid' sloop, because I have insured it; and as Thou hast said that the days of the wicked are but short, I trust in Thee, that Thou wilt not forget Thy promise, as I have purchased an estate in reversion which will be mine on the death of that profligate young man, Sir J. L. [Jonas Lloyd]. Keep my friends from sinking, and preserve me from thieves and house breakers, and make all my servants so honest and faithful that they may attend to my interests, and never cheat me out of my property, night or day. (qtd. in Timbs 62)

Recent scholarship notes that this may well not have been penned by Ward himself, but rather seems to have originated in a satirical letter to *Fog's Weekly Journal*, on the 24th of July 1731, which did not actually name the supposed author (Rogers and Baines 543). Nevertheless, the subsequent attribution to the infamous Miser of Hackney effectively illustrates contemporary attitudes towards Ward and such a testament to his character – or lack thereof – suggests that Dyche's attack on him was quite likely to have been justified.

Dyche's version of the Fables was printed by Samuel Butler (not the poet) of Holbourn. It is dedicated to William and Catesby Freeman, the newly-born twin sons of Ralph Freeman of Aspenden Hall in Hertfordshire. Freeman was the county representative for Parliament. The dedication states that "This translation of Phædrus Is Humbly Dedicated as a Token of my hearty Wishes for Your constant Improvement in Virtue and Learning."

It begins with a non-scholarly, slightly humourous retelling of the life of Phædrus based on scanty details from that author's own account. Dyche notes that the fables are remarkable for their simplicity and innocence, yet "contain in 'em the most pungent Reflexions upon Folly and Vice" (n.p. [iv]). The translations themselves are jovial without being vulgar, and, whilst accurate enough, they lack the prudish formality of a more severe rendering of the Latin. The phrasing of the same Fable as noted in Stirling and the anonymous pamphlet of 1714 will serve as sufficient example of Dyche's robust style:

'Tis never safe associating with those above us, as will appear by the following Fable.

The Cow, the Goat, and the good-natur'd Sheep went a Hunting with a Lion in the Forest, and having taken a mighty, overgrown Stag, the Lion quarters him out, and thus bespeaks his Fellow Hunters: *One of these Quarters I claim by Virtue of my Lionship; you shall allow me a second for my extraordinary Courage; then because I am stronger than any of you, a third Share belongs to me of Course; and for the fourth, if any Body here presume to meddle*

with a Bit on't, I'll give him sour Sawce along with it --- And so by the most unjustifiable Violence in the World, he took every Bit of the Venison to himself. (6-7)

The *vox Leonis* here displays pomposity, arrogance, and even a certain whimsy – note “sour Sawce” as a metaphor in the place of the more prosaic “something bad” suggested by the original Latin “malo” – wholly different from the poetic version of the 1714 pamphlet, with its talk of traitors and obsequence, and certainly very unlike the rather wooden *Ordo* of Stirling. It is an adept characterization in keeping with the light tone of this edition of the volume in general.

This tendency to look at meaning and humour rather than the abstruse nature of classical languages is typical of Dyche’s other work. As an educator, he seems to have focussed on students from the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum. He is listed as a “School-master in London” on the title page of his 1707 *Guide to the English Tongue*. The work is dedicated to “the Worthy Members and Promoters of the Society, united for the Cloathing and Tuition of an Hundred poor Boys, in the Parish of St. Giles without Cripple-gate,” and he notes that it is designed “to bring Children speedily to as much Accomplishment, in our Native Tongue, as may be attain’d without the Charge and Pains of studying the Learned Languages.” In other words, for poorer children, this book is intended to advance their development in English without requiring expensive and difficult tuition in Latin and Greek. It seems a pragmatic aim for the times and the situation of children from less-advantaged backgrounds.

An interesting side-note to this work is that it contains a poem extolling its virtues by one “N. Tate.” This is, in later editions, confirmed as (who else?) Nahum Tate (1652-1715), the Irish poet who became the third Poet Laureate upon the death of Thomas Shadwell in 1692. He makes Dyche’s point on the value of studying English on its own terms in the *peroratio* of his poem, albeit in somewhat painfully forced¹⁸ iambic pentameter:

These *Rules* are well design’d, to take away
The Scandal that upon our Nation lay;
Where Elegance a Stranger was, and few
The Beauties of their Mother-Language knew.
These *Rules* must rectifie both *Tongue* and *Pen*,
If Youths wou’d speak and write like Learned Men:
For foreign Tongues can ne’r be rightly Known,
Before we’re *Well* acquainted with *Our Own*.

Dyche’s translation of the fables of Phaedrus was not necessarily aimed at poorer children, dedicated as it is to the newborn twins of a country Member, but it shows an egalitarianism in both intent and language. By bringing a classical Latin text to a broader audience through ren-

dering it into pleasant and entertaining English, Dyche's work allows the purpose and substance of the fables to reach a new generation.

Conclusion

One does not need to be a Latinist to see that the *Fabularum* is a text that lent itself to an extraordinary versatility of applications in the early modern period. Whether offering useful pedagogic material for students at grammar schools, providing fuel for the satirizing of political corruption, or simply acting as a source of entertainment to young readers, the flexibility of the collection allowed for multiple uses. However, despite continuing to flourish in the 1800s, Phaedrus' fables have faded from popularity over the course of the last century.

A large part of this is doubtless due to the development of curricula in which Latin no longer plays a central role¹⁹. In a way, one can see in this Thomas Dyche's wish for a more universal approach to education coming true. With the original text sidelined and the attraction of the senarius thus obscured, the more "realistic" parts of the *Fabularum* which are unique to Phaedrus are not as attractive to the general reader as the charming tales of talking animals generally attributed to Aesop. These last have gained an unassailable ascendance, and have now become inextricably associated with their assumed originator.

That being said, the text of the *Fabularum* is studied to this day as an element of many Latin courses²⁰, either in the form of illustrative excerpts or as a full volume, for all of the reasons that it grew in popularity in the early modern period, and the volume is still important to scholars of classics and the history of fable. It remains to be seen if yet further uses still await this remarkably adaptable work.

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Notes

- ¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Latin translations in this discussion are those of the present author.
- ² Although this opening quotation was selected from Phaedrus to open this discussion by the present author prior to realizing this, by happy coincidence (or, more likely, the action of subconscious memory), these lines are quoted at the start of Addison’s entry for issue 223 of *The Spectator*, dated Thursday November 15th, 1711. In a further example of serendipity, the issue in question is a discussion of the excellence of Sappho and the disease of obscurity that has overtaken so many authors from antiquity onwards. As Addison notes:
- When I reflect upon the various Fate of those Multitudes of Ancient Writers who flourished in *Greece* and *Italy*, I consider Time as an Immense Ocean, in which many noble Authors are entirely swallowed up, many very much shattered and damaged, some quite disjointed and broken into pieces, while some have wholly escaped the Common Wreck; but the Number of the last is very small. *Apparent rari nantes in gurgite vasto* [They appear as rare swimmers amongst the vast currents]. (325)
- ³ It should be noted here that this is a contested term, as Kwame Anthony Appiah and others have pointed out in recent discussions.
- ⁴ The idea of the servant being wiser than the master is a common literary idea with countless fictional iterations, of whom Tranio, Sancho Panza, and Reginald Jeeves may well be amongst the most compelling and best-known to the modern reader. In the cases of both Aesop and Phaedrus, a cynical judge of history

might consider their status as morality-dispensing slaves – or former slaves – too neat an example of this trope to be probable in reality.

⁵ This is another contested term. The present author follows a broad definition and takes it to span roughly the period from the beginning of the European Renaissance to the end of the Napoleonic Wars, or c. 1450-1815.

⁶ This is not to suggest that Latin literacy was by any means universal, but it was certainly widespread amongst certain sections of society. As Hans Helander notes, “Up to the 18th century educated people learnt *nearly everything they knew* [italics original] by means of literature written in Latin. This holds true for all disciplines, including the sciences” (885).

⁷ At this time, Irish editions were known to be cheaper than those published in London due to both a lower cost for paper and a certain lack of rigour when it came to copyright and author royalties. One consequence of this was that Irish publishers often felt free to create their own collections by borrowing liberally from works already in print. This was done frequently without either the consent or knowledge of the original authors involved.

⁸ There seems to have been a particular fascination with these fables for graduates of Cambridge. Willymott, Bellamy, Hoadley, Smart, and Fowke were all alumni of the University. Henry Peacham the Younger was also a graduate, which lends some force to the present author’s guess that he might have been the translator of the 1646 English edition. One is further tempted to speculate as to whether the fables of Phaedrus were a traditional part of the Cambridge Latin curriculum in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, or perhaps a favoured amusement amongst undergraduates.

