NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN

Faculty of Design
Department of Visual Communications

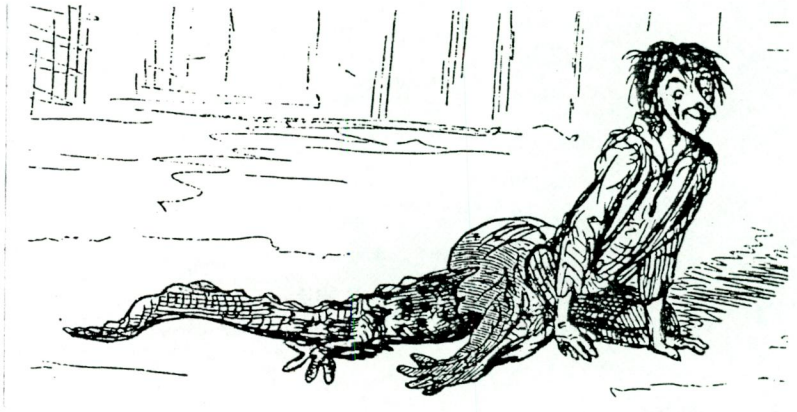
ANTHROPOMORPHIC IMAGERY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SELECTED VICTORIAN ILLUSTRATORS

By Ruth Whittaker

Submitted to the Faculty
of History of Art & Design
& Complementary Studies
in Candidacy for the Degree
of BDes Visual Communications

1992

C O N T E N T S



F O R E W O R D

This Thesis will attempt to sketch the early course of anthropomorphism together with the historical, social and ideological influences that affected it. Nineteenth century artists who illustrated animal fantasy books are discussed in that context and Beatrix Potter, who worked almost exclusively in this field, is dealt with in more detail.

Anthropomorphism will be taken to mean the age-old inclination of man to see in animals a distorted mirror of his own image, and to invest in animals the attributes, emotions and motives that are the result of man's own experience of life. In general, when man is depicted as an animal the result is satirical, bestial, uncivilised, uncouth. All our vices are equated with the animal. Conversely, when an animal is depicted as a man, the result

tends to be whimsical, sentimental, affectionately teasing. In poking fun at man's foibles in this way, the artist colonises the animal's body with feelings and emotions that the former understands and can relate to - fear, greed, deceit, love - and, by depicting the effects of such emotions, he alerts us to a consciousness of our own natures.

Anthropomorphism in the form of the fable had an honoured place amongst teachers and philosophers in ancient and medieval times. They relied upon the shock effect of a different context to make the true nature of a familiar pattern of behaviour truly visible. Presumably the power to effect change through the message of the fable was dependent on the quality of the fabulist's imagination and his ability to create the kind of imagery that would arrest the attention of a self-satisfied culture.

From fable to Regency caricature, to nineteenth century animal fantasy, the anthropomorphic impulse follows a tenuous but detectable line. In the hands of the Victorian illustrators, the figurative concept of the man-animal reaches a new maturity and humour, entering the mainstream of childrens's art and literature. Griset, Tenniel, Caldecott and Rackham have, in their various ways,

contributed to the genre but it is the anthropomorphised animal creations of Beatrix Potter that are best remembered and loved today. Using the most ordinary domestic settings, Beatrix Potter weaves magical stories that transport us to an idealised countryside peopled by rabbits, mice, frogs and squirrels. Her keen eye and deft pen can create a world of fantasy in every child's back garden.

> "He who does not imagine in stronger and better liniments and in stronger and better light than his perishing eye can see, does not imagine at all".*

---

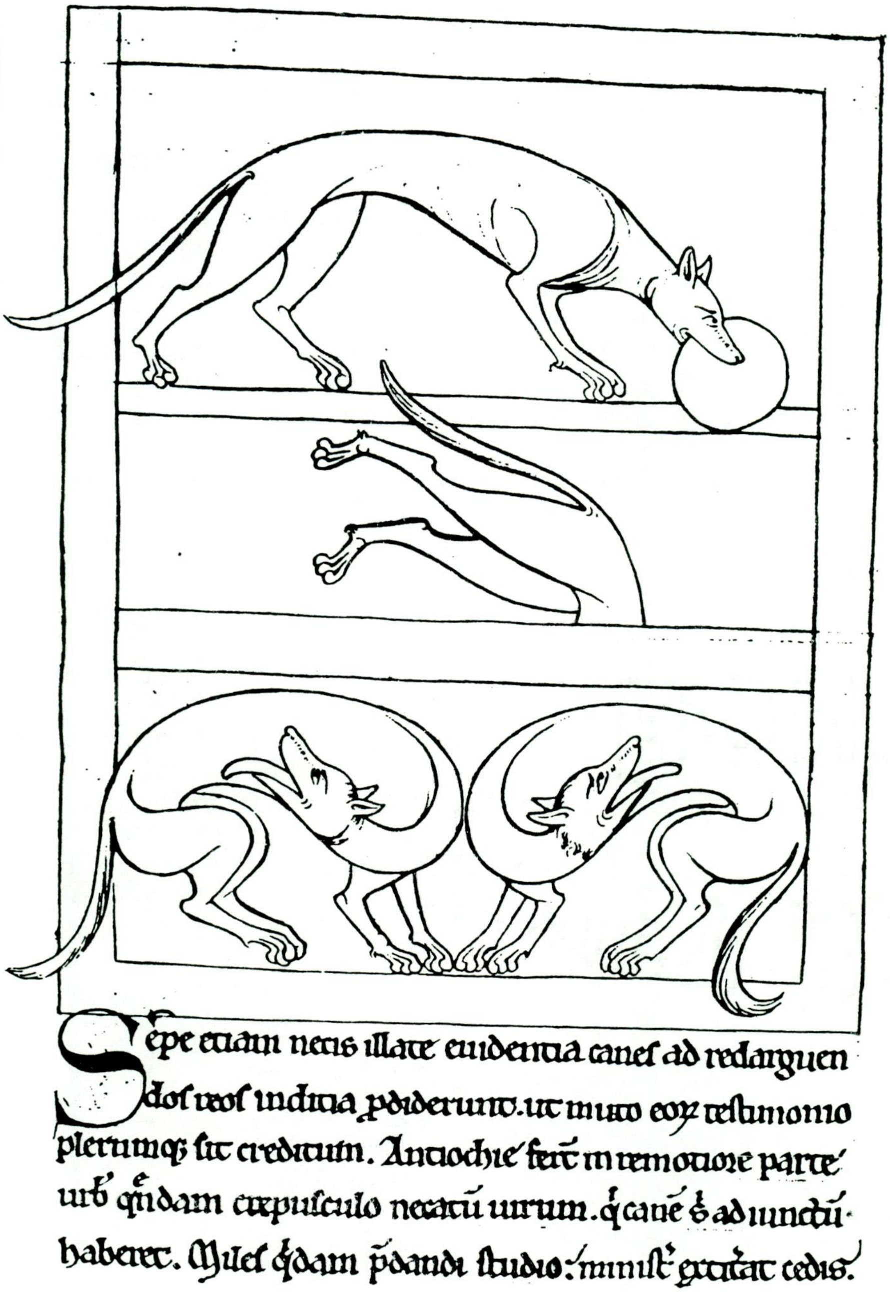
*The Complete Writings of William Blake
Oxford University Press (1966)
Edited by G.Keynes

I N T R O D U C T I O N

It is probable that man shared a common ancestry with his nearest living relative, the gorilla, about twenty million years ago. While the transition form ape-man to human took thousands of generations, man's relationship with the animal world from which he evolved remains ambiguous, being at the same time both sentimental and predatory. Man competes with the animal for food and living space, he eats his flesh, he hunts and preys upon the wild species for sport while he domesticates others for his use and benefit through selective breeding.

The ambiguity we have inherited finds its origins in primitive man, the hunter, who owed his survival to a keen observation and knowledge of animal species. Cave drawings of 20,000 years ago show a remarkably detailed knowledge of the structure of animals. Other drawings depict a transmutation of man and animal and these probably had some religious or mystical significance. If so, the work of these pre-historic artists represents the first recorded expression of the anthropomorphic urge to get inside the animal, and the inextricable bond of love/fear which has characterised this relationship ever since. Traditionally philosophers dismissed animal activities and emotions from

all comparison with human motives and feelings on the general grounds that man is a rational being with a spirit and intellect, a language and culture, whereas the animal merely possesses instinctive reactions to various stimuli. This dismissive attitude by the ancients, however, did not prevent the Greeks and Romans from including detailed information about animals and animal activity in their writings. Through the process of copying and translation some of the original insights and conclusions frequently became distorted and passed into the realm of fable and fantasy. In addition, the notion of the innate evil or baseness of animals became confirmed in human consciousness and this concept of our base animal natures crept into Christian culture, forming the core of our complex and ambiguous relationship with our fellow animals ever since.



Illus. 1 Sacred and Symbolic Animals of the Bestiary

C H A P T E R 1

MAN, ANIMALS AND MAGIC

The revival in the Middle Ages of the cult of the bestiary added its own layer of mysticism and ignorance to our understanding of animal creation. The bestiary contained a strange mixture of legend, observation and dogma, a heady mix of allegorical symbolism coupled with natural and unnatural history. To the moralist of the Middle Ages, everything in nature had been put there to reveal the will of God and to lead man to salvation. For example in Illus. 1 a dog holds a cake in his mouth but lets it drop to dive for its reflection in the water. The dog's greed "symbolises those silly people who leave the Law for some unknown thing". The other two dogs in the Illustration lick their wounds to heal them, but "the wounds of sinners are cleansed when they are laid bare in confession"*

However, the religious nature of the bestiary was frequently debased, resulting in an ugly form of anthropomorphism. In Beast and Man By Mary Midgley she describes a survey done by Ramona and Desmond Morris of

---

*Animals and Men by Kenneth Clark
Thames and Hudson, 1977 (p.96)

Medieval social attitudes: "the ape's capacity for imitation gave rise to the odd notion that he deliberately copied human actions in order to convince people that he was really one of them .....he became the prototype of the impostor, the fraud, the hypocrite and the flatterer"*.

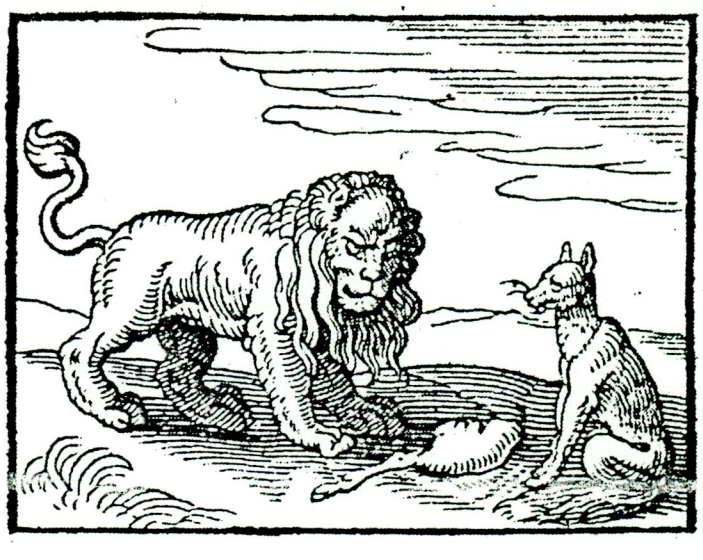
By seriously investing an ape with the exclusively human attributes of deceit, hypocracy and manipulation, Medieval moralists displayed a great lack of honest reasoning. How could an animal, who was universally credited with mere instinct, rationally plan and execute such a fraud? The anthropomorphic thought process involved was surely a symbolic mechanism to oppress and control ignorant and superstitious people. In the same text the Morrises also report that it was customary to ritually hang an ape on the gallows when a Jew was being executed as an exemplary lesson to swindlers. This malign side of anthropomorphism prevailed in varying degrees until the mid-nineteenth century when a more sentimental, affectionate approach to animal fantasy developed.

---

*Beast and Man by Mary Midgley
Metheum & Co. (1980) P.32

Illus. 2 *The Caxton Æsop, 1484*

Illus. 3 Aesop, *Francis Barlow* 1665



Illus. 4 Aesop, Amsterdam 1659

THE ILLUSTRATED FABLE

Until the late 15th century the tradition of the bestiary and the fable was an oral one, apart from a limited number of Latin manuscripts produced in monastic scriptoria. In 1484 William Caxton printed his own translation from the French of the Fables of Aesop, of which only three copies survive to the present day. Illus. 2 is one of 185 clear woodcuts contained in this edition. Another English version, illustrated by Francis Barlow, was issued in 1665 in which the animals are accurately represented and are given neither human nor symbolic attributes. His perfectly proportioned 'Lion and the Mouse' (Illus. 3) illustrates in a straight-forward and realistic way the inter-dependence of man and the fact that the most powerful can be laid low and require the assistance of his least significant neighbour. In a version of Aesop published in Amsterdam in 1659, the Lion, who is about to commandeer the complete 'kill' for himself, is depicted with semi-human features reminiscent of the scowling bully and grabber (Illus. 4)

However the best and largest collection of fables in English was compiled by Sir Roger L'Estrange in 1692 and, in addition to Aesop, it included a selection from La Fontaine and many other fabulists. As well as being used by monks as a source of moral instruction, Aesop was recommended as a first reading book for children in both English and Latin. All of these translations retained the intensely moral nature of the original fables. Indeed a high moral tone and an instructive style was a necessary ingredient of all children's books right up until the middle of the nineteenth century. Chesterfield is reputed to have forbidden his son to read "frivolous romances and stories of enchantment and giants" though he did allow his godson "to read fables, so long as they were by La Fontaine and in French".*

The fables of Aesop, of which there are several interpretations and adaptations, were originally collected together as a group by Demetrius of Phaleron around 300 B.C. The animal imagery of these short stories was used as satirical parables to mirror the foibles of human nature. Such tales as The Mouse and the Lion, The Lion and the Beasts, The Ant and the Grasshopper, The Fox and the Grapes

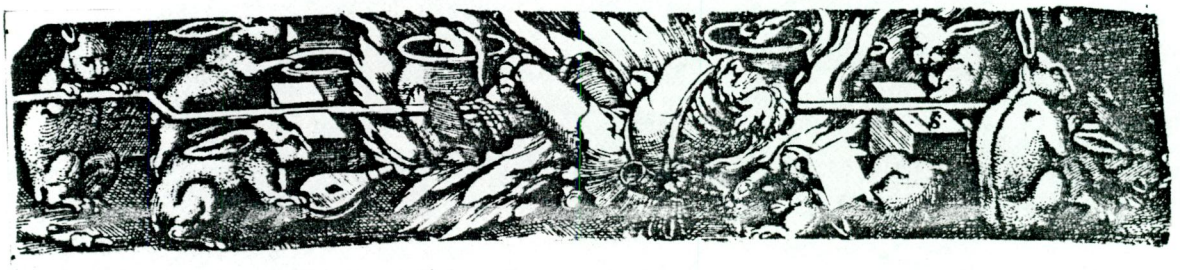
*English Children Books by Percy Muir
B.T. Batsford Ltd (1985) P.25

became classic texts for adaptations by illustrators such as Caldecott, Bennett and Rackham. Variations on similar themes range from the satire, Reynard the Fox, to Uncle Remus.

Apart from their value as moral parables for adults, fables can be perfect reading material for small children. A small child can talk to his pet with complete lack of self-consciousness and can listen with equal solemnity to a story relayed through the mouths of fictional animals. The notion of his own intellectual superiority has not yet dawned upon the child in most instances. This is no less obvious in the modern child than it was in Victorian and Tudor times or in the dim and distant era when fables were first concocted by wise men. Above all fables have the indispensable advantage of being make-believe and, whether we talk about Kermit the Frog in the Muppet Show, Puss and Boots, Lewis Carroll's weird characters, or Beatrix Potter's Tale of Johnny Town Mouse and Jemima Puddleduck, they are all direct descendants of Aesop's fabular bestiary.

GOTHIC INFLUENCE

European Gothic influences brought a novel dimension to animal fantasy drawing, introducing an element of facetiousness that was not there previously. The style resulted in amusing and original themes while extending the boundaries of fantasy. The Gothic artist displayed a certain irreverence for the medieval, god-like superiority of man over animals that strikes an ironic note. Some drawings mockingly imply that man and animal share an egalitarian world on an equal footing. The irony is all the more savage when one considers how man has abused his fellow creatures throughout the ages. An engraving in the Victoria and Albert Museum by Virgil Solis (1514-62) depicts a group of hares roasting a hunter and his dog over a long spit (Illus. 5) and it is a typical example of the skittish treatment of anthropomorphic themes which was fashionable at that time.



Illus. 5 Hares Roasting a Hunter and his Dog

THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

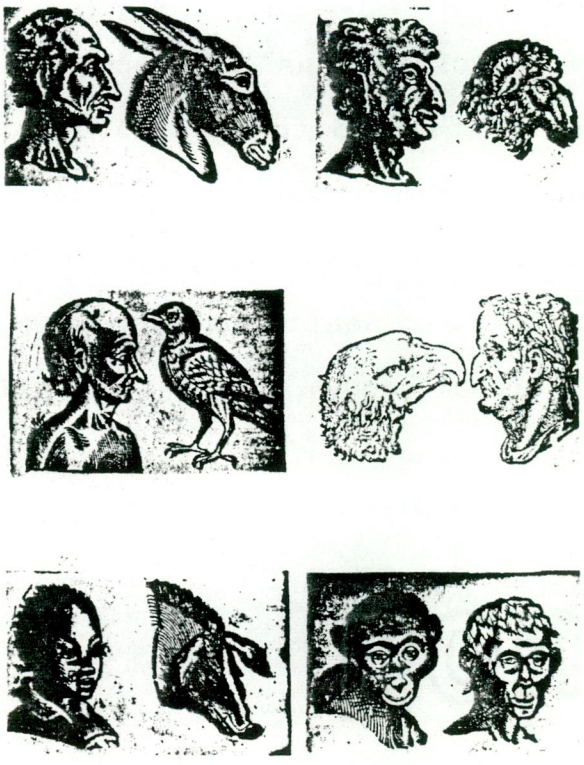
In all ages man, by his artistry, assumed the power and status of a God and remade the world to his own liking. What he did not understand he relegated to the realm of the supernatural. The eighteenth century, however, was different. With the development of new printing techniques, literacy increased amongst ordinary people. Books with new social and political ideas spread from the Continent and new inventions multiplied. It was the age of questioning and doubt. The eighteenth century saw the appearance of a literature profoundly sceptical and critical of the governing policies of the time, notably Voltaire's Candide. Therefore, searching for new ideas and territories, re-examination of old myths, better knowledge of the universe and basic scientific principles, a more enlightened approach to education and government and curtailment of the power of the Church were the main features of the 18th century.

Philosophers and writers, too, were searching for and exploring new ideas and concepts both at the physical and metaphysical level. William Blake's (1757-1827) engraving on the frontispiece of For children : The Gates of Paradise (1793) depicts a caterpillar/infant in a state of

metamorphosis (Illus. 6). As it is an 'emblem book' implying that the illustrations are open to individual interpretation, one is tempted to speculate that Blake was subconsciously anticipating the discoveries of Charles Darwin. However, in her book William Blake*, Kathleen Raine explains that he was dealing metaphorically with the origin of the spiritual body. The caterpillar is the symbol of the human-animal and its metamorphosis to an infant represents the birth of the spirit and the creation of a divine humanity.

Illus. 6 O What is Man !

*William Blake by Kathleen Raine
Thames and Hudson (1970)



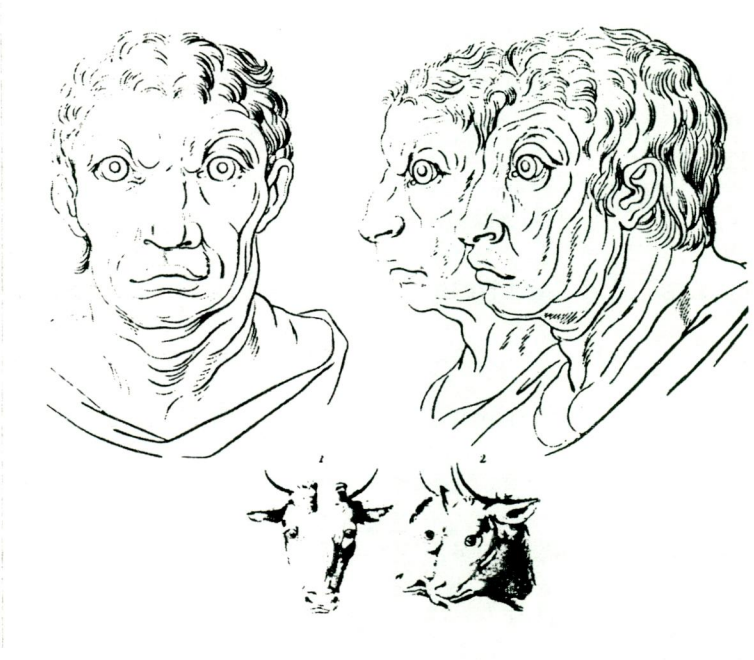
Illus. 7

Man/animal comparisons taken from G. della Porta. Groom Napier, *The Book of Nature*, 1870.

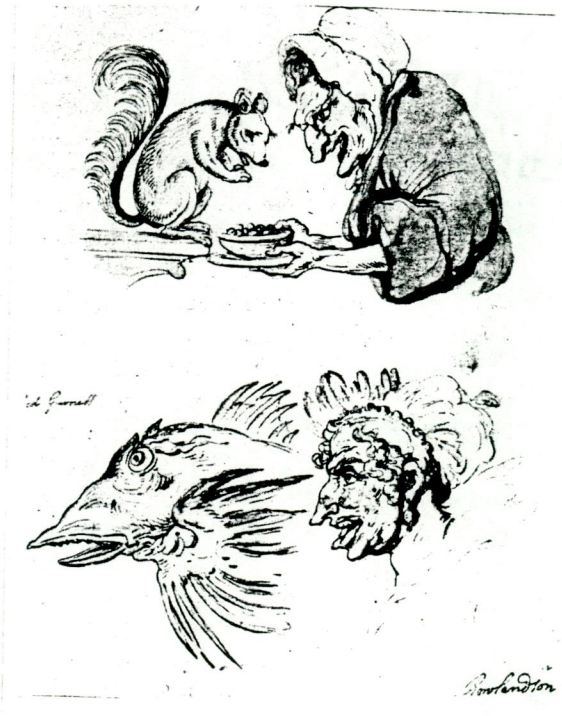
COMPARATIVE PHYSIOGNOMY

Natural historians and anthropologists were also exploring new concepts within the context of the age-old, captivating subject of man-animal resemblances. The art of judging human character from the shape of the face and skull reaches back in time to Aristotle and the ancient Greeks. The significance of superficial resemblances between man and animals was an integral ingredient in the cult of the bestiary and assumptions based on comparative studies were frequently used to back up social dogma. Aristotle believed that a broad-tipped nose in humans indicated laziness, as demonstrated in bovines, and a sharp-tipped nose indicated irritability, as demonstrated in canines, The history of physiognomy is a vast subject and can only be touched on in this essay. The subject is important, however, in that its widespread popular appeal in the late 18th and early 19th centuries greatly influenced the volume of anthropomorphic art produced during the Victorian period.

Giambattisla della Porta (1533-1615) produced an extensive, richly illustrated analysis of comparative man-animal physiognomy in 1586 and his work stimulated scholarly interest in the subject thereafter. Illus. 7 is an example



Illus. 8 A page fron *Lavater's* Physiognomic Fragments

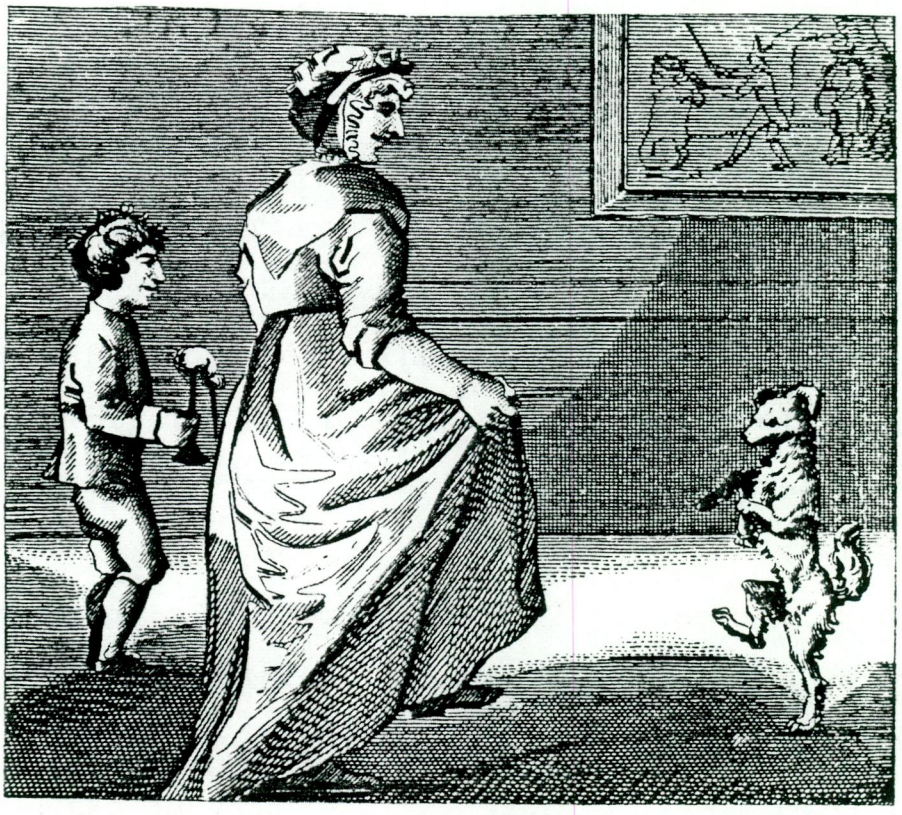


Illus. 9 *Rowlandson's* Comparative Anatomies

of Della Porta's work and is taken from The Book of Nature (1870) by Groom Napier. However it is in the 18th century, with its emphasis on new ideas and new scientific methods, that we see the ancient art of physiognomy elevated to the status of a pseudo-science. The translation of the investigations of Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801) was published in England in 1792 under the title Physiognomic Fragments and the theories proposed in this book profoundly affected social, intellectual and artistic thought for more than a hundred years. Lavater claimed that by his studies and by a system of measurements he had devised, he could "know the inner man by the outer.....apprehend the invisible by the visible surface"(Illus. 8)*.

