

## THE LITERARY DEVELOPMENT OF THE REYNARD STORY IN ENGLAND

The most significant aspect of Reynard the fox in medieval England is what little impact his story had on the literature of the period; and even in the field the Reynard story is hardly a frequent feature in manuscript illumination or carving. It is only with the publication of William Caxton's *Reynard the Fox* in 1481 that a full version of his story is found in Middle English. However, there are indications that Reynard's exploits were known in England, and it is appropriate to consider first those few traces that he left before Caxton's time. In what follows it should be borne in mind that parts of the Reynard story may have been known in French or Latin versions in medieval England and that representations of foxes and other animals which owe their symbolism to the Reynard stories are found in various forms.

The earliest text with a complete fox story is a poem of 295 lines, now known as *The Fox and the Wolf*. Probably written c.1250, it survives in a single manuscript. It reproduces the outlines of the story found in branch IV of the *Roman de Renart*, which is usually assumed to be its source, though there are significant differences between the English poem and the *Roman*. The two animals in *The Fox and the Wolf* are introduced as 'a fox' and 'a wolf', though the names Reneward and Sigrim (from Isegrim) occur incidentally. Two features near its end set the English poem apart from the *Roman*: the fox does not eat any hens when he enters the barn in which they sleep, and his attempts to persuade Chanteclere the cock to come down from his perch are unsuccessful. The fox leaves the barn hungry and disappointed. Although this scene has similarities with that in the *Roman*, it has some differences. One is the wolf's confession. The wolf in the English version says he once found the fox in bed with his wife, which suggests seduction, whereas in branch Va of the *Roman* the wolf claims that the fox had raped his wife.

Though this poem may be an adaptation of branch IV of the French *Roman*, it also drew on other branches. The English poet treated the *Roman* very differently from the German and Flemish adaptors who took over much more of the French text into their works to reflect the overall approach of the *Roman*. The English poem, however, is relatively brief, introduces the animals without names, and refers to their names only incidentally. In these respects it is more like a fable than the *Roman* which is a *conte à rire*. The English poem contains two halves: in the first the fox is unable to deceive Chanteclere to make him come down from his perch, but in the second he is able to deceive the wolf, who jumps into the bucket and thus lets the fox escape from the well. *The Fox and the Wolf* may thus be a fable illustrating the dangers of deceit with a warning to its readers not to be taken in by plausible villains. Collections of fables, mainly in Latin but occasionally in French, were available in England and may have provided the impetus for this poem, even if the story came from the *Roman*.

Another short poem, now called *A Song on the Times* also found in a single manuscript, introduces the fox and the wolf. This poem, usually dated to the early fourteenth century, is a complaint about the perversion of justice through bribery. In it the lion is the king of the beasts, the fox and the wolf are his courtiers, and the simple ass represents the lowest class. The fox, wolf and ass are accused of various crimes in the lion's court such as stealing sheep and poultry. The fox and wolf bribe the king and so escape any punishment, whereas the ass does not and is found guilty, even though as a grass-eating animal he had assumed his innocence would be self-evident. Although the animals are not named, the roles they play echo what is found in the *Roman*, though that can hardly be a direct source. This poem, too, is more of a metrical fable than anything else.

The best known work about the fox in medieval English is Chaucer's Nun's Priest's Tale, part of his *Canterbury Tales*, written towards the end of the fourteenth century. The *Canterbury Tales* survives in over eighty manuscripts and has been frequently edited since the first edition issued from William Caxton's press c.1476. The story of the fox and his exploits with Chanteclere have remained a feature of English literary life because of the popularity of this work, which may have inhibited further developments of the Reynard story in England. In Chaucer's tale, Chanteclere is flattered by the fox, Daun Russell, into shutting his eyes while he sings loudly; as soon

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as he does so, the fox seizes him by the throat and rushes off with him towards his lair. The fox's theft is proclaimed by Chanteclere's wife, and a posse of people set off in pursuit of the fox. Chanteclere notices this and suggests to the fox that he should utter a speech of defiance to his pursuers. As soon as he starts to do so, Chanteclere escapes from the fox's mouth and flies to a branch of the nearest tree. Attempts by the fox to entice him down fail, and so the fox has to depart empty-handed. The tale finishes with a suggestion that it is more than just a story of a fox and a cock:

But ye that holden this tale a folye  
As of a fox or of a cok and hen,  
Taketh the moralitee, goode men.

Many scholars have seen in this message a warning against the sin of flattery with an indication as to how one can learn from one's mistakes. Such a message is typical of fables, though similar ones are not uncommon in other literary forms.

Chaucer seems to have used two main sources: a version of the fable about the fox and the cock as told briefly in the *Fables* of Marie de France and the story as told in the *Roman*. It is, however, quite possible that Chaucer himself was familiar with neither of these sources, which may have been combined in a version of the fable as found in a preacher's handbook of *exempla*. For preachers in the Middle Ages collected illustrative stories like this one to serve as possible examples with which to embellish their sermons, as such stories provided both the excitement of the narrative as well as the moral which the tale illustrated. Nevertheless, some passages in the tale are verbally so close to equivalent passages in the *Roman* that Chaucer may have had access to a manuscript version of the *Roman*, even though evidence for the circulation of the *Roman* in England is slight. It is possible that Chaucer had access to the version of the Reynard story known as *Renart le Contrefait*, but evidence to confirm this hypothesis is lacking.

It is with Caxton's edition of *Reynard the Fox* in 1481 that the Reynard cycle becomes available in English. Before this time, as we have seen, stories about the fox, the wolf and the cock were known in England and sometimes

appeared in English writings, but there was no full account of the fox and his adventures as found in the *Roman de Renart* and other European literatures. As Caxton is such an important person as regards the dissemination of the Reynard story, it is desirable to say a few words about his career.

