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# *A Study of Three Animals in some European Fairy Tales*

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## **Abstract**

This article will discuss about the attribution of human characteristics and behavior to animals in children's stories. The use of anthropomorphized animals has an old tradition in literature. They are used to portray stereotypical characters. From the Antiquity to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, European stories such as fables, fairy tales and contemporary children books have captivated the imagination. In these stories, animals are used to criticize human behavior and to tell moral lessons. However, because of some bad characteristics attributed to them, some animals, like the wolf, have suffered and been persecuted.

**Key words** : Anthropomorphism, fox, lion, wolf

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## 1. Introduction

Fables, fairy tales and modern children stories tend to educate people by using a witty style and by offering a moral lesson to the reader. It is well known that the speaking animals in these stories are portraits of human beings. They depict the passions and vices of men. Three animals will be studied in detail : the lion, the wolf and the fox. From the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC to nowadays, these animals have almost always been depicted the same way in European tales. First, we will see how the lion is described in Aesop's fables (620 to 560 BC) and we will analyze how La Fontaine (1621-1695) uses the lion in his fables to criticize the French king Louis XIV. The lion is almost always depicted as noble and strong. Lions are highly favored in children stories. Second, we will see how *Little Red Riding Hood* (Charles Perrault and later the Grimm Brothers) presents the wolf and how it hurts him. The wolf is almost always depicted as evil. Wolves are surely one of the most despised and feared species in books for children. Third, we will see the dramatic difference between the way the fox is described in *Pinocchio* and in the *Little Prince* (Saint-Exupéry; 1943). The fox is almost always considered as a liar and a cheater. Things changed dramatically with the publication of the *Little Prince*.

The main point in this paper is that fairy tales and fables shouldn't be taken too seriously. Animals don't have our notions of good and evil. Humans use animals to criticize humans. People who believe that some animals are evil persecute them and contribute to their disparition.

## 2. The lion

Lions live in family groups. The females do the hunting while the males maintain the borders of their territory. Males are expelled from the family group when they reach maturity. The first cliché is that the lion is the "king of the jungle." In fact, the lion is an animal of the open plains. Lions are recurring symbols in the coat of arms of royalty and chivalry. The lion is associated with

the king. It is interesting to notice that the lion's natural enemy is another male lion seeking territory (just like a conqueror king is a threat to the other kings). Another famous cliché is that the lion is powerful. This assertion has to be moderated because the lion can sleep as much as 20 hours a day.

### 2.1 The lion in Aesop's fables

#### 2.1.1. Aesop and his fables

Aesop is as unknown as is fables are famous [1]. He is supposed to have lived in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC (around 620~560). His birthplace is uncertain. He was perhaps born in Thrace, in Phrygia, or in Ethiopia. *Aisopos* is the ancient Greek word for "Ethiop". He was the slave of Iadmon of Samos. Later, he became a free man and lived at the court of Croesus, the immensely wealthy king of Lydia. When he was in Delphi as the ambassador of Croesus, he was executed as a public criminal. It is said that Aesop was avenged from his cruel death. The city of Delphi suffered many calamities. The inhabitants recognized their crime and made a public apology. According to the famous Greek historian Herodotus (484-425 BC), the fables were invented by a Greek slave named Aesop. In fact, what is nowadays known as the Aesop's fables is a blanket term for collections of short animal fables. Each fable conveys a moral. The original Greek fables are lost. Latin translations of the fables were collected by many writers during the Antiquity and the Middle Ages. The Greeks versions we possess nowadays are only translations from Latin. Hundreds of fables are ascribed to Aesop [2].

#### 2.1.2. The lion in Aesop's fables

In the short story called *The Doe and the Lion*, a doe tries to escapes hunters and hides in a cave. But there is a lion in the cave. He attacks the doe and kills her. This fable is quite exceptional because the lion is associated to evil. The moral at the end says: "in avoiding one evil, care must be taken not to fall into another." It is interesting that

Aesop uses the word evil. In fact, the lion only wants to eat, just like every other animal. As to the hunters, they can sometime hunt for pleasure...

In *The Fox and the Lion* [3], the lion is called “the king of beasts”. A fox, when he sees a lion for the first time is very afraid. He shows him respect. The third time he sees the lion, the fox is neither afraid nor respectful anymore. The author concludes that “familiarity breeds contempt.” In this story, the lion is quite nice. He is not represented as a ferocious creature ready to kill. He even talks about his family to the fox. He is also very polite and distinguished. The fox looks down on him because of that. If the king of animals doesn't look fierce, the other beasts are not going to respect him, are they?

In *The Sick Lion* [4], the lion is once again represented as the king of animals. But this time, he is sick and about to die. Instead of honoring him, the animals say: “now is the time to pay off old grudges.” If the lion is nice, nobody respects him. If he is ruthless, he is respected and feared. However, when he becomes weak, everybody seeks revenge on him. When the ass comes to humiliate the lion, it is the final insult. The moral at the end says that “Only cowards insult dying majesty.” This story has been retold by La Fontaine [5].

## 2.2 The lion in La Fontaine's fables

### 2.2.1. La Fontaine and his work

Jean de La Fontaine (1621-1695) is one of the most famous French poets. He was born in Château-Thierry, Champagne, the son of a superintendent of forests. In 1647, he married Marie Héricart, an heiress, but the marriage was not happy. Eleven years later, they separated. Then, he moved to Paris and dedicated his life to writing. His fables of animals were very influenced by Aesop and Horace (65-8 BC). His first collection of 124 fables called *Fables Choisies* [6] (*selected fables*) was dedicated to the Dauphin, the grandson of Louis XIV. His work

was well received and in 1683 he became a member of the Académie française. La Fontaine's fables remain to this day the most famous of modern times. Each story is about animals behaving like men; in each fable, there is a comment on human behavior. These stories are attractive to children, but they are also loved by adults who can read between the lines a serious and timeless critique of French society. La Fontaine's fables talk about human condition. His message is well received because his stories, written in a witty and brilliant style, talk about the tribulations of familiar animal characters. Of course, the French poet spreads a large number of stereotypes: among the animals he presents are a lion, king of the animals, a cruel wolf, and a cunning fox. His fables were marked by his love of rural life. Animal figures gave La Fontaine enough freedom to distance himself from controversial issues. Using irony, he particularly loved to oppose two or three animals, that is to say two or three concepts or images. He never opposed professing a moral lesson and having a good time telling a witty story [7].

### 2.2.2. Depiction of Louis XIV as the lion

In *The Lion Prepares for War* [8] (Volume 5, fable 19), La Fontaine was inspired by the Italian humanist of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Lorenzo Bevilacqua (also called Laurentius Abstemius). In his collection of Latin fables, *Hecamythion*, the Italian writer tells the story of an ass and a hare. In the French story, of course, it is the king Louis XIV who prepares for war. The lion has “great plans for new hostilities.” As usual, there is a long list of clichés about the character and the ability of each animal: “The fox, meanwhile, would handle things requiring secrecy and guile.” Everybody says that the ass is too obtuse to participate to the war. As to the hare, he is “prone to panic.” But the king says that these two animals can be very useful: “The ass's frightful trumpet will make our foe retreat; the hare will be our courier. None is more fleet.” La Fontaine perhaps pleads for



himself : at the end of the story, he explains that “to the intelligent, no one is inconsequential.” He invites the king to be wise and to respect everyone. A good king has to know his subjects well because even the humblest people in the kingdom are essential. It is interesting to notice that La Fontaine uses animal stories to give his opinion to the king. In a period of absolute power and censorship, it was a smart and wise way to criticize the leader and his politics.

La Fontaine was very influenced by Aesop’s fables. In *The Lion, the Wolf and the Fox* [9] (volume 8, fable 3), the French poet tells the story of a sick and old lion. The king of the animals (Louis the XIV) asks all the animals (the courtiers in Versailles) to find a cure. Like in Aesop’s fable, the wolf criticizes the fox because he is absent. The fox has his revenge by telling the lion that he must kill the wolf and take his skin if he wants to recover. Aesop’s moral is general and simple : to spread malicious gossip can backfire. La Fontaine adapts this story to France and to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He particularly insists on giving a good advice to the Court of the Sun King: one is never rewarded when spreading lies and gossip. A similar theme can be found in *The Animals Stricken with the Plague* [10] (Volume 7, fable 1), but this time, it is the truth teller that is not rewarded. The king invites all the animals to make a public confession. The plague has been sent by God to punish crimes committed in the country. The lion king says : “let us find the one of us whose crimes are worst.” He is the first to acknowledge his crime : “My awful appetite, for example, has made me prey to gluttony. I’ve eaten flocks of sheep. Had they harmed me at all? No, not in any way.” Nobody dares to criticize the king and the fox, liar and cunning as he always is, tells his master that “We have the best of kings, whose scruples show his noble soul. But, I ask, why is eating mutton a sin? Those low, retarded things were honored when you ate them.” This is a very disturbing way to flatter the king. The lie is so big and the words “honored when you ate them”

so absurd that the king should feel offended. However, the king is satisfied and all the animals applaud. At the end of the story, the ass dares to acknowledge his very small tort: he ate a bit of grass in a field. All the animals are angry and ask for his head, especially the wolf, “a preacher of the saintly class.” His minor tort becomes “a capital offense.” La Fontaine adds that “Depending on your social height, the law will see your crime as black-or else as white.” In this story, La Fontaine criticizes the king’s justice and the attitude of the courtiers. Only the king can acknowledge his tort. When he does, he is forgiven because everybody is afraid of him. He is of course immediately forgiven. In fact, there is nothing to forgive ; the king is always right and innocent. When a poor ass acknowledges his tort, he is considered as evil and deserves a terrible punishment. This is a quite sad story. La Fontaine considers that there is no justice for the weak. As to the powerful, there are always above the law. It is also sad because things have not changed since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3. The wolf

The wolf is not a lucky animal because he is almost always depicted as nasty and dangerous. In truth, wolves are not a threat to humans. Mankind has almost decimated the wolf as a species. For example, a few years ago, in Sweden, only 60 wolves were still alive. Sweden used to be home to more than 100,000 wolves. In France and in Germany, wolves almost disappeared. For many years, there were no wolves left in France. Wolves suffered heavily because of hunting and deforestation.

#### 3.1 *Little Red Riding Hood*

##### 3.1.1. *Little Red* by Perrault and by the Grimm brothers

Perrault is the composer of *le petit chaperon rouge* (*Little Red Riding Hood*) [11]. *Little Red* is considered to be a fairy tale because it appeared in

the Grimm collection (*Little Red Cap*; 1812) [12]. The story is about the experiences of female family members, from the ordinary world of French villages and their surrounding woods. It is supposed to be a children's story, but it contains themes of sexual intercourse and a lot of violence. The French version contains an obvious erotic content. The little girl is in red, the color of blood. The story is addressed to young ladies of society who are supposed to be virgin before their wedding. The story makes an obvious contrast between the safe world of the village and the dangers of the wood. In brief, young ladies should stay home or be in a convent. They should especially be careful and distrust men. Charles Perrault says in his moral at the end of the tale that "from this story one learns that children, especially young lasses, pretty, courteous and well-bred, do very wrong to listen to strangers." [13] Perrault warns girls to stay away from dangerous suitors who look nice and pretty, but who have bad intentions. He tries to convince them to remain chaste and pure. Perrault makes it quite clear that young ladies are in sexual danger. According to Catherine Orenstein: "In the French slang, when a girl lost her virginity it was said that *elle avoit vû le loup* — she'd seen the wolf." [14] The Grimm brothers changed the end of the French story. Originally, the girl and her grandmother die and there is no happy ending. In the German version, they are saved by a huntsman. He opens the wolf's stomach with a pair of scissors and delivers the two women. In this version, the girl has a passive role and needs the help of a man. The Grimm brothers removed all erotic content and adapted the tale for 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. The little girl is more passive and obedient. She looks more prudish and reminds the reader of a girl of the working class. The two brothers censored most of the fairy tales they collected and removed most of the controversial elements. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were obviously influenced by the French tale. But they were also inspired by Jeanette Hassenpflug (1791-

1860) and about Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853; German Romantic poet), the author of *Leben und Tod des kleinen Rotk ppchens : eine Trag die (Life and Death of Little Red Riding Hood : a tragedy; 1800)*. Tieck wrote about a girl and her grandmother saved by a huntsman who was after the wolf's skin. The two brothers also retold the story written by Marie Hassenpflug (1788-1856). It is a sequel of *Little Red* that features the girl and her grandmother killing another wolf because of their bad experience with the previous one. The young girl has learned a lesson and lives happily ever after.

### 3.1.2. The wolf in *Little Red*

The speaking wolf in the French story is quite smart and plays tricks. He reminds the reader of the fox, as he is depicted in La Fontaine's fable and in *Pinocchio*. He is friendly at the beginning, but his purpose is to obtain as much as he can : he is not just after the little girl ; he also wants to eat her grandmother. The wolf represents the bad and vicious instincts of men. It is interesting to notice that the wolf, like the cat and the fox, is a hypocrite. He lies to take advantage of someone naïve. The wolf is as attractive as he is dangerous. He is a womanizer. He seduces young and innocent girls and brings to them and to their family shame and dishonor. In the French story, the wolf emerges the victor. In the German version, by contrast, he is killed while sleeping. When the wolf enters the house of the grandmother, he jumps on her and eats her. The wolf eats the grandmother immediately because he is starving. However, when the girl arrives and enters, he is not so hungry anymore and takes his time. The reader knows that the wolf is nasty and that he is about to eat the little girl. One of the most disturbing moments in the story is when the wolf is wearing ladies clothes to attract the young girl into bed. It is comic and frightening at the same time. The wolf looks a little stupid in grandmother's clothes ( "She was greatly amazed



to see how her grandmother looked in her nightclothes” ). The girl is clearly smarter than Pinocchio and notices immediately that there is something wrong with her grandmother ( “Grandmother, what big arms you have” ). However, she is quite naïve and continues to ask questions until the wolf, obviously still hungry, decides to put an end to the “Grandmother, what big... you have” game. The wolf has a smart answer to every question. It is called “réponse à tout” in French. His answers are quite funny: “All the better to hug you with, my dear.” Many fables and fairy tales have a comic relief. Even in the saddest and the scariest moments, there is a good word or a funny behavior by one of the characters to make the reader laugh. The wolf, as bad as he is, can be funny from time to time; if not because of the way he speaks, at least because of the way he behaves ( “The wolf cried out to her, softening his voice as much as he could” ). The ending dialogue between the wolf and the girl, because of its humor and suspense, contributed a lot to the tale’s popularity. It has to be said that the wolf in *Little Red* doesn’t resemble real wolves. Wolves travel in packs, usually consisting of two parents and their pups, and sometimes additional unrelated wolves. They work together to catch their prey. A wolf doesn’t hunt alone. Even if the tale is sometimes funny, it is quite clear that people were very afraid of wolves (especially during the Middle Ages). During centuries, this fear made humans represent wolves as evil and very dangerous. There are many myths connected to wolves. They are considered to be dangerous to humans. In truth, wolves almost never attack people. By contrast, millions of humans are attacked every year by dogs. It is also said that wolves eliminate prey species. Having been on the surface of the planet for millions of years and long before humans, they clearly represent no threat. Food availability and weather regulate wolf populations. When their prey is scarce, wolves suffer too.

### 3.2 The wolf in fables

A closer look at Aesop and La Fontaine’s fables shows that the wolf is always depicted as vicious. He represents everything that is bad in human nature. In Aesop’s *The Wolf and the Crane* [15], the wolf is an ingrate. Aesop typically chose the wolf as the perfect example of “wicked” people. In *The Lion, the Wolf, and the Fox* [16] by the same author, the wolf criticizes the fox because he is absent. He says that the fox doesn’t show respect to the lion and should be punished. The wolf spreads malicious gossip, but the fox arrives and defends himself. As usual, the fox is represented as cunning: he says that the only way to cure the lion is “to flay a wolf alive and wrap his skin yet warm around” him. In this story, the wolf is terribly punished. In *The Wolf and the Lamb* [17], the wolf is vicious and has no scruples. He tries to convince the lamb that it is his fault if the wolf has to punish him and eat him. The wolf tries to find a good excuse to eat the lamb. However, the lamb is innocent ( “You drink of my well.” “No,” exclaimed the Lamb, “I never yet drank water” ). Finally, the wolf is fed up to play this game and says : “I won’t remain supper less, even though you refute every one of my imputations.” Aesop considers in this story that the wolf symbolizes ruthless and cruel tyrants who always find a pretext to obtain what they want. And even if they can’t find a pretext, they just do what they want.

In La Fontaine’s fables, the wolf is also depicted as bad and cruel. The French writer retold the story of the wolf and the lamb in his fables (Volume 1, fable 10) [18]. Like in Aesop’s fable, the wolf is angry at the lamb because he is drinking his water : “How dare you have the gall to foul my drinking water!” Here too, the lamb responds that he has done nothing wrong. The scene is very famous and quite funny : “Well, if not you it was your brother.” “But I don’t have one.” “Then it was another just like you.” The wolf, tired of the game, decides it is time to eat the lamb because the poor creature is “not so nice.”

At the beginning of the story, La Fontaine says that “Might makes right.” This fable is presented to the reader to prove his point. The wolf is powerful, at least more powerful than the lamb. He could easily eat the lamb without saying a word. However, it is very interesting that he needs to justify his action. This can obviously been applied to many politicians who act like tyrants. They make their decision, but they do as if dialogue is still possible. Then, they try to show to the all world that it is the innocent’s fault. He has to be punished because, after all, he is not that innocent. The tyrant-wolf tries to find a pretext in order to punish his opponent. If the innocent is really innocent and has no reason to repent, the tyrant acts as planned, because like he says : “Well! I won’t remain supper less.” It is clearly an act of bad faith. The wolf is cruel, ruthless, and has no scruples. This looks like a circus trial. The wolf is the accuser. He tries to prove his case, but knows perfectly well that the accused is innocent. The lamb has already been condemned before the beginning of the trial. The reader of the story plays the passive role of the judge. But, of course, there is nothing he can do in favor of the lamb. The wolf is quickly confronted to the absurdity of his words. When it becomes clear that he can’t win the trial objectively, he just pronounces the verdict and executes the sentence.

## 4. The fox

There is an incredible difference between the way the fox is represented in *Pinocchio* and in *the Little Prince* : in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian story, the fox is quite vicious and nasty. He is a thief and a liar. With his companion, the cat, he tries to fool naïve Pinocchio in order to steal his money. In the 1943 French story, *the Little Prince*, the fox is wise and gives the little extraterrestrial boy the gift of love and friendship.

### 4.1 The fox in Pinocchio

#### 4.1.1. Carlo Collodi and Pinocchio

Carlo Lorenzini was born in Tuscany, Italy, in 1826. From 1856 onwards, he took the pseudonym of Carlo Collodi (Collodi being the name of the village where his mother was born) to write books and articles for newspapers. In 1875, he translated in Italian the French fairy tales by Charles Perrault. In 1880, he decided to write his own story for children. He offered to publish weekly *the story of a marionette* (*Storia di un burattino*) in the first Italian newspaper for children, *Il Giornale dei Bambini*. The story became a book in 1883. It became famous as *Le Avventure di Pinocchio* (*The Adventures of Pinocchio*). In Italian, Pinocchio means “pine eyes” ( “pino” for “pine” and “occhio” for “eye” ). Pinocchio’s metamorphoses through the story are quite interesting: in Tuscany, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, his name meant “pine seed.” Thus, Pinocchio was born as a piece of wood and was associated with a plant. Later, he was forced to be a watchdog and he was transformed into a donkey. Finally, he became a real boy. Pinocchio is impulsive and naïve, and gets easily into trouble. Among all the hostile beings he meets, there are many animals.

#### 4.1.2. References in *Pinocchio*

*Pinocchio* is a serious fable about life. It is a story about growing up poor in Italy at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Pinocchio is like Tom Sawyer in many ways. Both are energetic and imprudent, they are good, but act like bad boys who enjoy scorning rules and institutions alike. However, the world of *Pinocchio* is much darker and full of deceptive creatures. The fox and the cat prove to be particularly dangerous. It is important to remember that, in its first weekly edition of *Pinocchio*, Collodi stopped his story at the end of chapter 15, when Pinocchio is hung by the two thieves. In this first edition, Pinocchio dies. However, people loved the story so much that Collodi was asked to continue the adventures of the marionette. Collodi needed Pinocchio to come



back to life. In a catholic country like Italy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it seemed obvious that the resurrection of Pinocchio would be considered as a reference to the *New Testament* [19] : Pinocchio is betrayed, tortured and killed like Jesus. Then, he is reborn. The 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of Pinocchio is the exact parallel of the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of John in the *Bible*. The Trial of Jesus and of Pinocchio is very similar. They are condemned because they are innocent. However, they were warned and refused to listen. Jesus didn't listen to the Rabbis and Pinocchio didn't listen to the Talking Cricket. When the cat and the fox try to stab Pinocchio ( "they attempted to stab him twice" ), it reminds the reader of Jesus being wounded by the Roman Centurion : "one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear" (*John*, 19:34). Then, the fox proposes to hang Pinocchio, just like the chiefs priests said " Crucify him, crucify him!" (*John*,19:6). Pinocchio is hung to the branch of a big oak like Jesus was crucified on a piece of wood. Finally, the two animals wait for Pinocchio to die so that the pieces of gold come out of his mouth : "and the sovereigns hidden under his tongue to clink." It reminds the reader of *John*, 19:29 : "so they put a sponge full of vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth." The fox waits for Pinocchio to give up his pieces of gold just like Roman soldiers were waiting at the foot of the cross until Jesus gave up and died. Another famous reference to the *Bible* can be noticed when Pinocchio sees the fox and the cat for the first time. It is pretty clear from the beginning that the fox is the leader, even when the two animals cheat: "the blind Cat let the Fox lead him along" (chapter 12). The fact that the two beasts fake to be blind reminds the reader of the story of the two blinds going after Jesus and proposing to him to perform miracles (*Matt.*, 9:27). One of the most important references about the Bible can be seen in the obvious relation between the main characters in *Pinocchio* and in the *New Testament*. Of course, the Blue Fairy, especially because of

the fact that she is in blue, reminds the reader of Maria. The Virgin Mary is traditionally depicted wearing blue. