

Part III Readings

Passage One

Aesop Illustrations: Telling the Story in Images

A. In this article, I will examine some early illustrations of *Aesop's Fables* from the 1479 edition of *Aesop's Fables* authored by Heinrich Steinhöwel, one of the great humanist scholars of the early Renaissance. Throughout the 15th and 16th centuries, the text of Steinhöwel's fables was translated into many different European languages, and the accompanying **woodcuts** (nearly 200 of them) were also widely copied. These woodcuts demonstrate an ambitious attempt to use single-panel illustrations to depict the plots of a fable, while also showing how the illustrations themselves can yield new versions of the tales.

B. A typical fable usually has a two-part plot sequence: the **confrontation**, and the **outcome**. Unlike modern comic book art, where a plot sequence can be shown in a series of panels, in these illustrations the artist uses only one panel to depict the plot. In that one panel, the artist may depict the confrontation, or the outcome, or both, as you can see in the examples below. In each case, however, the reader must still apply additional information in order to get a mental picture of the whole story. That additional information might come from the text, or it might come from the storytelling tradition itself, since many of these fables were well established in European folklore and well known in the oral tradition long before being printed in books.



C. In the famous story of *The Wolf and the Lamb*, for example, the wolf accuses the lamb of **muddying** the water, while the lamb protests that he is innocent; this is the confrontation. The wolf eats the lamb anyway; this is the outcome. The artist has chosen to **render** the confrontation scene, including the important detail that the lamb is drinking downstream from the wolf. Any reader who knows the fable already can supply the outcome based on what they see here.

D. For an illustration which shows the outcome instead, consider the frog and the mouse. The frog offered to help the mouse cross the stream, and the mouse tied itself to the frog so that

woodcut *n.* 版画

confrontation *n.* 对峙, 冲突

outcome *n.* 结果; 效果

muddy *v.* 使污浊

render *v.* 给予, 提供

it would not drown. The **treacherous** frog then **plunges** under the water, trying to drown the mouse; this is the confrontation. In the outcome, a passing eagle **swoops** down and carries away both the mouse and the frog. For readers who know the story, the confrontation can be easily deduced from the dramatic **denouement**.



E. Sometimes the artist shows a series of events occupying the same space even if they unfold separately in time. Consider, for example, the story of *The Old Lion*: he is attacked first by a **boar**, then by a bull, and finally by a donkey, which is the most **humiliating** of all. The illustration shows all three attacks as if they were simultaneous, but readers who know the story realize that the attacks happen in a sequence, culminating with the despicable donkey.



F. Let's look at another example of multiple scenes in a single panel, the story of *The Lion and the Mouse*. A lion caught a mouse, and the mouse begged for mercy, promising he would do the lion a favor in the future. The lion **scoffed**, but let the mouse go. This is the mouse in the lower right, pinned under the lion's paws. Later, the lion was caught in a **snare** and the mouse then **chewed** through the ropes, setting the lion free. This is the mouse in the upper right, chewing through the rope wrapped around the lion's neck. Without the text of the story, you might think there are two mice, but there is really only one. In addition, you might think the lion is caught in a snare when he traps the mouse, but not so: you are seeing two different moments of time, **superimposed**.



G. You can even find sequences of three scenes combined into a single panel, as in the story of *Zeus and the Frogs*. As the story begins, the frogs ask Zeus to give

treacherous *a.* 不可信任的; 背叛的; 奸诈的

plunge *v.* 使突然前冲 (或下落)

swoop *v.* (尤指为了袭击) 向下猛冲, 俯冲

denouement *n.* (戏剧、小说等的) 结局, 收场; (事情的) 结果

boar *n.* 野猪

humiliate *v.* 羞辱; 使丧失尊严

scoff *v.* 嘲笑; 讥讽

snare *n.* (捕鸟、兽的) 陷阱, 罗网, 套子

chew *v.* 咀嚼; 嚼碎

superimpose *v.* 重叠; 叠加

them a king, so he **hurls** a **log** down into the water; you can see Zeus hurling the log on the left. At first the frogs are impressed by the big **splash** made by the log, but they grow bored with their king, and **hop** on the log to show their **contempt**. You can see the frogs hopping on the log in the lower right. They then ask Zeus to send them another king, so he does: you can see the bird (a stork? a crane? a heron?) in the upper right. The frogs are eaten one by one.



H. But where did this bird come from? The text accompanying the image says it was a water snake, not a water bird, who **devoured** the foolish frogs. All the classical and medieval Latin texts are clear on this: Zeus sent a snake to devour the frogs. Did the artist know a different version of the story? Or did he simply prefer the bird for artistic reasons of his own? Whatever its origin, the bird in the illustration to Steinhowel's *Aesop* in 1479 became firmly established in the tradition of Aesop illustrations, as you can see here in Hieronymus Osius's verse fables published in 1574. The illustration features a bird, even though the Latin text still maintains that it was a snake which ate the frogs.



I. As folklore, *Aesop's Fables* are always shifting and changing in their various retellings, and the images used to illustrate the fables, just as much as the words, are part of that creative tradition. The images are not simply added on to the story. Instead, these images can contribute their own distinctive elements to that endless mix-and-match process by which new versions of the fables are created — a process which has kept the Aesop's fable tradition going strong for three thousands years, and counting.

hurl v. 猛扔; 猛投; 猛摔

log n. 原木

splash n. 落水声; 溅泼声

hop v. (动物或鸟) 齐足 (或双足) 跳行

contempt n. 蔑视; 轻蔑; 鄙视

devour v. (尤指因饥饿而) 狼吞虎咽地吃光

Passage Two

The Acid Test of Children's Literature

The basic English children's edition of *Aesop's Fables* was written by Sir Roger L'Estrange



and came out in two volumes, 1692 and 1699. No philosophers knock on children's doors these days. The difference in attitudes that this suggests may be significant.

The point about these 8th century editions is that they reflect the attitudes and prejudices of their times towards children and literature for children. Which brings us to a further point: Since *Aesop* is such a basic book in England through the ages, and since as a basic book it came naturally to be thought of as a basic book for children,

then perhaps we could tell something about that **intangible** and **elusive** something in the air that characterizes different ages by looking carefully at what each did to its *Aesop*. More specifically for our purposes, it would seem to me, at least, that Aesop might prove a quick and convenient **indicator** of the basic attitudes of an age toward its children and what they read. The idea deserves a thorough look. It also suggests related questions that may have some light **shed** on them in the process.

What, for example, gives *Aesop* its **longevity**? Its almost universal appeal (Among the better known languages *Aesop* has appeared in are the following: Chinese, Basque, Bengali, Breton, Catalan, Esperanto, Estonian, Gascon, Hindustani, Icelandic, Marathi, Hyanja, Pushto, Sanskrit, Serbo-croat, Swahili, Tonga, Turkish, Welsh). Is it that animal stories appeal somehow to ancient human? Maybe to hear of animals making our mistakes, proving our points is somehow comforting in an **anthropomorphically** primitive way. Or maybe the



necessary **impersonality** of an animal fable tickles the fancy: objective and simple that way, life seems subject to solid, comfortable, consistent laws. No ifs and buts about what an animal does.

Of course the psychological, scientific, and sociological claims on *Aesop* cannot be