Born in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, Caxton was apprenticed as a mercer to William Large, who became in 1439 the Lord Mayor of London. The London mercers were the primary driving force of the Merchant Adventurers Company, that association of merchants responsible for the trade between England and the Continent through which so many fortunes were made. On finishing his apprenticeship, Caxton joined in this trade and spent most of the middle years of his life on the Continent, particularly in present-day Belgium and Holland. He became Governor of the English Nation at Bruges about 1462, a position which implies status and wealth in the officeholder. Caxton remained in this office until he left Bruges for Cologne in 1471. As a merchant Caxton principally dealt in finished cloth, though he would also have handled a wide range of other goods including manuscripts. Flanders was at that time one of the most important centres for the production of manuscripts, and many of them found their way to England through the Merchant Adventurers. The booktrade across the Channel was well established. In 1469 Caxton started to make a translation of a French text, and since this was the first translation he made it was done presumably with an eye to future publication. Printing had not by this time reached the Low Countries, but it was established in Cologne. It was there that Caxton went in 1471 to acquire a printing press and its secrets. He stayed in Cologne for eighteen months before returning to Bruges where he set up a press and printed his own translation of the *History of Troy*, the first book to be printed in English. In 1476 he moved his press and publishing business to England where he set up a shop at Westminster. He continued to translate and print books there until his death in 1492.

The majority of books translated and printed by Caxton were French texts in prose which were available in manuscript or printed form in the Low Countries and France. They included romances, religious works and didactic material. His edition of *Reynard the Fox* is different since it is a translation of the Dutch prose *Van den Vos Reinderde*; it is the only work translated and printed by Caxton which was not in French or Latin. Since the *Roman* was still available and read at this time, the question arises why Caxton should

have translated a work from Dutch rather than from French. The question must be asked since Dutch was not a courtly language and a work translated from that language would have none of the fashionable status conferred on a book translated from French. Although he often includes information about his choice of a particular text in its prologue or epilogue, he does not do so in this case. However, from what we know of Caxton's working practices, we may assume that he would have translated a French text if he had one suitable for his purposes. He may have known the *Roman*, but he is unlikely to have translated that because it is in verse. He printed poems, but he made no verse translations. He may have been unfamiliar with the *Roman* altogether, though that seems somewhat improbable in view of its wide circulation on the Continent. It seems likely that he knew of the Dutch prose version and that appeared to be the most convenient text to translate, because it was in prose in a language he knew well.

This Dutch prose version had been printed in 1479 by Gerard Leeu at Gouda, and is in its turn a prose adaptation of the Dutch poem *Reinaert II*. This poetic version contained material which is not basically part of the Reynard story, such as the parable of the man and the snake, and it also re-used in its second half episodes found in the earlier part so that this continuation is repetitive and somewhat long-winded. This difference between the first part which is racy and light and the continuation which is laboured and wordy may still be detected in Caxton's translation. After his return to England Caxton maintained contact with the publishing houses on the Continent and many books printed in France and the Low Countries were translated and printed by him very quickly, as is true of this book. It is not improbable that a copy of the Gouda edition was in Caxton's hands at Westminster within three to six months of its appearance. Presumably he decided that as a new-published text it was likely to be of interest to his readers. There was no English competition, though the popularity of the *Canterbury Tales* and the occasional use of the name Reynard both by Chaucer and other authors suggest that English people knew sufficient about the fox and his escapades to make an edition of *Reynard the Fox* financially viable.

Caxton appears not to give details of the book's printing; at the end of his colophon he merely states:

For I haue not added ne mynussed but haue folowed as nyghe as  
I can my cople whiche was in dutche and by me william Caxton  
translated in to this rude and symple englyssh in thabbey of west-  
mestre. Fynysshed the vj daye of Iuyn the yere of our lord  
M.CCCC.Lxxxj and the xxj yere of the regne of kynge Edward the  
iiijth

As Caxton seems to refer only to the translation, it is widely assumed that his *fynysshed* refers to the completion of the translation and not to the printing. So most bibliographical works list *Reynard the Fox* as c.1481. But ‘finished’ can be used by Caxton to mean either the translation or the printing, and the latter may be more appropriate here, because we know that he finished translating *Mirror of the World* on 8 March 1481 and *Siege of Jerusalem* on 7 June 1481. As there would be insufficient time for him to finish translating *Reynard the Fox* on 6 June 1481, it is reasonable to accept the printing was concluded on that day.

The story of *Reynard the Fox* follows the normal pattern. The wolf, the hound and the cat complain to Noble the Lion about the fox, who is not present at court. Various messengers are sent to summon him, but they are tricked and humiliated by him. Eventually the fox comes to court and there confesses; he is condemned to death. As he faces death he deceives the lion with a story of hidden riches and is able to incriminate the wolf and the bear through his lies. The wolf and the bear have their shoes plucked off and given to Reynard. He then leaves the court, ostensibly as a pilgrim, but it is not long before he is back to his old tricks. He kills the hare and sends his head back to the lion with the ram, who is so foolish as to implicate himself in the death. At the court various animals come to Noble the lion to complain about Reynard, just as had happened at the beginning of the story, for this stage marks the beginning of that continuation which was first added in *Reinaert II*. Eventually Reynard comes back to the court to answer the charges made against him and he carries all before him with the help of the ape. But then the wolf complains against the fox and challenges him to a dual. The fox, who follows the advice of the ape as to how he should prepare himself and fight, finally overcomes the wolf despite the latter’s superior size and strength. Through this victory which is achieved by dubious means the

fox regains the king's friendship and departs with honour from the court. There then follows an injunction to understand the book in the correct way:

in lyke wyse may it be by this booke that who that wyl rede this  
mater though it be of iapes and bourdes yet he may fynde therin  
many a good wysedom and lernynges By whiche he may come to  
vertue and worship.

This was the version which was to remain popular in England for many years to come. Even so, it should be remembered that other versions of the story were known in fables, and it was only gradually that Caxton's story would drive the other forms out.

