

ANTONIO STRAMAGLIA (ed.), Phlegon Trallianus. *Opuscula de Rebus Mirabilibus et de Longaevis*. Edited by A. S. Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana, Berlin - New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2011, pp. lx + 94, ISBN 978-3-11-024597-4.

In the third century B.C. the poet and scholar Kallimachos of Cyrene wrote *A Collection of Wonders from the Entire Earth, Arranged by Locality*, a compilation of supposedly true facts about the wondrous properties of certain natural phenomena -waters, animals, plants, stones, places, and the like. The work reflects two cultural trends of the time, an increasing interest in wondrous phenomena and fashion for making written compilations. From Kallimachos's time to the third century C.E. around twenty Greek and Roman compilers of marvels are known to have been active, and seven of their works survive more or less entire. The ancients themselves did not devise a label for the genre, but since the nineteenth century classical scholars have called it paradoxography.

With regard to content, ancient paradoxographical works, like their modern counterparts, range in tone from the mild (for example, the strange properties of magnetic stones) to the sensational (for example, the birth of a multi-headed infant). The ancient collections of *paradoxa* that survive are all of the quieter sort, with the single exception of the compilation of amazing and sometimes bizarre wonders made by Phlegon of Tralles. A freedman of the Emperor Hadrian, Phlegon was a learned Greek. Although he is known to have authored many works, not much survives beyond his compilation *On Marvels* and his equally strange composition *On Long-Lived Persons*. Now, thanks to the very impressive industry of Antonio Stramaglia, these two works are available in a splendid new critical edition in the Teubner series.

In his informative *praefatio* Stramaglia brings together the basic facts and conjectures about Phlegon's literary activity, the likely circumstances under which the present two works came to be included in the remarkable codex (Palatinus Graecus 398) now preserved in the library of the University of Heidelberg, the fascinating adventures of the codex itself, and other matters.

The topics in *On Marvels* show that Phlegon set himself the task of gathering together wonders of a rather extreme sort pertaining mostly to humans. Chapters 1-3 deal with dead persons who return briefly to life; chapters 4-10, with androgyny, mostly in the unusual sense of females who turn unexpectedly into males; chapters 11-19, with discoveries of large bones; chapters 20-31, with reports of amazing parturition; chapters 32-33, with persons who aged with abnormal rapidity; and chapters 34-35, with the capture of live centaurs. The individual chapters vary wildly in length, some of them having been copied word-for-word from earlier documents, others briefly summarized by the compiler.

*On Long-Lived Persons* also focuses upon the marvelous, in this case upon marvelous longevity, reflecting an ancient interest in the nature of the human life-span. The work consists mostly of lists of names, grouped by age attained, beginning with a catalogue of Italians who have lived to the age of one hundred, then persons who are 101-110 years of old, then persons 110-120, and so on, concluding with the Erythraean Sibyl, who lived just short of a thousand years. Phlegon has a fondness for oracles, and both works are replete with them, including one that seems to be a genuine Sibylline oracle (*Mir.* 10).

Little mention of these two unusual works was made in antiquity, and they were perhaps all but forgotten until the years 850-880 C.E., when, it appears, a circle of learned scribes in Constantinople chose to copy them, along with other works, into the rich codex that today is found in Heidelberg. The fortunes of the Byzantine codex thereafter read much like a novel of adventure. It probably remained in Constantinople until the fifteenth century, when it was taken to Basel; from there it made its way to Heidelberg, and when the Palatine Library was given as a gift to Pope Gregory XV, it found itself in the Vatican Library in Rome; next, Napoleonic troops conveyed it to Paris, whence in 1816 it was returned to Heidelberg, where it has remained. The ninth-century codex is the unique source for the surviving works not only of Phlegon but also of several other paradoxographers (Pseudo-Plutarch, Apollonios, and Antigonos) as well as a couple mythographers (Parthenios, Antoninos Liberalis).

The *editio princeps* of Phlegon's *On Marvels* and *On Long-Lived Persons* appeared in 1568 and, perhaps surprisingly, these two texts have been edited with some regularity ever since. Translations and commentaries in modern languages are rarer but available.<sup>1</sup> Stramaglia's edition differs significantly from those of his predecessors in that, he says, he has inspected the Heidelberg codex personally and carefully, and has consulted all the published literature on Phlegon's text, with the result that his *apparatus criticus* is both complete and accurate.

*Omnia apud Phlegontem aut abstrusa aut obscura sunt, et saepe utroque vitio afficiuntur*, as the editor observes (p. xxxvi). Happily, this is among the most reader-friendly editions ever to appear in the Teubner series, for the editor makes every effort to lend support to the reader, notably by equipping his edition with two very helpful apparatuses. In his critical apparatus he provides not only the usual information but also the justifications that he or other scholars have put forth for particular readings. In his other "auxiliary" apparatus he presents similar or parallel passages from other ancient authors and offers succinct aid in the form of brief commentaries or bibliography on difficult passages.

<sup>1</sup> My own English translation and commentary includes these two works by Phlegon in addition to fragments of a third work, *Olympiads*: William Hansen, *Phlegon of Tralles' Book of Marvels*, Exeter 1996. I have not seen the Spanish translation of and commentary upon the Greek paradoxographers, including Phlegon's *On Marvels*, which appeared in the same year: F.J. Gómez Espelosín, *Paradoxógrafos griegos: Rarezas y maravillas*, Madrid 1996. For a complete list of translations and commentaries see Stramaglia, pp. xxxviii-xxxix.

In sum, all readers will be grateful to Antonio Stramaglia for his informative preface, his improvements to Phlegon's text, and his unusually helpful apparatuses.

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