intangible *a.* 难以形容（或理解）的；不易度量的

elusive *a.* 难找的；难以解释的；难以达到的

indicator *n.* 指示信号；标志；迹象

shed *v.* 散发出光；把光照到（或洒在）……上

longevity *n.* 长寿；长命；持久

anthropomorphically *ad.* 拟人化地

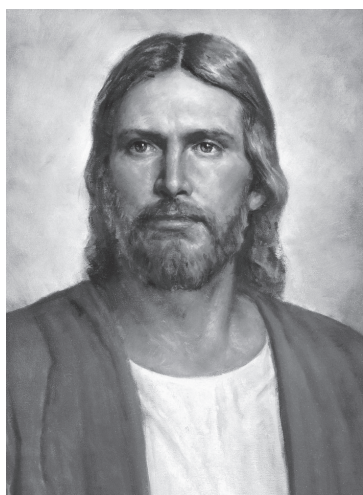
impersonality *n.* 冷静，客观

neglected. Anne Caldwell, author of *Origins of Psychopharmacology from CPZ to LSD*, has suggested that the connection between fables and **hallucinogens** needs exploring (any child **prone** to nightmares can **verify** that, I bet). And what about some sort of statistical-sociological study of the relationship between the number of editions of *Aesop* in any age and its **intensity** of feeling for its children? The possibilities, like the versions of *Aesop*, seem endless.

Perhaps after all this we shall discover that *Aesop* is one of those books that were **vital** to our civilization (look, after all, at the sheer numbers) but which we never noticed because it was so thoroughly basic. I cannot remember when I first heard of the hare and the tortoise, but I can distinctly remember yawning **ostentatiously** when it was used by my second grade teacher to make a point about (my lack of) diligence. I wonder which version I had read.

Passage Three

Christianizing Aesop: The Fables of Odo of Cheriton



Aesop's fables constitute one of the few traditions in ancient Greco-Roman literature which enjoy an unbroken line of popularity over the past three thousand years.

Unlike other genres of ancient literature, Aesop's fables were easy to assimilate into the European Christian tradition because of their **resemblance** to the **parables** of Jesus recorded in the Gospels. Like the parables of Jesus, Aesop's Fables are short, simple stories that teach a moral lesson. Moreover, the adventures of Aesop's talking animals provided some welcome humor, being filled with comic elements that are lacking in the parables of Jesus. As they rewrote the fables, the Christian monks would freely **elaborate** on the morals of the stories, adding in Bible verses in order to bring the fables more fully into the Christian tradition. Sometimes they would **allegorize** the fables, looking for Christian symbols, such as the treacherous serpent or the peaceful dove. They sometimes **supplemented** the traditional fables of Aesop inherited from

hallucinogen *n.* 致幻剂; 幻觉剂

prone *a.* 易于……的

verify *v.* 证明; 证实

intensity *n.* 强度; 烈度

vital *a.* 必不可少的; 对……极重要的

ostentatiously *ad.* 夸张地; 招摇地

resemblance *n.* 相似; 相像

parable *n.* (尤指《圣经》中的) 寓言故事

elaborate *v.* 详尽阐述; 详细描述

allegorize *v.* 寓言化, 以寓言诠释

supplement *v.* 增补; 补充

ancient Greece and Rome with similar animal fables, drawing on local storytelling traditions, or making up stories of their own. These fable books were used as reference materials for preachers as they crafted their sermons, much as in the ancient Greek world the first collections of Aesop's fables had been created as a reference work for **orators** looking for **anecdotes** to use in a speech.

One of the most famous of these medieval fable collections was written by Odo of Cheriton, a 13th-century English preacher and scholar. Odo's Latin fables were well-known and **circulated** widely, as evidenced by numerous **manuscript** copies as well as translations into Spanish, French, and Welsh. Odo was a very learned man for his time, having studied in the schools of Paris, but he was not a high-brown scholar. Instead, he intended his writings to appeal to a general audience, **embracing** both the **clergy** and lay people. Many of the fables **evinced** a strong sympathy for the poor and oppressed, with often sharp criticisms of high-ranking church officials. At the same time, Odo also looked for **theological** messages in the fables, interpreting the stories of the animals as a symbolic code for the workings of God in the world. Odo's fables thus provide evidence of both the "humanistic" and "religious" types of storytelling which Randy introduced in an article from a previous issue, *God and Man: Two Themes*.

Passage Four

The Roar of the Metaphorical Lion

Lions in the wild are dangerous but endangered, yet the mighty roar of the lion lives on in the mind of children and adults alike. Although unknown to most people walking the Earth, lions continue to fire up the imagination of people around the world.

The lion, while not known to be native to China, makes a notable appearance with the spread of Buddhism during the Han period and then emerges as part of a more distinctly Chinese tradition in the form of guardians sitting **astride** gates and entranceways. Lions **wrought** in stone as

orator *n.* 讲演者；雄辩家；善于演说的人

anecdote *n.* 逸事；趣闻

circulate *v.* 传播；流传；散布

manuscript *n.* (印刷术发明以前书籍或文献的) 手写本，手抄本

embrace *v.* 欣然接受，乐意采纳(思想、建议等)；信奉(宗教、信仰等)

clergy *n.* (尤指基督教) 牧师

evinced *v.* 表明，表现，显示(感情或品质)

theological *a.* 神学的；神学上的

roar *n.* 咆哮；吼叫

astride *ad.* 跨(或骑)在……上

wreak *v.* 使发生，造成(尤指变化)



paired guardian figures are a familiar sight in other parts of the world, too, whether it be the entrance to the New York Public Library, colonial British-style buildings and banks or in front of **sprawling** shopping plazas.

Lions may mean different things to different people in different cultures, but there is a telling consistency in how they are characterized. It is generally

observed, across the map and over the centuries, that lions are fierce yet serene, adept at killing yet restrained, keen at keeping enemies **at bay** while **steadfast** in protecting the home **turf**.

Lions were once much more numerous and widespread, ranging from Africa and India to Europe and the Americas, but they fell victim to the expansion of another highly socialized land mammal known for its periodic bouts of violence: **homosapiens**.

Studies of top **predators** have shown that the call of the wild and the **cull** of the hunt both serve to regulate ecosystems that might otherwise be subject to degradation from **overgrazing**, overpopulation and bovine indolence. In places such as the Yellowstone Park in the US, where wolves have been introduced to keep the deer and coyote numbers in check, not only do all species continue to thrive in their respective niches, but new niches are created by the growth of trees and plant life (a direct result of fewer ruminants grazing) which in turn enriches the riverine ecosystem for **beavers**, fish and other creatures who may never come into contact with wolves, but **nonetheless** benefit from their stabilizing presence.

Lions are a top predator. Yet widely beloved lion lore, from the Bible to Broadway and from Herodotus to Hollywood, tends to show lions as august and noble, if not cuddly creatures.

But I think it could be argued that even fierce lions in the wild bring about a kind of order and stability that is broadly beneficial to all creatures, in *The Lion King*, if they stick to script and don't kill except as minimally necessary to eat or protect the pride. When lions roar, the mice and meek of the Earth have nothing to fear, but the hyenas and wildebeests will tremble.

sprawling *a.* 蔓延的；杂乱无序伸展的

at bay 陷入困境

steadfast *a.* 坚定的；不动摇的

turf *n.* (自己的)地盘，势力范围

homosapiens *n.* 人类

predator *n.* 捕食性动物；实行弱肉强食的人（或机构）；剥削者；掠夺者

cull *v.* (为防止动物种群量过多而通常对弱者的)选择性宰杀

overgraze *v.* 过度放牧；在……上过度放牧

beaver *n.* 河狸

nonetheless *conj.* 尽管如此

As such, the lion is an apt metaphor for a leader keen on eradicating corruption. Top predators in the wild such as lions do indeed go quiescent between hunts, but when they awake, their ecological function is to cull the fat from a system grown **flabby**, **wobbly** and out of balance by restoring the natural **equilibrium**. A world without lions would be a world without the natural discipline necessary to guide the well-being of all creatures great and small.

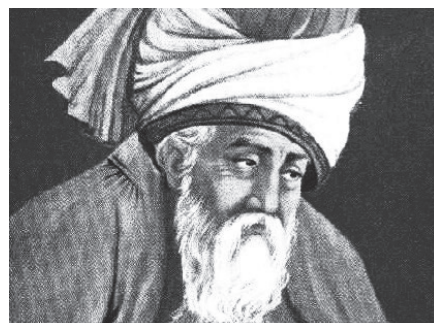


Passage Five

Rumi: The Fable of the Lion's Share

In this article, I will present an example of the use of *Aesop's Fables* in the wisdom literature of Islam, specifically in the great 13th century Persian poet, Rumi, one of the greatest **exponents** of **Sufi** thought in the Muslim tradition. The fables were not seen as distinctively Greek, but had been adopted wholeheartedly by Arabic and Persian storytellers, such as Rumi. Like other Sufi teachers, Rumi made use of these **secular** stories side by side with religious parables and legends in order to reveal **esoteric** doctrines to his followers.

To give you an example of how Rumi appropriates an Aesop's fable for mystical religious teaching, let us take Rumi's version of the famous fable of the "lion's share". This Greek story is a typical Aesop's fable: witty, vicious, and wise. It certainly does not seem to contain profound **revelations** about the right relations of God and man, but this is precisely what Rumi discovers in the story. As soon as Rumi identifies the lion not with secular authority but with absolute divine authority, the way to a mystical understanding of the fable becomes clear.



In the Aesopic tradition, you often find a moralizing

flabby *a.* 软弱的; 无力的

wobbly *a.* 颤动的; 不稳的

equilibrium *n.* 平衡; 均衡; 均势

exponent *n.* (观点、理论的) 拥护者, 鼓吹者, 倡导者

Sufi *n.* 苏非派信徒 (伊斯兰教一宗派成员, 主张通过虔修默祷和禁欲达到人主合一)

secular *a.* 现世的; 世俗的; 非宗教的

esoteric *a.* 只有内行才懂的; 难领略的

revelation *n.* (上帝的) 启示

preface to the telling of a fable, so it is not unusual to find a moral stated at the beginning of a fable like this. What is unusual is the profoundly religious theme that Rumi wants to illustrate with this fable: somehow the story of the lion and his hunting companions is going to turn into a lesson about the **annihilation** of dualism and unity with God. For Rumi, the animals' hunting **expedition** is a metaphor for the human condition itself, in which the spirit is shackled to the body, trapped in this **corporeal** partnership.

In Rumi's version, the lion then gives the whole of the spoils to the fox, and speaks these words of blessing: "**Inasmuch** as **thou hast** become pledge to love of me, pick up all of it and take it and depart. Fox, since thou hast become entirely mine, how should I hurt **thee** when thou hast become myself?" The fox then thanks the lion for giving him the privilege of having gone second, after the wolf; otherwise, he would surely have met the same fate as the wolf. This allows Rumi to conclude that we are lucky to be living now, with the examples of past generations to guide us: "So that we have heard of the **chastisements** which God inflicted upon the past generations in the preceding time, that we, like the fox may keep better watch over ourselves from considering the fate of those ancient wolves."



Rumi has thus taken a traditional Aesop's fable and turned it into a meditation on oneness with God and obedience to divine authority. This approach exemplifies what Randy has called the "religious theme" in myths and legends about the confrontation between the human and the divine. Rumi's fox worships at the feet of the lion, addressing him with the words "king of the world", and is duly rewarded for this devotion. In *Aesop*, on the other hand, there is a much more strongly humanistic theme: after seeing what happened to the would-be rebel who defied the lion, the fox concedes the lion's share, but the words she speaks are not words of worship. Instead, the fox uses her wit to provide a sly critique of the lion, even if she cannot challenge his authority directly. If you were to use just one word to characterize the attitude of Aesop's fox, it would have to be "**cynical**".

annihilation *n.* 消灭; 歼灭; 毁灭

expedition *n.* 远征; 探险; 考察

corporeal *a.* 物质的; 有形的; 实体的

inasmuch *conj.* 由于, 因为; 〈古〉只要

thou *pron.* 〈古〉你

hast *pron.* 〈古〉have 的第二人称单数现在式

thee *pron.* 〈古〉你

chastisement *n.* 惩罚

cynical *a.* 认为人皆自私的; 愤世嫉俗的