To underline this last point, the *Morall Fabillis* by Robert Henryson, a Scottish poet who died about 1508, appeared shortly after Caxton's work. It is a collection of versified fables, each of which concludes with a moral. Among the fables in this collection are those of the fox in the well, the prosecution of the fox, and the fox and the herrings. All reflect stories found in the *Roman*, but the Scottish version often contains details which not found there. This is not surprising since Henryson drew on a wide range of sources, including a French *Isopet* or poetic version of *Aesop's Fables*, Chaucer's Nun's Priest's Tale and Caxton's edition of *Reynard the Fox*. Some of the names given to the animals in Henryson are significant. The fox is called Lawrence, a name characteristically applied to foxes in Scotland, but the wolf is known as Waitskaith, a name found elsewhere only in Caxton's *Reynard the Fox*, though there it is not clear what animal it refers to. Henryson had a variety of sources, English, Scots and French, upon which he could draw, and it is noteworthy that even after Caxton's time he still considered it worthwhile to write fables using episodes from the Reynard story.

During the Middle Ages England knew of the Reynard story mainly through fables and examples used in sermons and other didactic literature. It is doubtful if the full cycle of the story as found in the French *Roman* and hence in many other European literatures was known to many in England, if it was known at all. It was only with the publication of Caxton's *Reynard the Fox* that a full version of the cycle became available in English. Since this version was available in a printed edition, it must soon have become relatively well

known, for it is probable that Caxton printed at least two hundred copies of a book like this. An obvious sign of its influence is its use by the craftsman who made the misericords in Bristol Cathedral in 1528, though the artist may have used a later edition of this work rather than Caxton's *editio princeps*. This is the first time in England that the Reynard cycle was used to form the basis of a series of carvings or paintings by an English artist. As we shall see Caxton's text was frequently reprinted and modernised over the years to come; his version remained the one known to English people. At the same time editions of the *Canterbury Tales* were constantly produced, and so the Nun's Priest's Tale also enjoyed a wide readership. It was from these two texts that English people in the following centuries appreciated the story of the fox.

Before going on to discuss the way in which Caxton's edition was reprinted and adapted by later publishers, it is important to say a few words about it. The text is a translation from Dutch and when he made the translation Caxton took over many Dutch words and spellings from his original. Some of these forms are attributed to carelessness or haste, as when Caxton's edition has *end* for 'and'. Others may have been deliberately introduced because Caxton was ignorant of an English equivalent as when he introduces the word *forwynterd* in the sense of 'reduced to straits by the winter'. Normally Caxton does try to use English spelling conventions for Dutch words, but occasionally the Dutch forms are retained. The Dutch verb *ruymen* is normally spelt in Caxton's edition as *rome*, but once he has the form *ruymed*. Naturally these Dutch words and spellings tended to be eliminated in later editions. Caxton's version is divided into forty-three chapters, a division which follows that found in the Gouda edition. Later versions will make alterations to this organisation. Finally Caxton's edition contains no illustrations, as is also true of the Gouda edition although illustrations were not uncommon in manuscript versions of the *Roman* and in many early printed books. Indeed, it might be said that the illustrations were one of the features which helped to make printed editions of the Reynard story popular. Caxton had not started to use woodcuts by this date and so there are none in his 1481 edition.

All editions of the Reynard story in England up to 1550 follow Caxton's version fairly closely in most respects. It is possible that other editions were printed which have left no trace, but this remains mere speculation. Caxton

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himself produced a second edition of *Reynard the Fox* in 1489. This second edition is in almost all particulars identical with the first. It survives in a single copy now in the Pepys Library, Magdalene College Cambridge. Its main point of interest is that it lacks a couple of leaves at the end and these have been supplied in a seventeenth-century hand. The question is whether this addition represents what was in Caxton's edition or whether it is an antiquarian reconstruction of the sort of thing Caxton might have included in his epilogue. The latter seems the more likely theory, and this addition probably exhibits seventeenth-century interest in Caxton and the Reynard story. An edition by Richard Pynson from the last five years of the fifteenth century survives in a single copy found in the Douce bequest at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. It too lacks some of its final leaves which might have told us more about the time and circumstances of the edition. Caxton's second edition and Pynson's first edition are not illustrated and both are reprints of Caxton's first edition and maintain its features closely. Naturally they make alterations to the spellings and to the words borrowed from Dutch, although such changes are not many.

Although it does not survive, it has been suggested that Wynkyn de Worde, Caxton's foreman and successor in the publishing business, published an edition of *Reynard the Fox* about 1499. This is an important edition because it introduced woodcuts into a printed English version. The existence of this edition can be deduced from the existence of the woodcuts which are found in later editions of the text, for it must be remembered that there was a great deal of co-operation among early printers who sold or hired out woodcuts to one another. Woodcuts represented a capital investment which needed to be re-couped. If a series of woodcuts was used only in a single edition, that would make their use very expensive. So they were re-used in many editions of the same text and even included in quite different texts for which they had not been designed. It has been shown that there originally existed a series of forty-three woodcuts and that these must have belonged to Wynkyn de Worde. The fact that there were forty three is significant, for the early editions of *Reynard the Fox* contained forty-three chapters. There was one woodcut for each chapter; and it was usual for printers to put a woodcut at the head of each chapter. The woodcuts for de Worde's edition were based on those produced by the Haarlem master for the Antwerp edition of *Reinaert de vos* published by Gerard Leeu about 1487.

A second edition by Pynson survives in some fragments in the National Library of Scotland. From its type it is dated to between 1501 and 1505. These fragments represent an edition which was illustrated with woodcuts, and the woodcuts are from de Worde's. Little else is known about the edition because of its fragmentary state. The same applies to de Worde's second edition of *Reynard the Fox*, usually dated c. 1515, which survives in a fragment in Cambridge University Library. This edition was illustrated with the same series of woodcuts used in de Worde's first and Pynson's second edition. Woodcut illustration appears to have become the accepted norm in editions of *Reynard the Fox*. Both these editions probably contained the standard forty-three chapters with one illustration per chapter and reproduced the text as found in Caxton's editions with some modernisation and updating. As a general principle it may be suggested that any new edition was based on the most recent edition immediately before it. Hence improvements and changes in the language of one edition are likely to be reflected in all subsequent editions. The vocabulary of these editions shows a distinct trend of modernisation. Words in Caxton's 1481 edition which reflect Dutch words in the Gouda text are gradually replaced: *romed* gives way to *voyded* and *skrabbyng* to *scrapyng*. Even older English words are replaced as they are accepted as being archaic: *wende* becomes *thought*, and *fordele* becomes *vauntage*. Less common phrases, some of which imitate Dutch, are replaced by more idiomatic phrases: *she said se wel to* is changed to *she bad hym take hede*, and *to fote* becomes *on fote*.