By the late 18th Century caricature had become very fashionable in England and France and many artists satirised the theories contained in Lavater's Fragments. Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827) did numerous sketches and caricatures of comparative anatomies based on the analogies proposed in Lavater's work, and he influenced artists like Griset, Tenniel and Caldecott in years to come (Illus. 9). Rowlandson's caricature prints helped stimulate popular demand for pictures of all kinds. His keen character observation, lively and penetrating wit, and fluency of

*Ernest Griset: Fantasies of a Victorian Illustrator by Lionel Lambourne Thames & Hudson (1979) P.6



Illus. 10 Old Mother Hubbard and her Dog, *Thomas Rowlandson*

Illus. 11 A Shrike as Butterfly Hunter, *Ernest Griset*

Illus. 12 The Eloquent Toad. *J.J. Granville*

line had a strong influence on the development of commercial picture books for children in the early 19th century. In The Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and Her Dog (1805), Rowlandson in fact created the first recognisable picture book. His illustration to the line "When She Came Back He Was Dancing a Jig" (Illus.10) demonstrates the characteristic facial resemblance between human and animal inherent in much of Rowlandson's work.

J.J. Granville (1802-1842) was, however, the most influential in this area, particularly his astute and uncompromising sketches in Scenes de la Vie Privée et Publique des Animaux (1840-42). In Illus. 11 he compares a butterfly hunter to a shrike, while in Illus. 12 the 'Eloquent Toad' displays a sartorial choice and elegant pose that even John Ruskin - the doyen of Victorian taste - would have approved of.

Other works published in England displayed an unpleasant race prejudice under the guise of scientific research. James Redfield's book, Comparative Physiognomy (1852), "was highly regarded perhaps because it confirmed so many prejudices. The Irishman, for instance, is compared to the

Illus. 13 Irishman/Terrior

George Cruikshank: Oliver Twist, Bill Sykes and associates. Oliver's refined physiognomy contrasts with the bestial features of the villains. Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 1837–8.

Illus. 14

scrounging, yapping terrior (Illus. 13) and Frenchmen to frogs"*

Physignomical criticism of figurative art was a universal habit in this period and a correct interpretation was seen as necessary to the truth and moral value of the artist. George Cruikshank's illustrations to Charles Dickens' 'Oliver Twist' (Illus. 14) were praised by John Ruskin for providing good examples of proven physiognomical beliefs in comparative animal anatomies. In the above illustration the bull-dog, Patch, is depicted as the prototype for his owner, Bill Sykes. Indeed the whole street mob is portrayed in bestial terms, with broad, coarse faces and flat, pudgy noses, apart from " the mild but high-minded Oliver Twist, with his fine Greek nose"**

---

*The Artist As Anthropologist. A representation of Type and Character in Victorian Art by Mary Cowling. Cambridge University Press (1989) P. 35

**The Artist as Anthropologist P. 118

C H A P T E R 2

VICTORIAN CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

The flowering of the cult of man-animal comparative analysis in the 19th century can best be explained by the deep-seated class and race prejudice that permeated Victorian society. The scientific value of physiognomy was seldom challenged because its conclusions echoed and reinforced the views of its adherents. The upper class and the established bourgeoisie felt threatened by the rapidly changing social structure of 19th century industrial England. The new trade and merchant class - who had aspirations to climb the social ladder and acquire a veneer of culture - tended to be seen as bloated bounders without social grace. In essence, the image of men who did not conform to the stereotype of English upper-class manners, culture and physical appearance - by virtue of their lineage or nationality - was expressed in the coarsest animalistic form. This illustrative technique mirrored precisely one part of the age-old anthropomorphic principle that when man is depicted as an animal the result is satirical, uncivilised, uncouth.

Illus. 15 High Life, Low Life, *Sir Edwin Landseer*

"Now, Marm, will yer buy? She's a good 'un at a cat, a ripper at a rat, and can tackle any dorg double her size fifty mile round. - Ah! she's a booty!"

Illus. 16 Bull-Dog Type

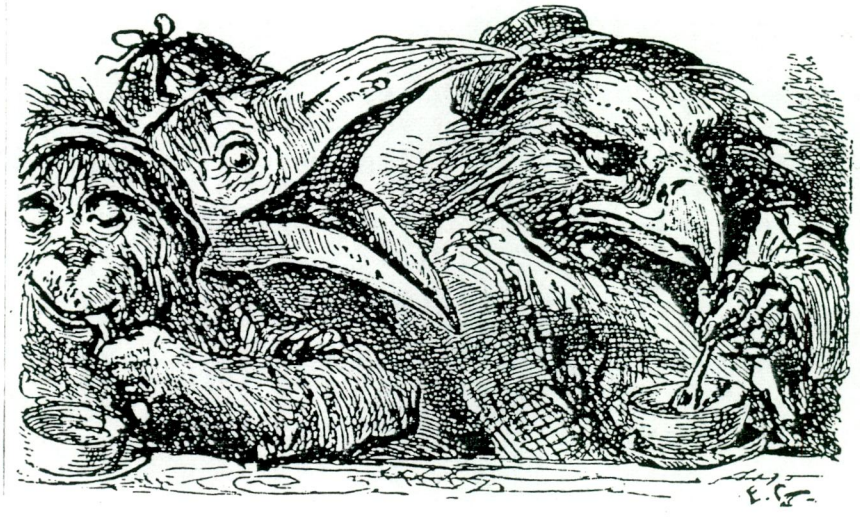
Victorian physiognomists were so besotted by their theories and social prejudices that they extended their class analogies into the realm of the animal world itself, equating contemporary, idealised, human attributes with animal perfection. In 'High Life and Low Life' (Illus 15), Sir Edwin Landseer (1802-73) contrasts two dogs representative of the highest and lowest classes. The 'high-class' deerhound is posed elegantly in a drawing-room setting with his fine clean lines and slim nose accentuated by a flattering light. In contrast the 'low-life' bull-terrior squats loutishly against what appears to be a backstairs pillar as befits an animal with a heavy, coarse, pugnacious face and rough, muscular body.

Bull-dog type humans were extensively caricatured in satirical magazines of the day and it was usual to show human and animal counterparts together in order to emphasise their common low natures (Illus. 16). Sir John Tenniel contributed numerous examples of the bull-dog man to Punch where it was frequently equated with the criminal

"DID YER WANT A GOOD WARMINT DAWG, SIR?"

Illus. 17 Bull-Dog Type by *Sir John Tenniel*

Illus. 18 A Criminal Type, *Sir John Tenniel*



Illus. 19 Stall Owners Enjoying Soup, *Ernest Griset*

class (Illus. 17 & 18)

> ".....the bull-dog....with bandy legs and heavy shoulders....small eyes under the brows, smooth bullet forehead, heavy jaw and snub nose...tough and pugnacious in its lower manifestations, the bull-dog shares an affinity with the criminal type".*

In 1884, Fun's Comical Creatures - a down-market version of Punch - published a series of animal and bird caricatures by Ernest Griset (1844-1907) depicting poor and under-privileged types in Victorian London. His vivid realisation of streets teeming with vagabonds, cheap-jack hucksters, con-men, drunks, stall owners and rough looking customers is presented in the coarsest animal characterisations. A typical example shows stall owners enjoying their morning soup (Illus. 19) in which the facial expressions range from the simian to the garrulous to the evil and predatory.

---

*The Artist as Anthropologist p. 198

THE STATUS QUO OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The deprivation, homelessness, hunger, exploitation and brutalisation of the Victorian working class is well documented by writers such as Charles Dickens and Anthony Trollope. The social inequalities of the 18th century were multiplied by the tremendous pace of industrialisation and the displacement of rural populations which resulted from it. Immense new industrial towns mushroomed around smoky factory sites. Port cities grew enormously, with a corresponding increase in street crime, prostitution, disease and homelessness. There was no State aid for the destitute; every person had to fend for himself and the unwritten law of survival was: "God helps those who help themselves".

Side by side with such deprivation was an unprecedented volume of wealth in the hands of the old aristocratic class, the bourgeoisie and the merchant nouveau riche. They were devoted to family, to church-going, to social etiquette and to public conformity with contemporary morals. The period of peace following the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 ushered in an era of sustained industrial expansion and international trade. By the time Victoria came to the Throne in 1838 new technology had greatly

influenced book publication. Railways were beginning to crisscross the countryside opening up new markets, gas light replaced candles in the home, lithography had improved and Bewick had demonstrated the potential of wood engraving for the mass publication of books.

Queen Victoria, with her numerous children, was the role model of the bourgeoisie and her example of happy domesticity was reflected in their ostentatious devotion to children. Increased wealth afforded parents the leisure time to take note of their children's emotional needs as well as their spiritual and moral training. In addition, the ideas of Jean Jacques Rousseau concerning children's education had been filtering through to English society since the beginning of the century and a gradual change had occurred in the attitude of writers to the subject matter of children's books. More and more stories were written and illustrated specifically for children. The didactic tone of previous generations was softened in favour of a more subtle, humorous approach, In some cases excitement, fantasy and pure entertainment was the sole intention of the writer/illustrator - a unique development in the history of children's books. While interesting and informative books on science, technology and natural history were very popular due to the influence of the Great

Exhibition of 1851, the Victorian appetite for stories based on animal fantasy was enormous and many of the most prominent visionary illustrators of the century contributed to the genre, e.g. Ernest Griset, Sir John Tenniel, Randolph Caldecott, Arthur Rackham and Beatrix Potter.

C H A P T E R 3

THE GOLDEN AGE OF ANTHROPOMORPHIC IMAGERY

From the accession of Queen Victoria onwards economic expansion and urban industrialisation increasingly divorced the population from its rural roots.

> "The decade of the 1850s, following the Great Exhibition of 1851, was crucial to the emergence of an intellectual climate that was increasingly critical of the ravages of industrialisation...."*

There were already signs of an important cultural reaction towards an identification with native English landscape and pre-industrial medieval culture rooted in a mythic past. Widespread interest in fables, medieval myths and animal fantasy was an important aspect of this cultural reaction. As well as representing a search for "olde English" identity, it also signified a middle-class desire to escape from urban blight to a fabricated world of the imagination or perhaps to the pastoral ideal of John Ruskin, where

> "there are no gas works, no waterworks, no moving machines, no sewing machines, no telegraph poles, no vestige in fact of science, civilization, economical arrangements or commercial enterprise".**

---

*Victorian Values Edited by Gorden Marsden
Longman Group (UK) Ltd. (1990) P.215

**Fantastic Illustration and Design in Britain 1850 - 1930 by Diana L. Johnson P.9

Urban middle-class children, too, had emotional needs caused by their isolation from the living creatures of the countryside and their confinement to nurseries until teenage years. Fictional fantasy writers and artists filled this need by recognising the child within themselves and allowing their memories to shape the imagination. The fantastic literary and visionary creations of the period and the revival of the cult of ancient fables enriched their lives and altered the style of children's literature in a unique and unprecedented way.

Illus. 20 The Animal Court, *Charles H. Bennett*

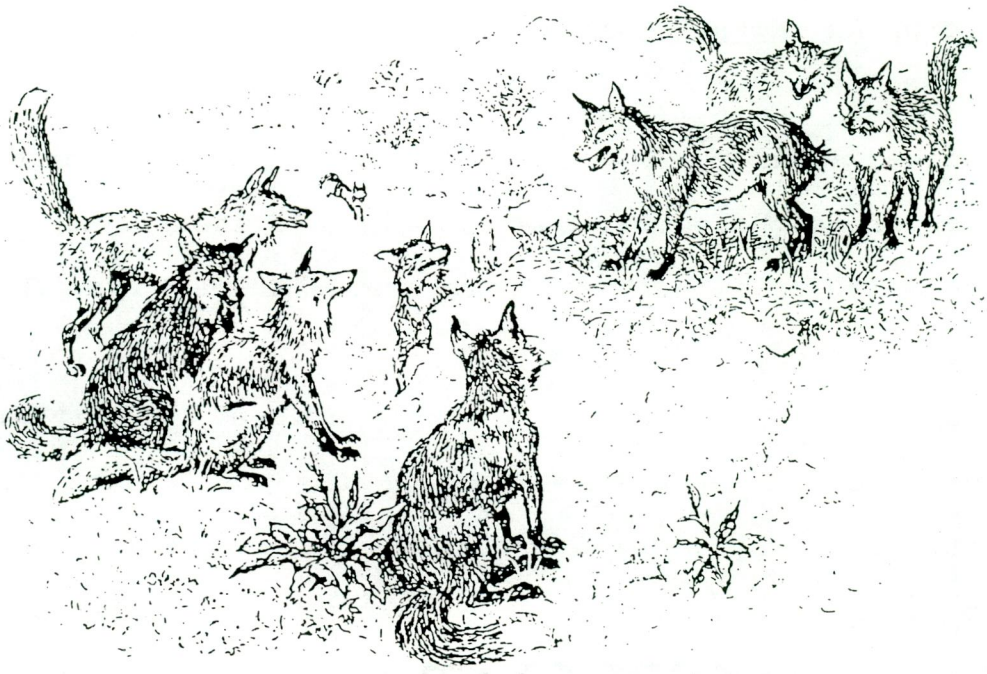
VICTORIAN INTERPRETATIONS OF AESOP

Fables, with their common sense, dramatic simplicity and lack of psychological complexity, lend themselves admirably to illustration. Therefore, animal moral tales proliferated in the 19th century due to the comparative ease and economy of printing at the time. Aesop, which had been copied ad nauseam over the centuries, was re-interpreted by several well-known illustrators, but I feel it was best re-vitalised by the inventiveness of artists such as Charles H. Bennett (1829-1897) and Randolph Caldecott (1846-1886).

Bennett's Fables of Aesop and Others Translated into Human Nature (1857) was really a picture book for adults and his animals represented Bennett's impression of contemporary London society. His beasts portrayed with energy and malice many of the types fictionalised in mid-Victorian novels, among them the callous, unsympathetic footman, the lazy official, the swindler, the ignorant patron of the arts and the snobbish social climber.* The frontispiece of Bennett's Aesop (Illus. 20) shows a man being tried for

---

*The Illustrator and the Book in England (1790-1914)
By Gordon N. Ray
The Pierpont Morgan Library
Oxford University Press (1976) P. 132 - 133



THE FOX WITHOUT A TAIL

"Nonsense, my dears! Husbands are ridiculous things & are quite unnecessary!"

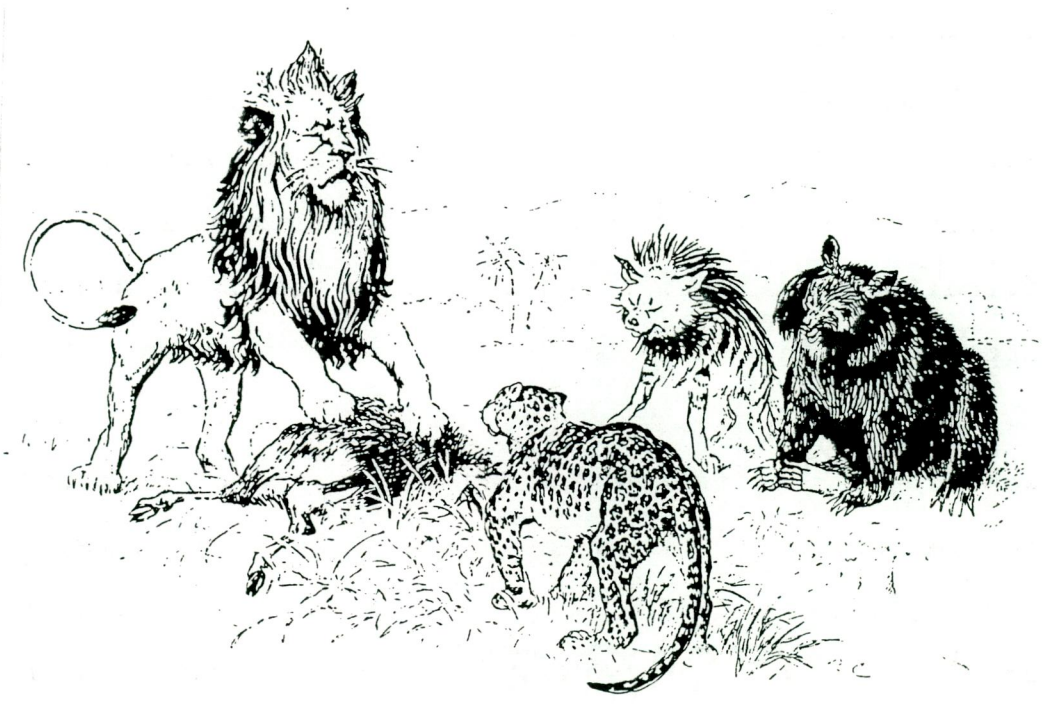
Illus. 21 *Randolph Caldecott*

ill-treating his horse by a lion as judge and a complete court of animals. Bennett's interpretations are dark, malign and brooding, the features of the animals are distorted and grotesque to signify human vices and the overall result represented a vicious attack on contemporary English society.

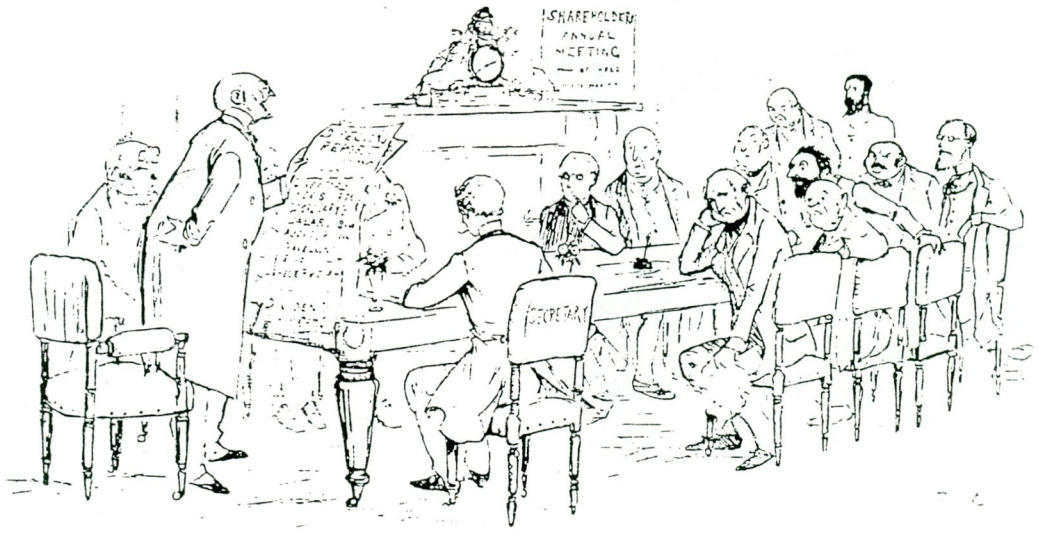
Randolph Caldecott, on the other hand, adopts a more light-hearted approach and invests Some of Aesop's Fables with Modern Instances (1833) with a sense of humour and originality. In his illustrations he separates the human and the animal elements, allowing a comparison to be made without the necessity for distortion or caricature. The viewer is left to draw any inference he wishes. Illus. 21 refers to the story of a fox who has his tail chopped off in a trap. At first he is embarrassed in front of his peers but then decides to persuade the other foxes to cut off their tails too. Having assembled all the foxes he declared "that a tail was an ungraceful thing; and further, was a heavy appendage, and quite superfluous".* Caldecott's human comparison as shown in his montage speaks for itself.

---

*The Randolph Caldecott Treasury
Edited by Elizabeth T. Billington
Frederick Warne & Co. (1978) P. 136



THE LION AND OTHER BEASTS



Illus. 22 *Randolph Caldecott*

In another variation of an Aesop's fable (Illus. 22) Caldecott illustrates the tale of a Lion who went hunting with other Beasts and caught a stag. The Lion divided the 'kill' into four equal portions but when the other Beasts tried to claim their rightful share, the Lion said that the first portion was his as a member of the group, the second was his because of his senior rank, the third was his as it was proper that they would pay tribute to his rank, and "as to the fourth - why, if anyone wishes to dispute with me for it, let him begin, and we shall soon see whose it will be".* His human comparison with the boardroom row is as pertinent today as it was in 1883.

*The Randolph Caldecott Treasury P.137

THE DARWINIAN EXPERIENCE

The determination of the Victorians to create animals in their own image and their insatiable appetite for anthropomorphic fantasy may in part have been a repercussion of the impact of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution on popular consciousness. Once man was shown to be merely a particularly adaptive species of animal instead of a flawed replica of God, writers, artists and public had a motive to credit their fellow creatures with emotions, motives and moral responses never before contemplated. Whole new areas of fantasy and speculation were opened up and avidly availed of.

However, in the decade following the publication of Origin of Species(1859) controversy raged between the Church orthodoxy on the one hand, who preached a strict Biblical interpretation of creation, and Darwin's followers, on the other hand, who ridiculed their unscientific fundamentalism. This was

> "a generation whose religious certainties had been undermined by the advent of Darwinism and who felt insecure in a rapidly urbanising world".*

Ernest Griset (1844-1907) revelled in the controversy and found much of his inspiration in the arguments of the

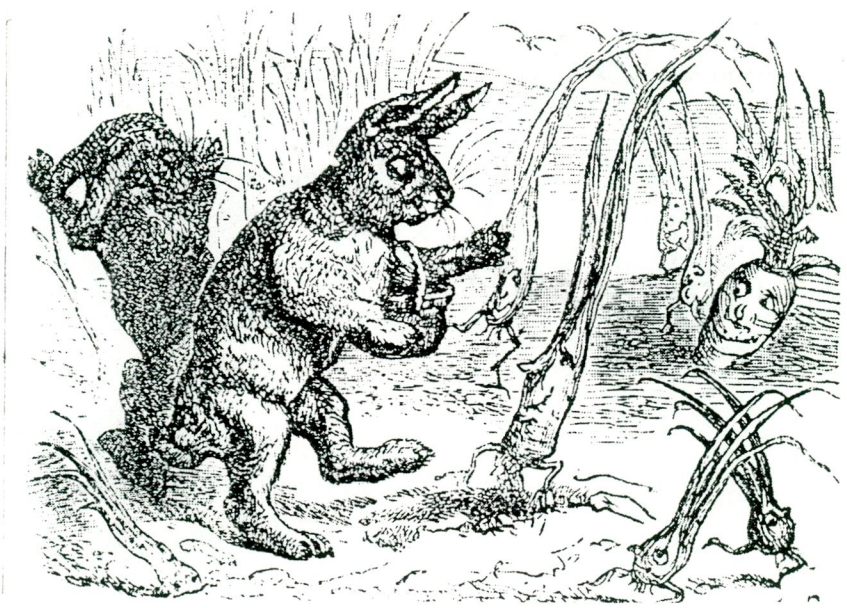
---

*Victorian Values p. 216

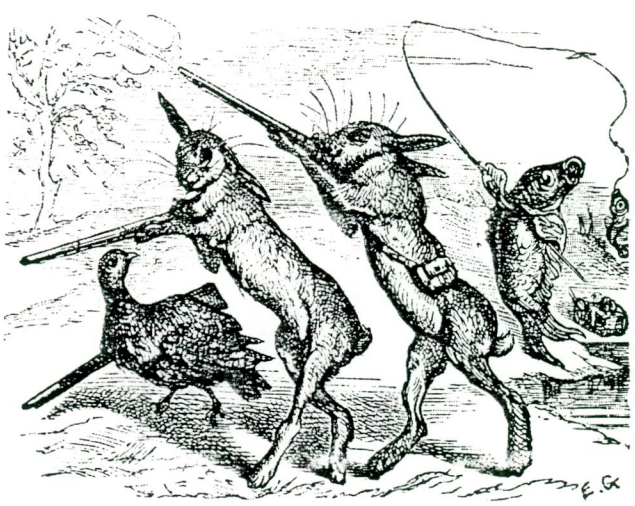
ALL IN TO BEGIN!

WALK up, walk up, the *Show's* the thing!
"The Funny Foxes" in full swing.

Illus. 23 The Funny Foxes & their Feats at the Fair, *Ernest Griset*



Illus. 24 *Ernest Griset:* Spring



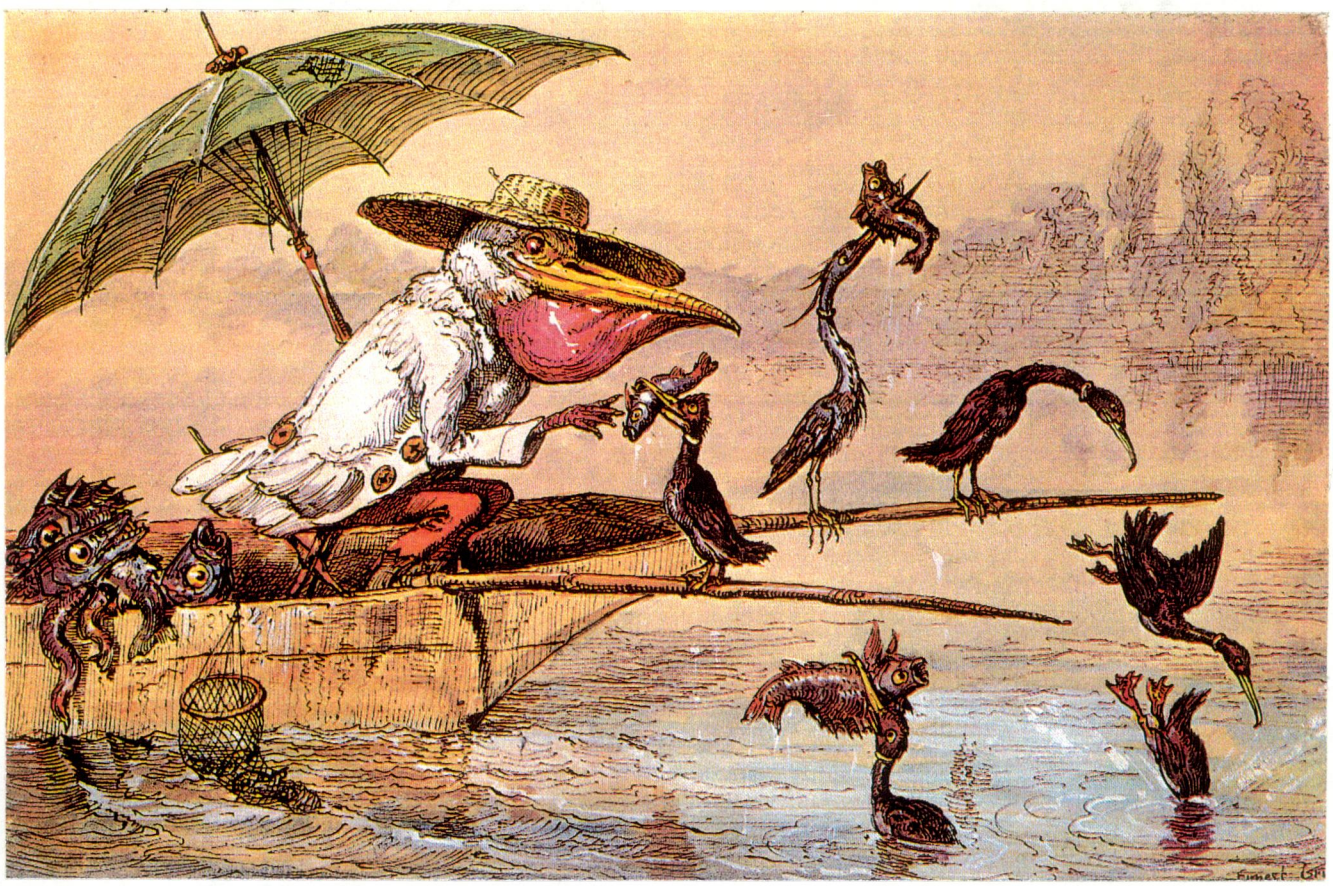
Illus. 25 *Ernest Griset*: Autumn

protagonists. He created several caricatures of animals and insects acting out the role of men very much in the style of his fellow Frenchman, J.J. Granville. His illustration to The Funny Foxes and Their Feats at the Fair (Illus. 23) is a case in point. The foxes are carrying out all the circus functions of performers and animals alike, watched by an audience of animals in sundry dress. The notion of the superior attributes of man is typically played down as in much of Griset's other work.

In the Season Series 'Spring' (Illus. 24) depicts the animals sowing the crops and even the vegetables themselves are humanised. 'Summer' shows the animals lazing about in the sun drinking. In 'Autumn' they are shooting and fishing and in 'Winter' they are skating on the frozen lake. Illus. 25, which depicts a fish fishing and a pheasant and hares shooting, is characteristically anthropomorphic. It is also strikingly reminiscent of Granville's caricature of'A shrike as Butterfly Collector' from La Vie Privée et Publique (Illus. 11, P. 19)

Griset had an unsentimental but genuine empathy with the 'human feelings' of all creatures and through his simple linear drawings he savagely satirises man's careless

Illus. 26 Peter the Cruel as a Fisherman's Fly, *Ernest Griset*



Illus. 27 The Dream of the Fisherman, *Ernest Griset*

disregard for such feelings. In The Purgatory of Peter the Cruel James Greenwood tells the story of the metamorphosis of a cruel youth into various creatures, there to suffer the agonies that he himself had inflicted in the past. Griset's contributions to this grim, salutary tale are acutely and sympathetically observed as if the artist was in complete accord with the text. In Illus. 26 Peter, in the shape of a fly, is about to be pierced by the fishing hook of two grinning, unconcerned youths. As always the message of Griset's illustration is powerfully conveyed as it is in 'The Dream of the Fisherman' (Illus. 27), where a pelican engages cormonants to do his fishing for him. In this illustration he clothes the lazy, manipulative pelican to emphasise his uniquely human characteristics.

Griset was a draughtsman of vigour and inventiveness but his savagely satirical treatment of human nature, so popular in the post-Darwinian decade, eventually went out of fashion. He seems to have been unable to widen the scope and interest of his subject matter and failed to achieve the sustained success of other contemporary caricaturists such as John Tenniel. His biographer, Lionel Lambourne, suggests that Griset lost his creative originality and appeal as a result of the demands of a very

large family, and possibly as a result of his failure to introduce people into his drawings. I believe another reason may have been the intenseness and lack of humour in his work and the fact that his imagination tended towards the grotesque rather than towards the fantastic or funny.

Illus. 28 Frog-Footman, *Sir John Tenniel*

ANIMAL CHARACTERISATION

Sir John Tenniel (1820-1914) as we have already observed in an earlier section, was a prolific contributor to Punch and other satirical magazines, where Ruskin ".....recommended the study of (his) moral and social types....."* While Tenniel was much in demand as a caricaturist, it was his work on Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland that gained him lasting international recognition. His authoritative characterisation of the various creatures in the two 'Alice' books, Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There, gave them the form that most people relate to ever since - although Arthur Rackham's re-illustration in 1907 was a lively, fresh and individual interpretation in its own right.

Like Griset, Tenniel too owed much to the work of J.J. Granville. There is, for instance, a resemblance between Granville's 'Eloquent Toad' (Illus. 12, P. 19) and Tenniel's 'Frog Footman' (Illus. 28). The 19th century tendency to endow animals with almost exclusively human characteristics had by now become more emphasised and the principal device used in this humanising process was the addition of clothes or the semblance of clothes. Tenniel's

*Artist as Anthropologist P.189

Illus. 29 The White Rabbit, *Sir John Tenniel*

visualisaton of the 'White Rabbit' was an example of an animal being immortalised as a human character in children's fiction (Illus. 29)

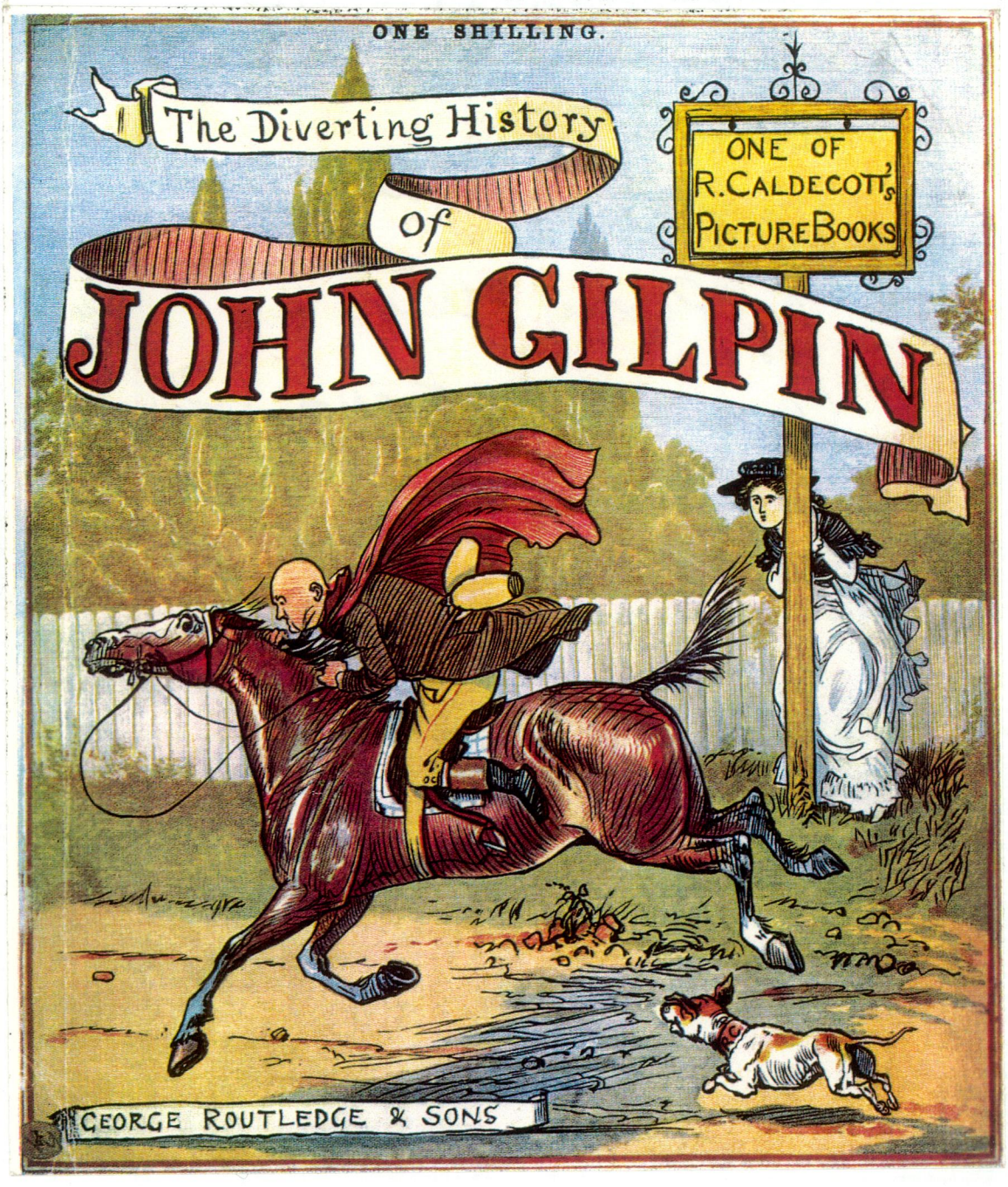
Tenniel worked in woodblock and in black-and-white. His firm delineation of the various characters gave lasting visual form to the weird creatures of Lewis's imagination and gave a perfectly believable shape to the unreal, upside-down world which he depicted. In this surreal, magical, amoral world we encounter creatures who are half-animal/half-man,

> "half-flower and half-human, elves, fairies, genii, a plethora of assorted monsters; all the figures of Alice's Wonderland and many others populate this alternative existence, an existence generally far removed from daily realities"*

Through the inspired, though occasionally traumatic, collaboration of Tenniel and Carroll, children's literature was finally liberated from the tyranny of didacticism and infused with a spirit of fun and fantasy.