⁹ One imagines that the late Umberto Eco might, in a discussion of this type, have been unable to resist remarking upon the parallel here with the Ciceronian triumvirate – with *satira* of course replacing *movere* – and having done so, would likely have gone a step further to describe it as something which should hardly escape the notice of all but the least attentive of readers.

¹⁰ The present author is in the process of preparing further papers with more complete details of Stirling’s life and works, as well as a companion annotated bibliography.

¹¹ As Stirling often uses simply “Ordo,” Aaron Shapiro, in a brief discussion of the influence of his work, mistakenly unpacks this term as “*ordo naturalis*” [natural order] (64). He does, however, correctly tie the approach to the pedagogic technique of “*grammaticalis constructio*” [grammatical construction] that had been in vogue in the previous century (64 n. 60). This might be the place to note that, whilst several modern scholars mention Stirling, few, if any, do so without errors.

¹² This speculated date is based on publication lists for Astley in the period, as well as advertisements in periodicals and other volumes. The date of the second edition cannot be guessed at, as no record of it appears in any of the lists examined so far. There is also the possibility that Stirling considered his self-published 1727 Edinburgh edition to be the first, and that the second edition was merely the first published by Astley, being a heavily-revised version that thus appeared in or around 1733.

¹³ Shapiro notes that Stirling’s format for his *Phædri Fabulæ*, along with many of his subsequent classical texts, had a notable effect on eighteenth-century adaptations of Milton, and especially James Buchanan’s *The First Six Books of Milton’s Paradise Lost Rendered into Grammatical Construction*, published by Kincaid in 1773 (Shapiro 64). The link is particularly clear where Buchanan’s Introduction touches upon the value of the natural order of words in Latin study (7-9).

¹⁴ The history of the term “Prime Minister” is, in the United Kingdom, traditionally somewhat vague, and was especially so at the outset of the long eighteenth century (one might argue that, by the twenty-first

century, the position has become better-defined, but the policies of the individuals themselves destined to hold it ever less so). The term describes a governmental role which emerged following the Glorious Revolution of 1688, but the first individual to be generally accepted by modern historians as inhabiting the position is the Whig Robert Walpole (1676-1745), who did so from 1721 to 1742. Earlier prominent statesmen such as Robert Harley fulfilled many of the same functions, but were perhaps understood more to be financial managers and advisors to the Crown.

¹⁵ Onslow was himself a fascinating character. Renowned for his personal integrity, he served a record term of 33 years as Speaker of the House of Commons. Unlike the majority of the politicians of his day (or, indeed, subsequently), he seems to have been almost universally admired.

¹⁶ The present author has his money on Bolingbroke as the subject of this pamphlet, given the direct equivalence between his theft of capital and the actions of the Lion in the fable. However, on a more personal note, it is deeply saddening to reflect that the risk to wealth was the object of satire here, rather the horrifying institution of slavery itself, which was the primary source of the profits of the South Sea Company and by far the greatest evil connected with the whole enterprise.

¹⁷ Whilst the monumental 1755 work *A Dictionary of the English Language* by Samuel Johnson is often popularly described as the first such in English, the history of dictionaries in Britain goes back to at least the early sixteenth century, with the work of such lexicographers as Thomas Elyot and Richard Mulcaster. That being said, most of these early dictionaries were either from one language to another (Elyot is Latin-English, for example) or of less common words, as is the case with Dyche and Pardon's, work on which was begun some two decades before the famous consortium of London booksellers requested Johnson to undertake his Herculean task in 1746.

¹⁸ Were one so inclined, one might be tempted to observe that the production of bad verse was almost obligatory for a British Poet Laureate during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. So much so, indeed, that this fact was often immortalized in the satires of considerably better writers, and nowhere more famously than through Alexander Pope's enduring portrait of then-Laureate Colley Cibber in the *Dunciad* of 1748.

¹⁹ For a discussion of the beginnings of this process, see Richard S. Thompson's *Classics or Charity? The Dilemma of the 18th Century Grammar School*, especially pp. 36-48.

²⁰ Including one taken by the present author some decades ago.

²¹ Note that, as there are numerous variant editions of the fables of Phaedrus referred to here, each will be listed under the name of its translator and/or editor. It should also be mentioned that, following MLA 9th edition format guidelines, the city of publication is included for all sources published before 1900. Full names are given where known, with initials and abbreviations otherwise provided.