The last edition of this early phrase of *Reynard the Fox* in England is that published by Thomas Gaultier in 1550 which survives in several copies. This maintains the model of forty-three chapters and is in most respects simply a modernised copy of Caxton's original version. It was produced in octavo instead of folio as previous editions had been, and this might suggest that the nature of the text was changing - or rather the way publishers saw it. The smaller format might suggest that this was a book which was popular in its appeal. Caxton produced books for the upper end of the vernacular market - books which would appeal to the reading tastes of a fashionable clientele. Gradually *Reynard the Fox* came down in the world and was being presented as a text you could take around in your pocket and which had pictures to decorate the story and widen its appeal. This may mark the beginning of its ap-

peal more as a children's book or as a book which was more suitable for a less refined audience.

The next edition, which I have not seen since it is in private hands, has no name of publisher or date of printing. The type used suggests a date about the middle of the sixteenth century. More importantly from a textual point of view this edition is close to that published by Gaultier in 1550. Most of the linguistic changes found in Gaultier are also found in this edition, but the printer has made additional changes as well. This suggests that the edition is later than 1550, since as we have seen changes made in one edition appear in subsequent editions. It is recorded in the Stationer's Register that editions of *Reynard the Fox* were printed in 1560 by William Powell and in 1586 by Edward Allde, though neither of these editions is now extant. So it may well be that this anonymous edition is one of these two missing editions; if so, it is likely to be the former. This anonymous edition differs in some important ways from preceding ones. Where early editions had contained forty-three chapters, this one contains fifty-eight; and where early edition had forty-three illustrations, this contains fifty-five. This edition therefore marks the end of what might be called the first phase of *Reynard the Fox* production in England. Although the text is substantially unchanged, modifications are now being made to the presentation of the material - and these modifications herald even more substantial changes which will be introduced in subsequent editions. It is not clear why this edition has fifty-eight chapters, though it does allow for more woodcuts to be introduced. Of the fifty-five woodcuts, nine are found twice so there are only forty-six different pictures. These are divided into thirty-five tall (12.5 cm high and 9 cm wide) and eleven wide (7.5 cm high and 11 cm wide) woodcuts. Some of these wide woodcuts repeat illustrations found among the tall ones and are presumably copies of them. The thirty-five tall woodcuts are part of the series which belonged to Wynkyn de Worde and were used to illustrate his editions, and faults in the woodcuts can be found both in the de Worde editions and in this anonymous edition. In other words, the woodcuts had been handed down among the publishers of *Reynard the Fox* so that they remained available for new editions. This contributes to a sense of continuity and sameness among the early editions.

In the seventeenth century numerous editions of *Reynard the Fox* continue to appear, though there are striking changes to record. What is noteworthy is that so many editions were issued, since *Reynard the Fox* is not a book normally associated with the literary development and taste of this century. We need to remember that each century continues to produce books which occupy a low level of literary visibility and which inhabit, as it were, a substratum of the literary scene. Books at this level were perhaps more popular and common than those which figure in the literary histories of the period. The earliest seventeenth-century edition to have survived is that by Edward Allde about 1620 in London. There may have been editions prior to it, but none have survived or are otherwise recorded. This edition was reprinted, often with revisions, regularly during the seventeenth century, for editions have been recorded for 1629, 1640, 1654, 1656, 1662, 1681, 1694, 1699 and 1701. Furthermore continuations or sequels to the story are found. *A Continuation, or, Second Part, of ... Reynard the Fox* appeared for the first time in 1672, and this sequel was added to the first part and issued together with it in 1681. In this second part the author killed off Reynard, and so when someone else wanted to issue a new continuation, it had to be about Reynard's son, who was called Reynardine. The fortunes of this son, in a work called *The Shifts of Reynardine The Son of Reynard the Fox*, was first made public in 1684. This development of a hero's activities by creating a son who carries on in much the same way as his father is a typical publishing expedient of this century. This development does not exhaust the seventeenth century's response to the story of Reynard the fox, for in addition to these editions, that century saw the publication of a versified version by John Shurley and the appearance of at least five abridged accounts. It is time now to look at these various developments in greater detail.

The 1620 edition marks many important changes in the presentation of the Reynard story. The book is offered under the title *The Most Delectable History of Reynard the Fox*, and the title page refers to the story being 'Newly corrected and purged from all the grosenesses both in Phrase and Matter' as well as 'Augmented and Inlarged with sundry excellent Moralls and Expositions vpon euery seuerall Chapter'. It is indeed this emphasis on morality which is the most noticeable feature of the text. This point is emphasised in a new Epistle to the Reader which is inserted at the beginning of the volume. This contains the following comments:

Thou hast here (courteous & friendly Reader) the pleasant and delightfull History of *Reynard* the Foxe, which in an humble & lowe style (couthed to the natures of Beasts it treateth on) beareth in it much excellent Morallitie & hidden wisdome, worthy both thy regard in reading and thine applycation in the course & comerce of thy life and actions, for the ayme at which it bendeth is the ouerthrowe of vice and the aduancement of the good & vertuous.

Now foasmuch as hitherto it hath flowne into the world (like *Sybilla's* loose papers) couered with much obscurity & darknes, I haue for thy more ease and contentment, to euery seuerall Chapter annexed the Morals and expositions of such darke places as may either holde thy Iudgement in seeking to winde out of a laborinth so dark & curious.