---

*Fantastic Illustration and design
in Britain 1850-1930
By Diana L. Johnson P.9



Illus. 30 Cover of a *Caldecott* Picture Book

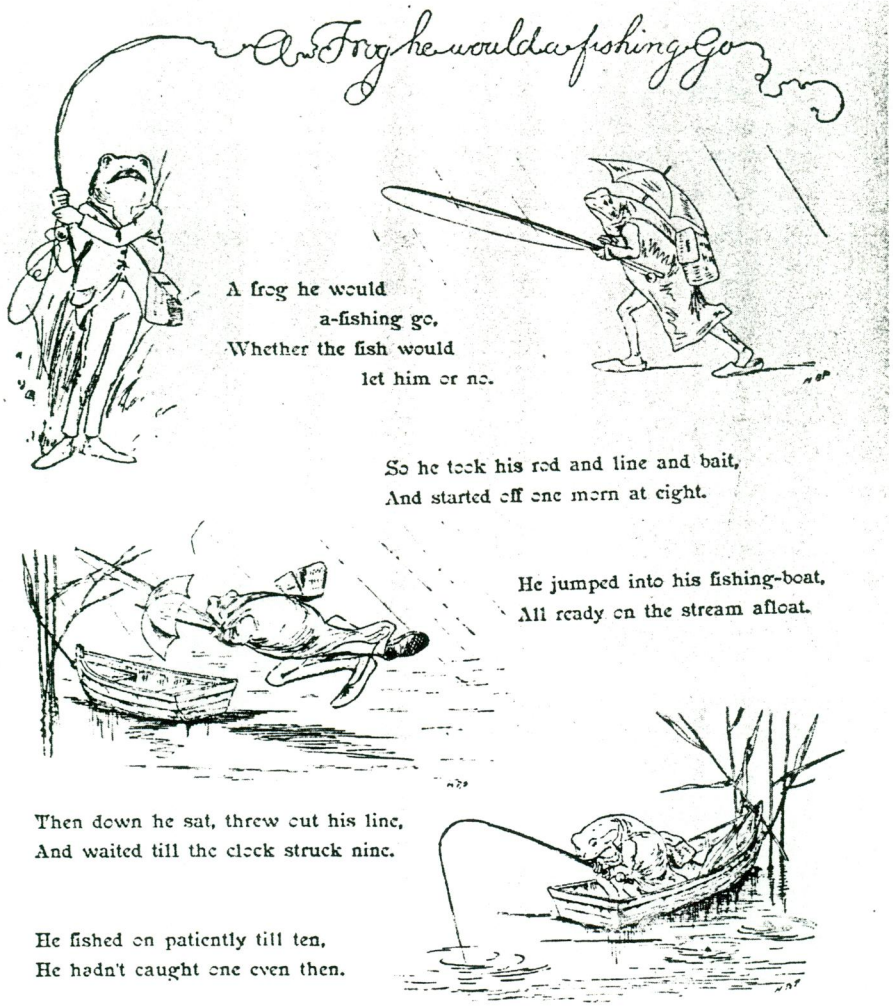
CALDECOTT'S TOY BOOKS

By the late 1870s the publication of children's books had become a lucrative business. Colour engraving was well established and the emphasis on style and layout put childrens books in the forefront of fashion. The mass production of colour picture books had increased enormously since the publication of Rowlandson's Old Mother Hubbard and Her Dog but, probably due to the indiscriminate taste of the Victorian nouveau riche, "coarse colours and vulgar designs....ruled the market place".* From 1860 onwards Edmund Evans, the gifted engraver and printer, made efforts to refine the process of mass-market production, colour printing and the illustrator's work on which it was founded. While Kate Greenaway and Walter Crane contributed to the colour book series, it was the collaboration between Evans and Randolph Caldecott (1846-1886) in the production of illustrated nursery rhymes that has left the most lasting impression. A series of sixteen titles, beginning with The House that Jack Built, were published in colour from 1878. Caldecott's treatment of the rhymes represented a welcome escape for the small, privileged, but socially isolated urban child to an idyllic countryside of winding

---

*Sing a song for sixpence
by Brian Alderson
Cambridge University Press (1986) P.76

Illus. 31 A Frog He Would A Wooing Go, *Randolph Caldecott*



Illus. 32 A Frog He Would A Fishing Go, *Beatrix Potter*

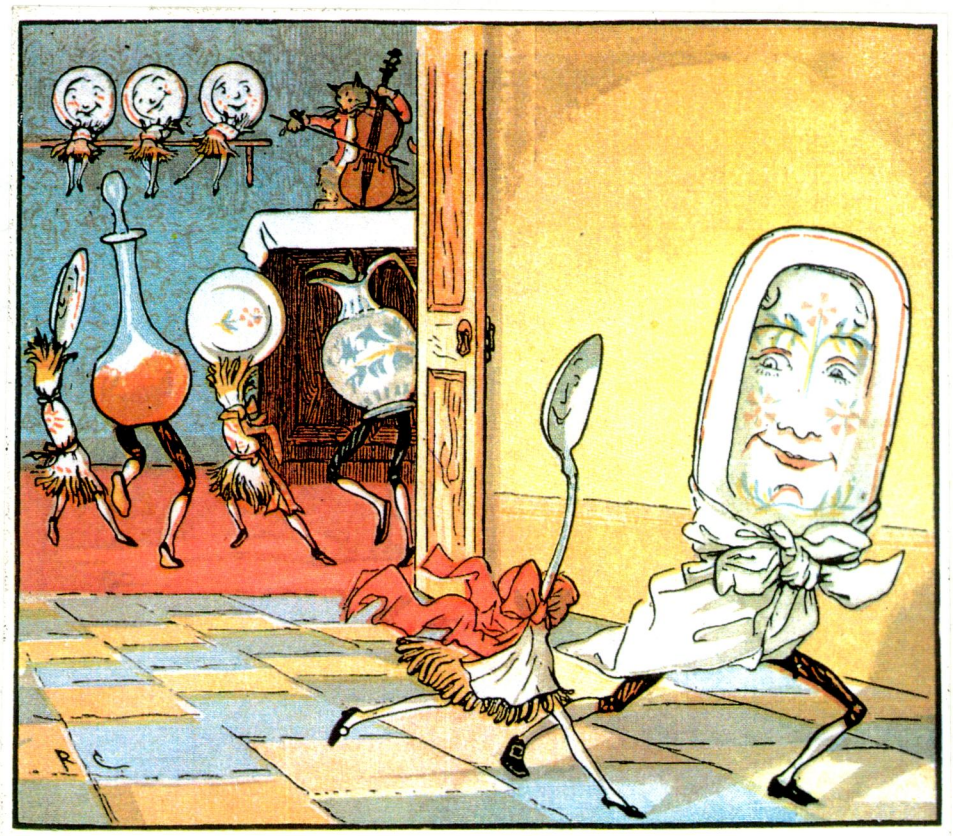
lanes and fences, meadows and leafy ponds. The idealised country settings immortalised by Caldecott had a colourful, warm and eternal quality about them, and this typically perceived English landscape was carried into the next century through the illustrated stories of Beatrix Potter. Caldecott's countryside, however, recalls a lusty rusticity, a rich romantic panorama of colour and movement (Illus. 30) quite different in style from the intimately observed, serene and pastel watercolours of Potter. His strongest link with her is seen in his second published picture book A Frog He Would A-Wooing Go (1883). In it we can see depicted the probable forebearers of Jeremy Fisher and Samuel Whiskers (Illus. 31). It is interesting to note that in 1895, eleven years before the publication of The Tale of Jeremy Fisher, Potter sold a set of drawings (Illus. 32) entitled A Frog He Would A-Fishing Go which are remarkably reminiscent of Caldecott's creations.

> "Randolph Caldecott was the true book artist. He was far more conscious of the relationship between text, picture and page than was Walter Crane.....He had a far wider range than Kate Greenaway and, unlike both....he had a sense of humour."*

He chose funny characters to illustrate the rhymes, he placed them in Georgian or Queen Ann settings and clothed

---

*A History of Children's Illustration
by Joyce Irene Whalley and Tessa Rose Chester
John Murray (Publishers) Ltd. 1988, P.109



From *Hey Diddle Diddle* (1882). Caldecott's rendition of this familiar old nursery rhyme established a tradition that others followed for generations.

Illus. 33

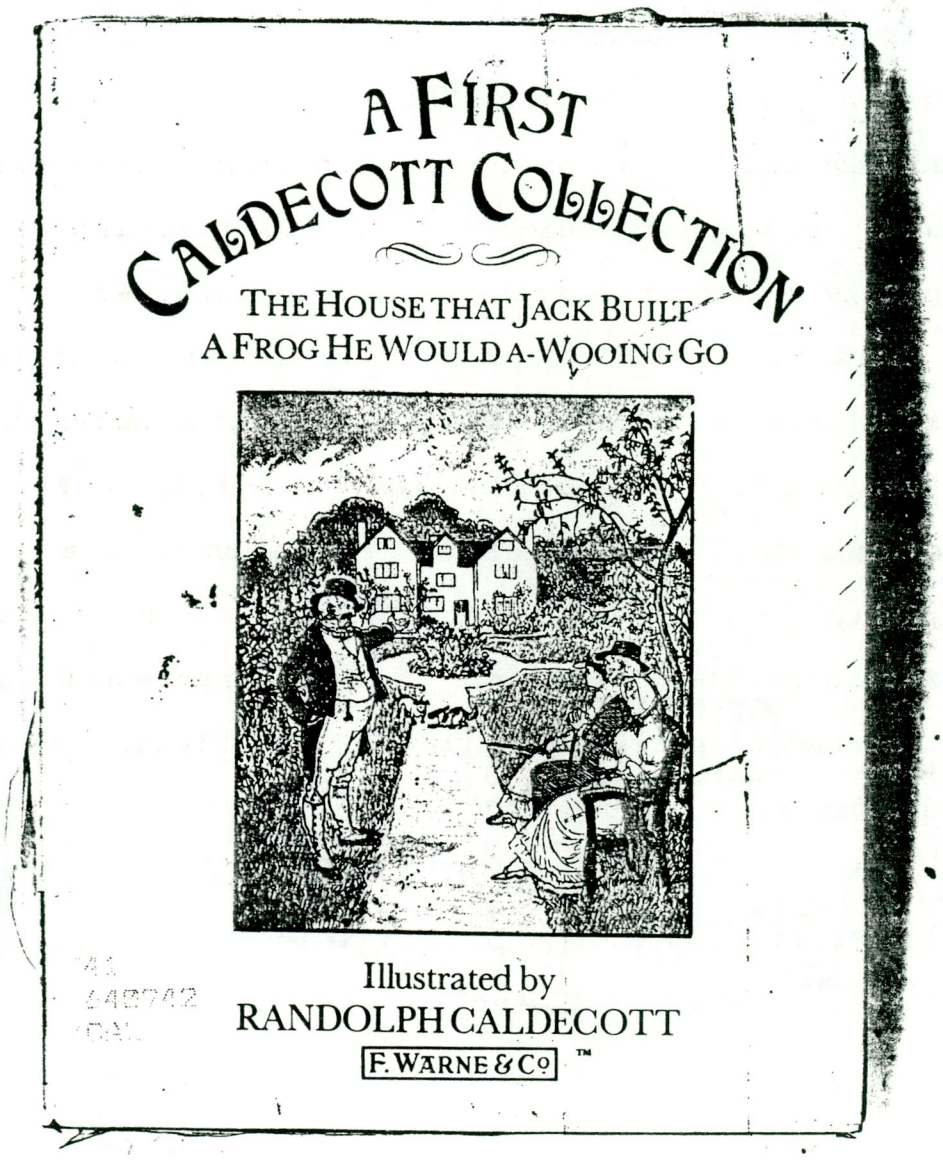
Illus. 34 Hey Diddle Diddle, *Randolph Caldecott*

them carefully in the style of the period. He varied the text between full-scale, colour illustrations (Illus. 33) and simple monochrome sketches scattered throughout the text (Illus. 34). In some cases no print at all appeared on a page - simply an economical line drawing set against a white background. Caldecott once wrote: "The art of leaving out is a science. The fewer the lines, the less error committed."* The sketches, which were vigorous, spontaneous and racy, either visually continued the story or merely enhanced it. Above all, Caldecott's human/creatures were full of life, movement and humour. Their rendering showed an excellent knowledge of animal anatomy and an affection and tolerance for the foibles of man. In common with Griset and Rackham, Caldecott liked to humanise inanimate objects, such as plates, spoons and household utensils, and blend them naturally with the other creatures. In Caldecott's version of Hey Diddle Diddle (Illus. 34) he depicts the tragic end of the Dish's attempt to elope with the spoon and applies his usual wry humour to the situation.

It was the good fortune of Caldecott to come into association with a printer of Evans's skill. Evans's use

---

*A Treasury of the Great Childrens Book
Illustrators by Susan E. Meyer
Harry N. Abrams Inc. Publishers, 1983, P.104



Illus. 35 Little Book Format

of key blocks to supply Caldecott with line-proofs for the making of colour blocks, and his meticulous application of tint and carefully chosen ink, ensured that their coloured Toy Books reached the highest technical standard of the day. It is interesting to note that in the 1980s F. Warne & Co. have re-packaged the Caldecott Toy Books in a form remarkably similar to Beatrix Potter's Little Books (Illus. 35) Even the technique of the dropped initial, established by Potter in the privately printed edition of The Tale of Peter Rabbit, is adopted by Warne & Co. It is ironic that a marketing strategy developed by an inexperienced, female artist at the turn of the century is still considered to be a winning formula today.

