

Being one of a handful of contemporary sources for the reign of Tiberius, the little read and less often studied Phaedrus has recently received some long overdue scrutiny at the hands of John Henderson's *Telling Tales on Caesar* (Oxford UP 2001). This paper will follow up on some of the questions raised by Henderson, especially with regards to figured speech and fable in the reign of Tiberius. Henderson's primary focus in *Telling Tales* was the close reading of those poems of Phaedrus which seem to specifically engage the early principate. Although Phaedrus claims to be writing fables in the Aesopic tradition, among the protagonists of Phaedrus' fables are the first two emperors, Augustus and Tiberius. While Henderson examines what Phaedrus has to say about these two, he does not specifically ask why Phaedrus says it. I would like to propose that Phaedrus is trying to locate himself through these fables and others within the new world order of the post-Augustan principate. This loss of identity and definition culminates in the poem narrating the false Princeps (5.7) in the final book of fables (such as they are).

As Shuttleworth Kraus has pointed out in her review of Henderson's book (*BMCR* 2002.10.16), the re-arrangement of Phaedrus' poems in Henderson's treatment causes the reader to lose the narrative thread. Assuming that despite the loss of poems within each book the extant manuscripts preserve the original order of arrangement, I believe the order of the poems may hold valuable insight into the viewpoint of Phaedrus with regards to the principate and his role in the imperial court. Likewise, while Henderson rightly recognizes the importance of Phaedrus' claim in the Prologue of Book III to have been attacked by Sejanus as self-posturing (65-66), he does not follow up on this point. Being a survivor of Sejanus indicates loyalty to Tiberius and gives Phaedrus social capital not only among other survivors of Sejanus, but also with the embattled emperor.

Indeed, the very genre of fable seems to have been close to the heart of Tiberius. In Suetonius (*Tib.* 25; cf. Ter. *Phorm.* 506), Tiberius is cited as using the language of fable to describe his position as new princeps as "holding a wolf by the ears." Likewise, his succession policy nurses Caligula as a snake in his bosom who will destroy the Roman people (*Cal.* 11), a fable narrated by Phaedrus (4.20). Tiberius, according to Josephus (*AJ* 18.173-176), spins an Aesopic fable, telling of a man beset by ticks/flies (cf. Arist. *Rh.* 2.20=*Aes.* 427) who, when a would-be good Samaritan offers to brush them off, responds that the gesture would cause him further pain. The current infestation is already sated with blood. New flies would gorge their empty stomachs and bleed him dry. Tiberius was also said to have responded to greedy provincial governors that he wanted his flock shorn not flayed (Suet. *Tib.* 32; cf. Dio 57.10.5; *Aes.* 212). All of these examples provoke examination of the use of fables— not only by those like Phaedrus of lower position addressing those in power, but even by the man at the top—in response to the vague boundaries of power and the new position of the principate.