As the editor notes here, each chapter is provided with a moral. This moral is added in a smaller type in the margin, at some convenient point for the printer. As some idea of what these morals are like I include that which is attached to the first chapter dealing with the court of Noble the Lion and the attack of various animals upon Reynard.

Howsoeuer a vicious man perswads him self to escape punishment by absenting himselfe from the presence of the Maiestrate, yet he deceiues himselfe, & by his contempt, animates his enemies to be more bolde in their compaintes against him; as appeares heere by the Wolfe who (although worse than the Fox) yet armed with his absence and the seasonableness of the time for free libertie of speech, takes opportuntiy to say the worst he can against him, & by the example makes others of fearefull nature doe the like. And therefore let no wise man shrinke from his iust triall, but either defend his owne Innocence, or else submit to mercy, for dead men and absent finde slacke Aduocates.

No one reading the 1620 edition can avoid these morals, and so the story is presented in a quite different way. The tale was being made respectable.

The editor of this edition also modernised the language of the work. Although this was a process which had been going on since the first edition, this time there was a more thorough revision of the language so that the tale was made more contemporary in its tone. The story line was unchanged, but

the packaging has been improved. This can be seen from the opening, which in Caxton read:

It was about the tyme of penthecoste or whytsontyde/ that the wodes comynly be lusty and gladsom/ And the trees clad with leuys and blossoms and the ground with herbes and flowris swete smellyng and also the fowles and byrdes syngen melodyously in theyr armonye.

In the 1620 text this opening has now become:

About the Feast of *Penticost* (which is commonly called Whitsontide) when the Woods are in their lustyhood and gallantry, and euery Tree cloathed in the greene and white liuory of glorious *Leaues* and sweet smelling blossomes, and the earth couered in her fairest mantle of Flowers, which the Birdes with much ioy entertaine with the delight of their harmonious songs.

Here words like *gallantry* and *mantle* as well as adjective and noun combinations like *glorious Leaues*, *fairest mantle* and *harmonious songs* give the passage a seventeenth-century feel in its style. The passage is much longer than that found in Caxton because it has been expanded and elaborated.

The 1620 edition differs from earlier ones in its organisation into chapters. Caxton's version and most subsequent editions had forty-three chapters. The 1620 edition has arranged these into twenty-five chapters by regrouping much of the material. This edition is also provided with woodcuts, but for the most part they are the same woodcuts which had been used in earlier editions. They are scattered throughout the text, and do not necessarily occur immediately after the chapter-heading: they include both the wide and the tall varieties. New woodcuts were not provided. The appearance of the same woodcuts and the general similarity of the text make the continuity between the 1620 edition and previous ones quite marked. The editions which followed in the seventeenth century were almost exact reprints of the 1620 edition so that there is little to record in the development of the story until the publication of the first continuation in 1672. That continuation is anticipated in the 1620 edition, which concludes with the comment 'But if all thinges sute to my wisht imagination, I shall then be encouraged to salute the world with a Second part, clad in some neater English, deeper matter, and if not more, yet

euery whit as pleasant Morals'. There is no reason to suppose that the sequel was composed by the editor of the 1620 edition, whether that was Edward All-de or someone else.

*A Continuation, or, Second Part of the Most Pleasant and Delightful History of Reynard the Fox* was published by Richard Brewster in 1672, though the author is unknown. This edition is provided with woodcuts, but they are all from the original series found in the first part and consequently are not always very appropriate as illustrations of the new story. This continuation is about two-thirds of the length of the first part; it is divided into thirty-two chapters; and it is provided with marginal comments to highlight the morality of individual episodes. The story is concerned with Reynard as a crafty courtier and hence differs in tone from the original version. Caxton's translation and its subsequent modernisations dealt with the evils of everyday life, for Reynard was presented more as an ordinary citizen than as a courtier. He had to answer to the king for his actions, but his evil deeds were mostly perpetrated outside the court. The continuation is rather more political since it focusses on corruption in high places, and it may even contain veiled references to contemporary political happenings. The continuation is narrower in its moral focus, which aims at probity in the ministers of the crown rather than at good behaviour among the population generally.

The story develops as follows. Reynard is made the chief favourite of Noble the lion and uses this power quite shamelessly to promote his own interests. He has Isegrim promoted to chief prelate in succession to Bellin the ram who was executed in the first part, even though Isegrim is totally unfitted for his position. The bear and the cat plan Reynard's death because of Isegrim's elevation, of which they are jealous, but they both drop their plans when Reynard extends patronage to them as well. Reynard uses his position to enrich himself with the aim of ultimately usurping the throne. He suborns many nobles with this wealth, and when he judges the time right he calls an assembly at which he proposes an armed rebellion against Noble. The plot is betrayed by the leopard and the panther, and Noble acts quickly to quell the rebellion. Many rebels are captured and Reynard is besieged in his castle Malepardus. After a spirited resistance he is captured, tried for treason, found guilty and duly executed. As may be realised from this brief synopsis, the tale is very different from that of the first part. Although in some ways better or-

ganised and more cohesive in tone and morality, it is rather lifeless in its characterisation. The animals have become little more than dull allegorical figures. The liveliness of the folktale which is so much a feature of the first part is missing. Furthermore, Reynard himself is no longer a swaggering and cunning rogue who is never at a loss for a way to extricate himself from a difficult situation. In the continuation he is little more than a crooked courtier who tries to outwit his king, but is caught out. At his trial he offers no defence; he is a character without spirit or interest. It is difficult to imagine many readers succumbing to the attraction of sin from reading this continuation.

In 1684 the second sequel to the story of Reynard the fox appeared under the title *The Shifts of Reynardine The Son of Reynard the Fox*. This volume was also published by Edward Brewster, though the author is unknown. As the first sequel ended with the death of Reynard, this continuation deals with his son. The volume is divided into thirty-three chapters, which come to about the same length as Caxton's original version, but it contains no woodcuts. The author is apparently different from the person who wrote the first sequel. No doubt the story of Reynardine is meant to parallel that of his father Reynard, and he certainly perpetrates some unpleasant deeds, but his sheer zest for evil can in no way match that of his father. He is rather a pale reflection of his father, and it may well be that the seventeenth century was too concerned with morality to be able to portray evil convincingly. The story also loses much of its medieval flavour because the names have been changed. Most of the original continental names have been abandoned to be replaced either by English ones or by names which have more than a touch of Augustan allegory in them. When Reynardine assumes the role of doctor, he calls himself Doctor Pedanto.