PERSONALITY TYPES

By marrying the fable to the fairy story, Arthur Rackham (1867-1939) created new life. This life was a new perception of things, a spirit, an essential personality that infused all his creations. By a subtle transformation of forms, grotesque trees with senuous roots and tendrils radiate life amidst beasties, gnomes, goblins and fairies. All is suffused with personality, nothing is inanimate; Rackham created his own version of reality and

"even his trees and shrubs are best described as humanoid. The division between imagination and reality in Rackham's world is a tenuous one, and because of this a new world is created".*

At another level Rackham possessed remarkable ability to create the essence of personality by combining the human and animal form in one figure. Whilst his characters have the shape of animals, their essential personalities are decidedly human. His talent for individualising his characters was achieved through a clever choice of clothing, but more importantly through an emphasis on facial expression and hand gesture. His creatures are human in animal vesture, unlike those of Beatrix Potter who never lost sight of the animal nature of her characters. Rackham's work as a journalistic illustrator with The

---

*Arthur Rackham by Fred Gettings
Studio Vista (1975) P. 83

Illus. 36 Aesop, The Hare and the Tortoise, *Arthur Rachkam*

Westminster Budget sharpened his awareness of human nature, a knowledge which he used to great effect in subsequent drawings of human-animal types. He was a student of human personality whereas Potter preferred to study the various breeds of animal, their particular characteristics and their habitat.

Rackham's illustration to The Hare and the Tortoise (1912) from Aesop (Illus. 36) depicts the nonchalant, confident fox, arms gently folded and wearing a stylish, huntsman's jacket. The fox's face has a laconic slyness about it that is more foxy than fox-like. While he remains a fox in form, he projects the personality of a cool, urbane, wordly gentleman.

Indeed, each of the six animals, silently mocking the tortoise, resembles the human types one might meet in any public place. The dormouse could be the henpecked husband or inadequate personality gleefully enjoying the discomfort of the poor tortoise. The hare, with his white gloves and dandified appearance, might signify the brash, conceited know-all who is the first to sneer and ridicule. In the two storks, with their grasping, self-seeking hands, one might recognise the disconsolate, morose melancholic, smoking and drinking himself to death.

Illus. 37 Solomon Caw and Mice from Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens, *Arthur Rachkam*

In J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens (1906) the mixture of fantasy and childhood memories is admirably suited to Rackham's non-representational treatment of text. However, despite his lack of exactitude at times, Rackham always remained faithful to the mood of a story. He depicts Peter Pan as a 'welcome' outsider in the secret island of Soloman Caw, the Shoe-Shine Mice, the gnomes, goblins and delightfully light-hearted, mischievous fairies who work and play in the twilight shadows. His characters are like free-spirits gliding in and out of the story-text, re-creating mystery as they go.

In Illus. 37 we see Soloman Caw examining a five pound note with the two mice. Rackham's mice are city mice but not as genteel and well-bred as Potter's Johnny Town-Mouse and his sophisticated friends. These are street-wise mice who can mix it with anyone and take care of themselves in the big city. The long, expressive hand with the flashy wrist-watch, can make a point and win an argument, or survive a scrap with any opposition. The casual waistcoat, rolled-up shirt sleeves, pince-nez and shiny shoes could belong to a cub reporter following up a robbery story, or perhaps to a post office clerk reminiscent of the younger Rackham.

Illus. 38 Alice in Wonderland (1907), *Arthur Rackham*

By matching colour and mood to his texts, Rackham creates just the right atmosphere for his gossamer, ethereal, mysterious, sub-world. The gossamer quality was achieved by applying several veils of transparent pigment, and to give added dramatic effect, it was not unusual for Rackham to draw over his watercolours once more in pen and ink.*

"The subtle, muted greys and browns in his backgrounds reflect autumn or winter, dusk or night, the skill of his watercolour washes creating mist and mystery through which his delicately tinted blend of real and fantastic images timelessly weave and dance."**

Although his natural bent is towards subtle and muted tones, Rackham frequently accentuates the 'other worldliness' of his images by using touches of bright colour to enliven the mood of his picture (Illus. 38).

Throughout his long life Arthur Rackham continued to create his anthropomorphised creatures with sensitivity, humour and charm, his last work, The Wind in the Willows, being published posthumously in 1940.

---

*A Treasury of the Great Children's Book Illustrators. P. 167

**A History of Children's Book Illustration P.154

Illus. 39 Sketch Book Drawing, *Beatrix Potter* at age 9

C H A P T E R 4

BEATRIX POTTER, THE SPECIALIST.

For the greater part of her life Beatrix Potter (1866-1943) dedicated her time and energies to observing, understanding, touching, examining and sketching all forms of living creatures, together with the landscape they inhabited. Though she was largely self-taught - apart from the limited curriculum of a private education - by the end of her life Potter was an accomplished children's story writer, animal fantacist, naturalist, water-colourist, landscape artist, businesswoman and farmer. These multi-skills and the meticulously high standard of her miniature watercolours, were only made possible by the many years spent in unconscious and loving preparation.

At first she copied pictures from natural history books and sketched incessantly the numerous small pets kept in the nursery. Her animal fantasies date back to the age of nine as can be seen from the picture of rabbits dressed as humans (Illus. 39). Then she began sketching from life while on annual holidays in Scotland and The Lake District. Her holiday trips to the country were crucial to her artistic development. There she learned to understand

Illus. 40 After the Meal, *Beatrix Potter*

intimately the nature of individual breeds of animal, their characteristics and temperaments, as well as the landscape they inhabited. In her stories for children she was careful to give due respect to the animal nature of her characters. Her creatures were truly half-animal, half-human and, while they behaved as people do, they never fully lost their animal attributes. When back in London she sketched animals, skeletons, bones, insects and fossils in the South Kensington museums, and studied the engravings of Caldecott, whom she admired. Through constant application and meticulous observation of nature, Potter's art developed in excellence over a period of twenty-five years.

From an early age her naturalist's accurate sketches - recording every detail of every fur and feather - slipped over into a make-believe world where her rabbits and mice became inspired creatures dressed up and behaving like people. Her sketches became more sophisticated and varied and in her mid-twenties she did a series of four exquisitely executed watercolours depicting a Rabbits' Christmas Party. In 'After the Meal' (Illus. 40) the rabbits relax before a roaring fire in a snug room decorated with holly and cabbages.

Illus. 41 Frog Studies, *Beatrix Potter*

Illus. 42 Jeremy Fisher

The majority of animal characters appearing in the Little Book series were developed over a number of years and collected either consciously or unconsciously. Illus. 41 represents a characteristic collection of frog studies which eventually evolved into the character of Jeremy Fisher (Illus. 42) The characters in The Tale of Peter Rabbit (1902) evolved from a series of story-letters sent to the children of friends. Their success with children and adults alike gave Potter the confidence to go ahead with her own published text with entrepreneurial determination.

LAYOUT AND PRESENTATION OF THE LITTLE BOOKS

Beatrix Potter was completely absorbed in the creation of her little animal-people and she painted them for love. "I painted most of the little pictures mainly to please myself, the more spontaneous the pleasure, the more happy the result" she wrote.* However, she had firm ideas on how her books should be set out, printed, illustrated and priced. They had to be kept small enough for a child's hands and cheap enough for the average parent's pocket. After a number of set-backs, she signed a contract in 1902 with the publishers, Frederick Warne, for the production of a moderately priced colour version of The Tale of Peter Rabbit, and she agreed to take no royalties on the first 3,000 copies. In just one year 28,000 copies were sold and Potter's charismatic rabbit had become a household name.

Potter planned her Little Books down to the last detail of word and picture. The format consisted of a colour plate on the front cover and dust-jacket, illustrated end papers depicting the principal characters holding their own books, and a colour frontispiece. The colour plates were in pairs and printed on one side only. Each plate faced a page with a small but carefully thought out amount of text.

---

*The Art of Beatrix Potter by Enid and Leslie Linder
Frederick Warne & Co. Ltd., 1978, P.264

Edmund Evans did the printing and Potter's delicate watercolours were reproduced by a three-colour, half-tone method know as trichromatic process. The Tale of Peter Rabbit was one of the first books to be printed by this process. It involved the converting of colour drawings into colour blocks from which they were then printed with the help of photographic filters. While this new process was eminently suitable for the mass production of economically priced colour books, it tended to give a muddied appearance to the finished print to the detriment of Potter's delicate watercolours. This was caused by the filter screening of the three colours required for half-tone reproduction, and by the glossy paper which the photographic process required.

Illus. 43 The Sly Old Cat, *Beatrix Potter*

Illus. 43a *Randolph Caldecott*

CALDECOTTIAN INFLUENCE

"We bought his picture books eagerly as they came out....I have the greatest admiration for his work - a jealous appreciation," wrote Beatrix Potter in a letter to the American Librarian, Jacqueline Overton in 1942.* She knew Caldecott's work from a young age and his talent was very much in sympathy with her own. In both their cases a clear but light-toned palette enhances a drawing, and colour is never a substitute for good form. Like him she developed a spare, energetic and flexible line, making use of the white space surrounding a drawing for added dramatic effect. Her draft sketch of The Sly Old Cat, 1906 (Illus. 43) reflects the Caldecottian influence in its economy of line, vivacity and wit. It displays their joint ability to convey action without words and to develop the story through a confident, expressive line (Illus. 43a).

While Caldecott and Potter had a common bond in their love of the English countryside and the creatures that inhabit it, an important difference lay in the fact that Potter set her stories in real locations known to her personally, painting what she saw all around her. Like the pre-Raphaelites, she aimed to realise her detailed

---

*Sing a Song For Sixpence P.84

observations, recording in meticulous miniature " the light, dewy freshness" of an idyllic landscape. Caldecott's panoramas, on the other hand, depicted an idealised, unlocated place set in a pre-industrial, 'merrie' England, a stable, rural society already disappearing but locked in the memory of his soul.

Illus. 44 Peter Rabbit

They hang up the rats' tails in a row on the barn door, to show how many they have caught—dozens and dozens of them.

Illus. 45

STORY TEXTS

Potter's stories are skilfully constructed and written with enthusiasm, vigour and conviction. With deceptive simplicity, each word of the text is concise and carefully chosen, and the tales are full of little nuances and a subtle sense of humour. When Peter Rabbit's buttons become entangled in some garden netting as he is being chased by Mr. McGregor, she ignores his dire predicament momentarily to comment: "It was a blue jacket with brass buttons, quite new" (Illus. 44). Potter so arranges the experiences of her characters that their animal and human attributes coexist quite naturally. We observe Peter looking like any ordinary rabbit - having lost his coat on the netting - scurrying across the garden on all fours, only to see him a few pages later tucked up in bed being served camomile tea by Mrs. Rabbit. Potter is at her best when painting rabbits, gardens and flowers and The Tale of Peter Rabbit provides the ideal opportunity to display her unique talents.

Her characters are usually young, foolish and inexperienced in the ways of the world like the children she is writing for. Her main character is usually male and slightly rebellious in comparison with his female relatives who are

Illus. 46 Old Mr. Bunny, *Beatrix Potter*

Illus. 47 Old Mr Bunny caning Peter Rabbit, *Beatrix Potter*

conformist by nature. Potter's stories are never condescending or trivial. They have a solid moral structure and sense of fair play that appeals to the need for justice which is inherent in every child. Her tales are also enhanced by a matter-of-fact shrewdness and pragmatic toughness that possibly reflects the farmer in her. Reality is never far below the surface. In The Tale of Samuel Whiskers she tells us:

> "Moppet and Mittens have grown up into very good rat-catchers. They go out rat-catching in the village, and they find plenty of employment. They charge so much a dozen, and earn their living very comfortably." (Illus. 45)

Again in The Tale of Benjamin Bunny we see Old Mr. Bunny, cane in hand and bristling with annoyance, about to pounce on poor Benjamin (Illus. 46). Illus. 47 shows Mr. Bunny chastising his son because he went with his cousin, Peter, into Mr. McGregor's garden - a place that was known to be very dangerous since Peter's father had been "put in a pie by Mrs. McGregor". In this regard I believe that Beatrix Potter fully subscribed to the Victorian precept 'spare the rod and spoil the child', and is I feel a little diminished as a result.

