

REVIEW

A NEW EDITION OF  
THE *WONDERS BEYOND THULE*

Helena Schmedt, ed., *Antonius Diogenes: Die unglaublichen Dinge jenseits von Thule*. Millennium-Studien 78. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2020. Pp. 656. Hardback, €154.50; also available open access in electronic form. ISBN 978-3-11-058510-0.

This book is a revised and corrected version of the PhD dissertation defended by Helena Schmedt at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University of Frankfurt am Main in November 2016 (Hans Bernsdorff acted as supervisor). In over 600 pages, Schmedt gives the first thoroughgoing treatment in German of the *ἄπιστα τὰ ὑπὲρ Θούλην* by Antonius Diogenes, which survives in direct tradition (five papyrus fragments of certain attribution and a few fragments of disputed attribution) and in indirect tradition (Photios' *Library*, whose summary in ch. 166 is our sole source for virtually all the details on this novel, and excerpts and quotations in late-antique philosophical and theological texts). Schmedt has given a new edition and translation of the fragments and testimonia, accompanied by a detailed line-by-line commentary (with special attention to philological, literary, and historical issues arising from the text). Furthermore, there are some thematic sections devoted to specific aspects of the history of the language, literary genre, motifs, and ideas related to this novel; the recent and less recent bibliography is widely discussed; and new readings and approaches in the interpretation and analysis of texts are presented.

The chapters of this book, concentrating on various specific aspects related to the text and its context and relations with other texts, are well articulated with an extensive exposition of the problems, examples, and results, and there are also diagrams. They take the long view, aspiring to give more than a mere critical edition. Therefore, it will be useful to give a picture of the chapters and their content.

All general aspects Schmedt briefly sketches in Chapter 1 (*Einleitung*, 1–17), in which the large issues regarding the dating of the *Apista* and their context, the identity and name of the novelist are addressed: 'Diese Indizien weisen allesamt ins 1. oder 2. Jhd. n. Chr.' (11).

The second and third chapters are the real core of the book. In Chapter 2 (*Testimonien*, 18–205) a comprehensive critical edition of all the testimonies is given with German translation and commentary. It begins by dealing with Porphyry's *Vita Pythagorae* (10–17, 32–45, 54–5): the exact length of quotations by Porphyry from the novel cannot be determined with any certainty due to the fact that the *Apista* are almost totally lost. As there is disagreement among modern scholars on this matter, starting from the criteria put forth by Erwin Rohde,<sup>1</sup> Schmedt has indicated the different opinions that have developed, through a clear graphic representation of two tables (26 and 52). The other testimonies are: the *Refutatio Omnium Haeresium* (1.2.14–15), once attributed to Hippolytus; Eusebius' *Contra Hieroclem* (17); Epiphanius' *Panarion haeresium* (33.8); Synesius, *ep.* 148; Servius, *ad Verg. Georgica* (1.30); John Lydus' *De mensibus* (3.5, 11; 4.42); Olympiodorus' *In Aristotelis Meteorologica* (1.13); al-Bīrūnī's *Indica* (3.1–14, in the English translation by Edward C. Sachau);<sup>2</sup> *schol. ad Lucian's Verae Historiae* (2.12); and finally, Photios' *Library* (166)—the Photian section covers over 100 pages!—and *schol. ad Photios' Library* 166 (110b37–8). In this context, one should recall here that only Porphyry and Photios show any in-depth knowledge of the novel.

In Chapter 3 (*Fragmente*, 206–375) Schmedt provides a reliable and comprehensive edition of the papyrus fragments (transcriptions based in large part upon autoptic study), including several ones published or identified since the edition and translation by Stephens and Winkler:<sup>3</sup> for each of them she gives the history of the text (along with discussion on the attribution), papyrological and palaeographic description (taking account of the dating issues related to the provenance of the fragments), diplomatic transcription and critical edition, bibliography, translation, and commentary; and her interpretation and reconstructions of the scene.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter also includes a section wholly dedicated to the papyri wrongly attributed to the *Apista*: *P.Gen.* inv. 187, which is confirmed to be a 'Text der jüdischen Apokalyptik' (356) on the basis of a photographic examination; as for *P.Mich.* inv. 5 + *P.Lit. Palau Rib.* 26 inv. 152 (MP3 2636 = LDAB 5069), the variety of alternative attributions are canvassed; in *P. Dubl.* C3 (MP3 2621 = TM 63692/LDAB 4901) one can hardly read the name *Δερκυλλίδος*, and

<sup>1</sup> E. Rohde, 'Die Quellen des Jamblichus in seiner Biographie des Pythagoras', in id., *Kleine Schriften* (Tübingen, 1901) 102–72; orig. *RhM* 27 (1872) 23–61.

<sup>2</sup> *Alberuni's India* (London, 1910) 43.