The story proceeds like this. Before Reynard died, he gave his wealth to his sons, Reynardine and Volpus, enjoining on them the duty to revenge him on Firapel and Sly-look who had betrayed him and caused his death. Volpus is soon killed, but Reynardine goes to another country where he becomes a novice in the monastery at Manton. He is expelled for stealing, but keeps his habit and is able to exploit his dress by selling indulgences to the gullible. Losing the habit in a trap, he decides to return to his own country, where he is advised by the ape to become a doctor. In due course Firapel falls ill, and Reynardine treats him with an overdose so that he dies, and so achieves his first revenge. He quarrels with the ape, who denounces him publicly, and so

he is forced to flee. But he has his ears and tail cut off by a mountebank, and is so unrecognisable that he can return to his own country once more where he takes service with Sly-Look under the name Crabron. He poisons Sly-Look to complete the revenge for his father. He makes such a show of sorrow for his master's death that the king makes him one of his purveyors. He is able to maintain this position for a time by eliminating those who could betray him. Ultimately he is unmasked, and he makes a full confession under torture. When he is on the scaffold he manages, as his father had done, to win a reprieve through a lying speech. He continues his escapades for a time, but is caught again and finally executed after another confession about his whole life. The king decrees that all foxes will be banished for ever, but this kind of edict cannot be enforced. However, Reynardine does not have the same interest for readers that his father had. It may be that the rather tame conclusion in which morality is ultimately justified undermines some of the previous wickedness. That wickedness itself never manages to capture the spirit and flavour of the original story, although some of the episodes are clearly modelled on that version. There is ultimately a lack of inventiveness and imagination. The delicate balance between the human and animal kingdom is disrupted as the animals become increasingly allegorical manifestations of human failings.

If these sequels indicate that the Reynard story was becoming more popular, the opposite is suggested by the appearance in 1681 of a verse adaptation by John Shurley. This edition was printed by T and G Passinger in London. It has two title pages. The second refers to 'The most delightful History of Reynard the Fox: in Heroic verse, much Illustrated and Adorned with Allegorical Phrases and Refined English, containing much Wisdom and Politics of State, under the Fabling Discourse between Birds and Beasts, with a Moral Explanation of each hard and doubtful Place or Part, being not only Pleasant but Profitable, as well to the Learned of the Age, as others'. There then follows the Epistle to the Reader, which is signed by John Shurley. Among other things this epistle claims:

In this piece as in a Crystal Mirror, may the Politick Statesman see  
his shadow, the flattering Courtier learn how to behave himself,  
and time his Adulations as occasion offers it self, in order to find  
best acceptance and acquire the ends he aims at. ... wherefore  
knowing that such pleasant Fables are acceptable to most, I have

presumed to put them into Heroic Verse, in the sweetest, still, and smoothest language now in use, what has been formerly written of this kind, having been old English, composed of harsh and unintelligible words, but in this explained by moral, and largely augmented, suitable to the times.

The text contains about 4,000 lines of Augustan verse arranged in twenty-four chapters. Each chapter heading is followed by a verse argument before the text itself begins. There are some woodcuts, but these have been grouped together in twos and threes. Each chapter has a moral, which as in the 1620 edition is placed in the margin. The moral to chapter one is:

In what kind so ever a wicked man imagines to escape just punishment by absconding from Justice, yet he only flatters himself with what will not avail him, and gives his enemies leave by his absence to magnifie his Crimes and render them greater than indeed they are, as in this is made manifest.

The moral is clearly based on that found in the seventeenth-century prose editions. In order to get some idea of the style of the verse, I quote the opening lines of this new version:

About the Feast of Pentecost, when all  
The Suns' bright rays shone on this earthly Ball,  
When Trees were in their gaudy Liv'ry dress'd,  
And smiling Flowers each fragrant Field possess'd,  
When balmy Sweets perfum'd the gentle Air,  
And blossoming Spices scented from afar.

Here the Augustan style becomes more marked. Almost every noun has an adjective to qualify it, and that adjective is often bisyllabic and ends in *-ing* or *-y*. The balance between *smiling Flowers* and *fragrant Field* in line four is typical of much verse written at this time. The effect is to raise the general tone and literary merit of the story, though the narrative retains its essential characteristics for it has been borrowed from the prose accounts of the period. The poem ends with an attack on the flattery of servile courtiers whose presence detracts from true wisdom in courts.

### *The literary development of the Reynard story in England*

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A second verse rendering was published in London in 1706 where it was printed for John Nutt. Its title is *The Crafty Courtier: or the Fable of Reinard the Fox: Newly done into English Verse*. The versifier is unknown, but he used as his source the Latin version of Hartmann Schopper, first published in 1567 and based on the Low German text of 1498. The text is divided into four books, containing 37, 9, 14 and 12 chapters respectively. Each chapter has an argument at its beginning, and the last two books have general introductions. There is also a conclusion. No morals are attached to the text, though the whole is understood to be a moralistic and satiric work. The text covers the same story as told by Caxton, but differs in some respects because of its different source. The names of the animals are different: the cat is usually Malkin, the badger Grevincus, and the king is referred to as Caesar. Court life and politics are the primary aims of his satire, but the author has literary pretensions. His opening with its echo of Virgil gives a good idea of the style and approach:

Nor Arms I sing, nor of Adventurous Deeds,  
Nor Shepherds playing on their Oaten Reeds,  
But civil Fury, and invidious Strife,  
With the false Pleasures of a Courtiers Life.  
To whom ye *Muses*, will my Theme belong,  
And whom, shall I invoke to aid my Song?