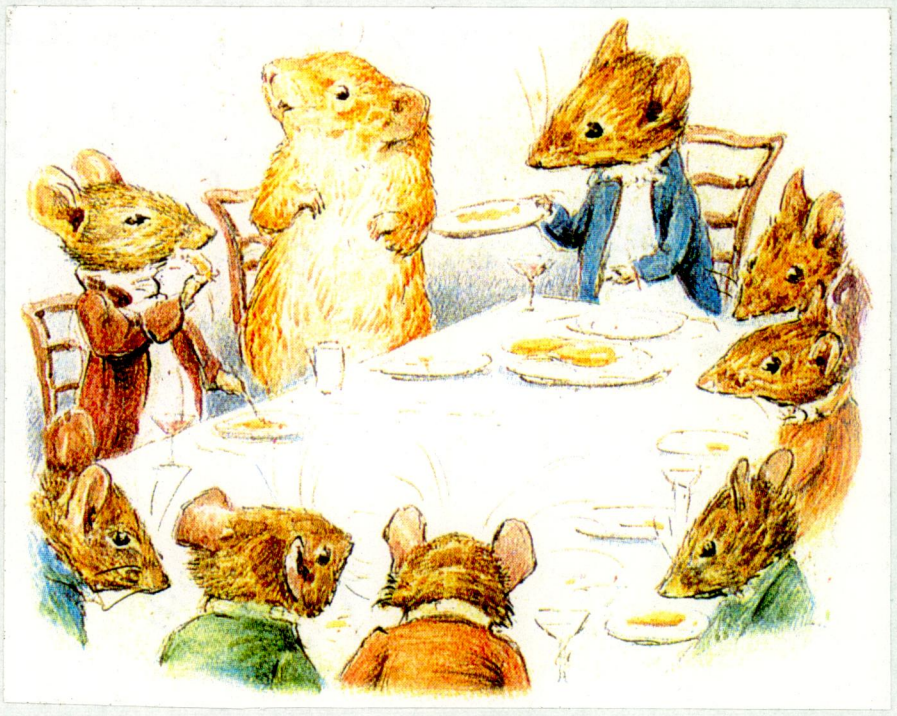
While happy endings come in the nick of time, the child is never spared from the truth about death and danger and the

inevitable retribution when stupid and foolish exploits are undertaken.

THE REAL AND THE FANTASTIC

Beatrix Potter's style represents a marriage of opposites. Her animal characters are the result of an extraordinary mixture of realism, imagination and subtle irony. While caricature and bitter satire are completely absent from her work, even the fantastic nature of her subject matter can sometimes be forgotten due to the subtlety of her treatment. This is due to her emphasis on the natural characteristics of the animals and on the authenticity of her portrayal of them. Individual animal traits frequently parallel human characteristics but the animal's individual nature is never usurped or supplanted for the sole purpose of satirising human vices or behaviour.

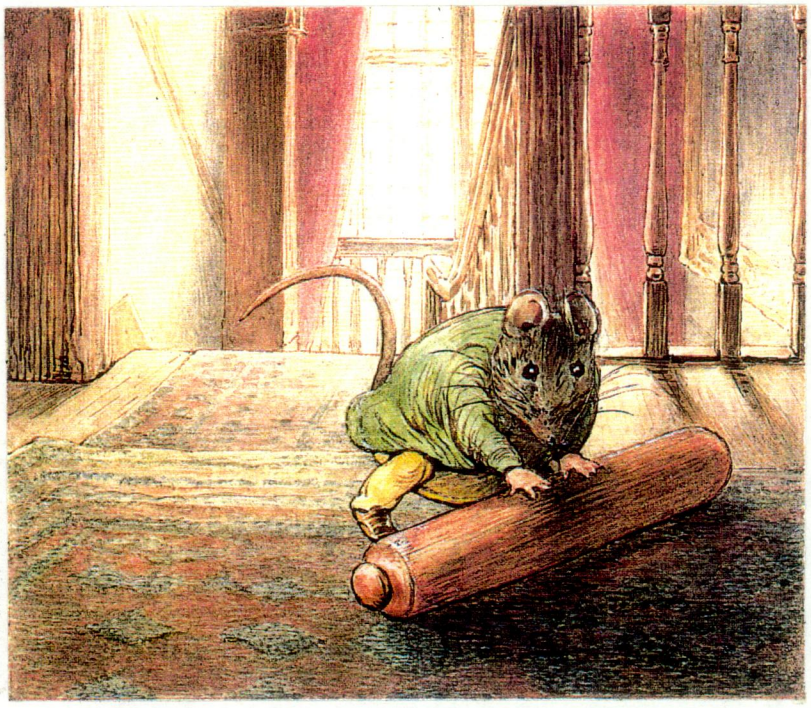
In this regard Potter's treatment of Aesop's Fables is in marked contrast to Charles Bennett or Arthur Rackham, whose characters were really humans in animal vesture. Potter's common sense and wisdom, like Aesop's, are based on meticulous observation of both human and animal nature. In keeping with the naturalism and realism of her illustrations, her creatures behave in character while depicting parallel foibles and mannerisms commonly observed in humans. Her style depends on a subtle emphasis on



Illus. 48 The Elegant Dinner, *Beatrix Potter*

detail and on the clever use or deliberate absence of clothing.

In this regard The Tale of Johnny Town Mouse is a mild satire on the complexity of human society and the effect of environment on the moulding of personality. She illustrates her story with two mice, Johnny Town Mouse who was born in a cupboard, and Timmie Willie who was born in a garden. Immediately these images neatly emphasise the contrast between the confinement of urban life and the expansiveness of the countryside. Timmie Willie was taken to town by mistake in a vegetable hamper. Town life disagreed with him and although Johnny Town Mouse endeavoured to entertain him, he was ill-at-ease and decided to return to the peace and simplicity of the country. In 'The Elegant Dinner' (Illus. 48), Potter makes a social comment very successfully without resorting to caricature, distortion or sentimentality. It depicts the two worlds of urban and rural life while allowing the little animal creatures to retain their own intrinsic natures. Timmie Willie is portrayed as a plump, corn-coloured field-mouse who obviously feels awkward sitting at a table. This appearance of awkwardness and vulnerability is emphasised by his apparent 'nakedness' in contrast to



Illus. 49 A Cat's Perspective, *Beatrix Potter*

Johnny and his sophisticated friends who are decked out in white tie and tails.

Potter's ability to marry realism to fantasy extends to the very settings within which her stories are placed. Just as the animals populating the pages of her books represent the pets in her own home, so too do the settings describe what she actually observed in her own surroundings. Many of the scenes in her Little Books are based on interiors at 'Hill Top', her home in The Lake District. The settings, particularised yet ideal, are seen from an animal's perspective, and the creatures themselves are drawn large in relation to their backgrounds. The landing in The Tale of Samuel Whiskers is based on the actual stairs at Hill Top farm (Illus. 49) and Potter illustrates it from a cat's perspective.* This compositional device adds a sharp injection of reality to her animal stories. By giving the viewer a cat's perspective of the world, she highlights the wonderment and drama evoked when experiencing everyday life

---

*Beatrix Potter's Art
By Anne Stevenson (P. 17)
Frederick Warne & Co. Ltd., 1989.

through the eyes of an animal. Potter's uniquely individual style, representing as it did a warm understanding and affection for the particular point of view of both man and animal, ensured for anthropomorphic imagery an honoured place in the realm of children's literature.

C O N C L U S I O N

The many strands of genius represented in nineteenth century anthropomorphic art live on in the children's books and film cartoons of the present day. In the products of the Walt Disney Studios - Snow White, Bambi, Pinocchio, The Lady and The Tramp - all sorts of creatures strike moral attitudes and adopt human behaviour, speech and clothing. The ancient fables as well as the Victorian writers and illustrators of children's books form a fascinating anticipation of such contemporary work, linking Aesop's Frog King to Kermit the Frog.

Despite an abundance of visual stimuli in science fiction extravaganzas, the appeal of animal fantasy continues to satisfy man's emotional need to visualise himself in the imaginary fictional world of other living creatures. The unique personal response and the creative genius of the fantacist is our link to that world of the imagination. To quote an eminent Kerryman whom I overheard on the radio a few weeks ago:

> The indelible memory of the anthropomorphised Miss Piggy in the Muppet Show is a result of the inspired welding of a mucky little *banbh* to a dazzling debutante."*

---

*Extract from an RTE Interview with Brian McMahon, the Short Story Writer.(2/2/1992)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

ALDERSON, Brian, Sing a Song for Sixpence, Cambridge University Press, 1986.

BILLINGTON, Elizabeth T., The Randolph Caldecott Treasury, Frederick Warne & Co., New York & London, 1978

CLARK, Kenneth, Animals and Men, Thames and Hudson, 1977.

COWLING, Mary, The Artist as Anthropologist: A Representation of Type and Character in Victorian Art, Cambridge University Press, 1989.

GETTINGS, Fred, Arthur Rackham, Studio Vista, 1975.

HOBBS STEVENSON, Anne, Beatrix Potter's Art, Frederick Warne & Co., 1989.

JOHNSON, Diana, Fantastic Illustration and Design in Britain, 1850-1930, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 1979.

LAMBOURNE, Lionel, Ernest Griset: Fantasies of a Victorian Illustrator, Thames & Hudson, 1979.

LINDER, Enid and Leslie, The Art of Beatrix Potter, F. Warne & Co. Ltd, London and New York, 1978

MARSDEN, Gordon, Victorian Values, Longman Group (UK) Ltd., 1990.

MEYER, Susan E., A Treasury of the Great Children's Book Illustrators, Harry N. Abrams Inc., Publishers, New York, 1983.

MIDGLEY, Mary, Beast and Man, Metheum & Co., 1980.

MUIR, Percy, English Children's Books, B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1985.

RAINE, Kathleen, William Blake, Thames Hudson, 1970.

RAY, Gordon N., The Illustrator and the Book in England 1790-1914, The Pierpont Morgan Library, Oxford University Press, 1976.

TAYLOR, Judy, WHALLEY, Joyce Irene, HOBBS STEVENSON, Anne, BATTRICK, Elizabeth M., Beatrix Potter 1866-1943; The Artist and her World, Frederick Warne & Co., 1987.

WHALLEY, Joyce Irene, CHESTER, Tessa Rose, A History of Children's Book Illustration, John Murray (Publishers) Ltd., 1988.

WORLD WILD LIFE FUND in conjunction with THE READERS DIGEST, The Living World of Animals, Hodder & Stoughton, 1978.

MAGAZINES

MULLER, Marion, U & lc International Typeface Corporation, New York, PP. 30-31.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Fontispiece LAMBOURNE, Lionel

ILLUS. NO.	SOURCE
1	CLARK, Kenneth, P.96
2	FOLMSBEE, B., LATIMER, L., MAHONEY, B. P.7
3	CLARK, Kenneth, P. 101
4.	FOLMSBEE, LATIMER, MAHONEY, P.10
5	LAMBOURNE, Lionel, P. 5
6	RAINE, Kathleen, P. 37
7	COWLING, Mary, P. 18
8	LAMBOURNE, Lionel., P. 6
9	JOHNSON, Diana L., P. 70
10	ALDERSON, Brian, P. 50
11	LAMBOURNE, Lionel, P. 6
12	JOHNSON, Diana L., P. 11
13	COWLING, Mary, P. 37
14	COWLING, P. 118
15	COWLING, P. 163
16	COWLING, P. 200
17	COWLING, P. 201
18	COWLING, P. 293
19	LAMBOURNE, Lionel, P. 78
20	RAY, Gordon, P. 269
21	BILLINGTON, Elizabeth T., P. 136
22	BILLINGTON, P. 137
23	ALDERSON, Brian, P. 87
24	LAMBOURNE, Lionel, P. 70
25	LAMBOURNE, P. 80
26	WHALLEY, Joyce Irene, CHESTER,Tessa Rose, P.88
27	LAMBOURNE, Lionel, Plate viii
28	JOHNSON, Diana L. P. 11
29	MEYER, Susan E., P. 9
30	MUIR, Percy, Plate 77
31	ALDERSON, Brian, P. 82
32	ALDERSON, P. 90

33	MEYER, Susan E., P. 104
34	ALDERSON, Brian, P. 82
35	Cover for A First Caldecott Collection (1986)
36	GETTINGS, Fred, P. 64
37	GETTINGS, P. 60
38	GETTINGS, P. 61
39	LINDER, Enid and Leslie, P. 16
40	LINDER, Enid and Leslie, P. 186
41	HOBBS STEVENSON, Anne, P. 162
42	TAYLOR, WHALLEY, HOBBS STEVENSON, BATTERICK. P. 108
43	ALDERSON, Brian, P. 91
43a	BILLINGTON, Elizabeth T., P. 282
44	The Tale of Peter Rabbit, P. 31
45	The Tale of Samuel Whiskers, P. 74
46	The Tale of Benjamin Bunny, P. 48
47	The Tale of Benjamin Bunny, P. 52
48	The Tale of Johnny Town Mouse, P.24
49	The Tale of Samuel Whiskers, P.50