<sup>3</sup> S. A. Stephens and J. J. Winkler, edd., *Ancient Greek Novels: The Fragments* (Princeton, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> *PSI* 1177 (MP3 95 = LDAB 233), *P.Oxy.* 3012 (MP3 95.1 = LDAB 234), *P.Oxy.* 4760 (MP3 95.11 = LDAB 10693), *P.Oxy.* 4761 (MP3 2621.01 = LDAB 10694), and *P.Oxy.* 5354 (LDAB 783340) based upon the *editio princeps* by P. J. Parsons, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 83 (2018) 54–63.

Schmedt brings other arguments and authorities that exclude any possible connection between this fragmentary text and Antonius Diogenes' novel.

And there is a very useful final section in Chapter 3 (*Was verraten die Papyri über die Leserschaft des Romans?*, 374–5) that provides an examination of the physiognomy of novel readers and specifically of the *Apista*'s readers, where it is observed that 'die Roman-Papyri sich nicht grundsätzlich von denjenigen archaischer und klassischer Texte unterscheiden' (374), and that the *Apista* presuppose 'ein gebildetes Publikum' (375), or at least one able to appreciate the form and style of Antonius Diogenes' novel, as well as the philosophical, ethnographic, and geographical digressions. It was an audience in which conceivably women as well as men are included—as can be seen from the reference to Isidora (Photios, *Bibl.* 166, 111a 33–4 Ἰσιδώρα φιλομαθῶς ἐχούσῃ).

Chapter 4 (*Sprache und Stil der Apista*, 376–420) deals with the language and style of the *Apista* and its relationship to Atticism and the Second Sophistic: it provides an admirable review of these subjects with observations on, and examples of, orthographic, morphological, lexical, and syntactic phenomena. After an extensive discussion of narrative structure, motifs, and themes (considerable attention is devoted to some aspects and phenomena that are of great importance for the understanding of Antonius Diogenes' behaviour such as the hiatus and the rhythm of the prose) Schmedt concludes that 'in der Untersuchung einzelner Stilelemente hat sich gezeigt, dass A[ntonius] D[iogenes] weder der Sophistik noch dem Attizismus durch das mechanische Anwenden bestimmter Regeln folgte, sondern vielmehr aus verschiedenen stilistischen Entscheidungen seinen individuellen Stil schuf' (420). Furthermore, some elements could display a stylistic diversity reflecting the diversity of the novel itself through the alternation of simple and sublime style—such as, e.g., in Ps.-Dionysius, Isocrates, and Plato—which allows the author to give individual sections of the work 'eine spezifischere Färbung' (420).

Chapter 5 (*Gattung*, 421–4) focuses on the *Apista*'s relation with their literary genre—which we define by the modern and consciously anachronistic term 'novel'—which Antonius Diogenes develops with such remarkable distinction and originality, especially regarding the role of *eros* or the (actual) pair (Derkyllis and Mantinias or Derkyllis and Deinias?).

The particular issue Schmedt addresses in Chapter 6 (*Verhältnis zu anderen Texten und Autoren*, 425–82) is how this text relates and intersects with other texts and literary genres or with other novels and contemporary writings (Homer's *Odyssey*, ancient comedy, Euripides, Plato, Pytheas of Massalia, fragmentary novels, Plutarch, Lucian, Aelian, Dictys, Philostratus, Phlegon, the *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri*, medical texts, Heliodorus, Petronius, Virgil, Ovid, etc.).

In Chapter 7 (*Philosophie und Kult in den Apista*, 483–514) the role of philosophy and worship in this novel (and its ironic distance from them) is

explored: e.g., the Pythagorean implications and the relationship with Porphyry's *Vita Pythagorae*, Merkelbach's thesis of *Mysterienroman*, shamanism, and rites of passage.

In Chapter 8 (*Motive der Apista*, 515–88) the motifs making Diogenes' novel in some respects so peculiar are dealt with: from the spatial dimension of travelling, to the geographical (e.g., Thule and its *mirabilia*, the Ocean, the tales of Pytheas), from the various forms of personal communication (the silence, the magic, the use of epistles) to the overall narrative framework (relation between fiction and reality, truth, and credibility), from questions that are posed by the novel's title itself to the story being told.

The final chapter (*Schluss*, 589–613) includes a summary and synthesis of the main themes and provides a general set of conclusions regarding the types of problems which the author addresses, and gives a full listing of all *Romanmotive*. The volume closes with a lengthy *Literaturverzeichnis* (615–47) and a useful *Index* of names and topics (649–55).

Given the breadth and richness of this book, the evidence of the use which other scholars will actually make of it will be more relevant than this review. In any case, Schmedt's work remains a point of reference and a valuable contribution to the philological and literary research on Antonius Diogenes' complex and intelligent novel that used all of the fascinating literary and inventive resources available at that time.

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