During the course of his work he refers to such authors as Chaucer, John Dennis, Congreve, and Samuel Butler. He exhibits his poetic expertise by writing some parts, particularly the exempla in book 3, in octosyllabic stanzas usually rhyming aaabcccb. He sets the courtier's life against the idyllic life of the countryman, here named Collin:

Happy, Ah COLLIN! in thy humble State,  
They oftner envy Thee, than Thou the Great.

It is in fact a typical eighteenth-century attack on the life of the court as compared with the country, though it is strange to see it clothed within the story of Reynard the fox. The conclusion, when it comes, is absolutely expected:

Plain is the Lesson of our humble Tale:  
That Fraud, and Flattery at Court prevail.

However, because this work was taken from a different source its effect on the development of the story in English was restricted. An adaptation of this version by David Vedder was published in 1852, but otherwise it appears to have had little impact on English accounts of the fox.

The end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth witnessed the production of abridged versions of the Reynard story. These editions are usually small and portable, and probably represent a further stage in the popularisation of the story. Their number is uncertain because they have not yet been studied bibliographically. What may be the earliest is *The Most Pleasant History of Reynard the Fox* printed for J Conyers in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, perhaps about 1685. This abridgement was made by taking the first part of the Reynard story up to his first release by the lion and the final chapter as the subject matter. A different abridgement was made by adding to this first part an account of Reynardine, the son of Reynard, which is introduced as a second part. The latter appears to have been the more common form, and I shall examine a version produced about 1700. It could be said that these abridgements became the standard form of the Reynard story in the eighteenth century and drove the 1620 text off the market.

Although an abbreviated version, the edition produced in 1700 still tries to appeal on literary and cultural grounds. It has the title *The History of Reynard the Fox and Reynardine his Son. In Two Parts*. It adds to this 'With Morals to each Chapter, explaining what appears Doubtful or Allegorical: and every Chapter illustrated with a curious Device, or Picture, representing to the Eye all the material Passages. Written by an eminent Statesman of the German Empire, and since done into *English, Dutch, French, Italian, &c.*' The reference to the German original could well mislead the unwary that it lay immediately behind this edition, whereas of course it lay over two centuries before. The adaptor has included a preface to the reader, which contains the following comments:

Here, as in a Mirror, the politick Statesman may see his Counterfeit,  
the flattering Parasite how to carry himself even, and sail with all

Winds; the Powerful and Mighty, how weak it is to rely wholly on Strength, when they have a subtle Enemy to deal with; and those that trust fawning Friendship, are convinc'd, that in Adversity but few will stand by them: ... Therefore receive it not as a Trifle, but as a Work of Weight and Moment, which cost much sound Judgment and Labour in Compiling, and being done into English, it varies little from the Original.

This preface is signed 'D.P.', which in some editions appears as 'P.D.', though it is not known to whom this refers. The book itself is small, approx. 7 x 11 cm, and contains 168 pages. Over two-thirds of the text is devoted to Reynard with the rest to Reynardine. Part one has eight chapters, and part two seven. Each chapter has a title, a woodcut, the text and a moral. The woodcuts are naturally small, though they reproduce the subjects of those found earlier. The morals can be lengthy, that for chapter one being:

By this we see however wicked Men flatter 'emselves with escaping unpunish'd by hiding 'emselves from Justice, yet it the more proves their Guilt, by inboldening, in their absence, their Enemies to complain against 'em. Which is demonstrated by the Wolf, who, as guilty as the Fox, nevertheless takes this time to make his Complaints against him; and so gives Encouragement to others, who in all likelihood otherwise would not have done it. The Brock's pleading for the Fox, denotes, that rich Men and Flatterers, tho' never so vicious, rarely want any Advocate to excuse 'em, tho' they shame 'emselves in doing it, as the Brock did, when the Cock appear'd with his fresh Complaint against the Fox, &c.

It can be seen that this is based on the morals introduced into the 1620 edition. There is little that is new in this edition, though when the Cock brings in his dead wife the adaptor breaks into some wretched verse:

Coppel, Chanticleer's dear Wife,  
Who by a Traytor lost her Life;  
Pray come with him, you to weep are able,  
For her, whose unjust Death was lamentable.

Perhaps one might also add that the printing of this and similar editions shows many infelicities, as though it was set up in a hurry or by apprentices.

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From page 48 speeches are given in italics, though this is not so before. The whole of chapter 2, part 2, is in italics (pp.124-9). The final part of the text (pp.157-68) is printed in a smaller type as though to accommodate all the text in a set number of pages. The effect is of a book which is cheap and popular.

In the eighteenth century the Reynard story takes another step towards popular dissemination by the appearance of chapbook versions. Chapbooks are small editions, usually of no more than twenty-four pages, in which a story is abbreviated to its bare bones so that the work can be sold cheaply. The style of such chapbooks is not necessarily low or vulgar; on the contrary, some of them try to aim at a more elevated style. They were also published in different parts of the country to be sold at local fairs and other gatherings. Because they were produced cheaply in a small format, not many of them survive because they must in many cases have been read out of existence. At least two editions of the Reynard chapbook are extant today. One was published in London, in Bow Lane, about 1750. Its title page contains the title, *The History of Reynard the Fox*, a woodcut depicting the lion sitting in judgement which is based on earlier models, and the reference to the place of printing and publication; there is no date. The volume consists of twenty-four pages, and the material is divided into ten chapters. The story is confined to the first part, which corresponds to the original *Reinaert I*, but it is considerably reduced. The style is by no means popular, as the opening reveals:

It was when the woods was cloathed with green attire, and the meadows adorned with fragrant flowers, when birds chaunted forth their harmonious songs, the Lion made a great feast at this palace of Sanden, and issued a proclamation for all the beasts and birds to come thereto without delay, on pain of his contempt.

The link with earlier versions is clear enough. There are in this volume a few woodcuts, but not one for each chapter. The pictures were less important now than they had been.

The other example was printed in Newcastle about 1780, it is generally believed. This is still a chapbook, but rather more elaborate than the London example. The volume has two title pages. The first has the title *The most*

*pleasant History of Reynard the Fox*, to which it adds the comment 'Giving an Account of the many cruelties committed by him, and the complaints made to the King: his being summoned to court, where he was tried and condemned to die, and his getting a reprieve; with the many stratagems he used to obtain his life, &c.' This is followed by the woodcut of the king in judgement, and the note 'Printed in this present Year.' The second page is blank; the third has the title again followed by the chapter heading and text. It contains in all twenty-four pages and is divided into twelve chapters. The story, as can be seen from the subtitle, is the same as that found in the London chapbook. It is not a reprint of that version, because the style has been elevated, as may be seen by comparing its opening with that of the London text:

It was when the woods were cloathed with green attire, and the meadows adorned with delicate and fragrant flowers, and birds sweetly chanting forth their harmonious songs in the entrance of a fine delicate spring, the Lion, king of beasts, intending to celebrate the feasts of Orpheus in great state and ceremony, and keeping open Court in his stately palace of Sanden, sent forth his royal proclamation.

Like the previous chapbook this one contains no morals, and has no elaboration of the story at all. It may be said to have reduced the story to its basic narrative, though presented in an elevated style, which was allowed to stand by itself without any moralising promptings from the editor.

From the middle of the nineteenth century a variety of different trends can be detected in the development of the Reynard story in English. Perhaps the most important is the emergence of translation once again. After Caxton's initial translation of the Dutch version, only the verse version of 1706 made use of a continental original. From 1840 onwards translations of Continental versions became more common. This is partly because of Goethe's reworking of the original story and the immense reputation which Goethe and his work had throughout Europe. Goethe's text was translated and adapted into English versions frequently during the second half of the nineteenth century. It would probably be true to say that these adaptations of Goethe were aimed at the more literary end of the market and reclaimed some of the ground which

had been lost as the intended readership of Reynard's exploits had sunk in both class and age.

It is important to note that translations from other languages were not common. Translations from Dutch occur only in the twentieth century, and then reflect an academic curiosity more than anything else. There is no translation in English of the *Roman de Renart* at all, even though the *Roman* is the original version of the story. It cannot be just because the *Roman* is in verse, though that may be a contributory cause, or because of its length. It may be because it was too medieval and amoral for the nineteenth century. More importantly perhaps, a good edition of the *Roman* was not made until the present century, and that must have been the major deterrent for most would-be translators.

Another trend was the continuation of adaptations of the Reynard story; they occur in a variety of forms. Some are metrical re-tellings. Others are school versions. There are even versions written in words of one syllable for use in elementary reading. Presumably the exciting pace of the narrative and the general moral reading which had become attached to it in so many versions made it a work suitable for classroom use. This applied throughout the English-speaking world, for many of these versions were made in America. As an example of this genre, we may consider a very early version of this schoolbook trend by considering a version printed by Edward Ryland about 1775. This volume has the title *The pleasant and entertaining history of Reynard the Fox represented in a moral light*. It contains new copperplates specially made for the volume, though the subjects are the same as those found in the earlier woodcuts. This volume contains an introduction and each of the twelve chapters contains a moral at the end. Though the story itself is in prose, the introduction and the morals are in couplets, written in a condescending tone to the young. The following is taken from the introduction:

Attend, ye youths, of infant mold,  
To what the following sheets unfold!  
And let each little rip'ning maid,  
Con o'er the morals here display'd; ...  
Pray don't imagine, little readers,  
We in the *Fox's* cause are pleaders;  
Too well we know his subtle ways

To give the wily culprit praise;  
So print his various pranks to shew,  
What *Foxes* on two legs may do;

However, the tone of the moral verse is not repeated in the prose narrative which is an elevated version of the story as handed down in other texts as the opening passage reveals:

In that pleasant season of the year, when nature, proud to display her own beauties, puts on her best attire, cloathing the woods in green, inspiring the warblers of the grove to sing, and painting the meads and plains with flowers; at this happy time, the noble Lion annually invited all his subjects to court, to enjoy luxuriant festivity.

What the young readers were to make of this is not clear. The editor may have felt able to compose morals in verse, but he could not adapt the level of his story to children's tastes.

However, not all the metrical adaptations should be regarded as primarily intended for instructional purposes. One of the most familiar is of course the version by John Masefield, poet laureate, known as *Reynard the Fox or The Ghost Heath Run* which was published in 1921 together with illustrations by G D Armour. This poem has very little connection with the Reynard story as it had been passed down from Caxton's first edition, for it describes a hunt and some of the ensuing events and consequences. It merely illustrates the attraction which Reynard had for many readers and how that quality could be exploited in different ways.

The most significant development was the onset of antiquarianism which brought with it a desire to go back to the roots of a particular literary genre so that the original version of a given story could be brought into circulation once more. This trend coincided with the growth in the mania for collecting incunabula so that the prices paid for Caxtons increased considerably. Hence many scholars wanted to strip away the accretions of the intervening centuries to present Caxton's text as it had been published in 1481. The earliest reprint of Caxton's text in modern times was that by W J Thoms for the Percy Society in 1844. In 1878 Edward Arber produced a diplomatic reprint in his English Scholar's Library. Other private presses also produced versions of

Caxton's edition. The Kelmscott press issued an edition by H Sparling in 1892 and a privately printed version was produced for Bibliotheca Curiosa in 1894 in a text prepared by E Goldsmid. These editions attempted to reproduce Caxton's text faithfully, though they achieved this aim only with limited success. Many of them, for example, produced the text in a modernised spelling and punctuation, and the level of accuracy in them sometimes left something to be desired. It was only in the present century that the text has been reproduced accurately with the original spelling and punctuation. The version published by the Early English Text Society in 1970 accomplished this aim, and so Caxton's edition is once again available. A facsimile of Caxton's second edition has been produced recently, but as yet there is no facsimile of his first edition. Generally speaking the renewed scholarly interest in Caxton's *Reynard the Fox* has tended to drive adaptations off the market, though school versions are still occasionally produced.

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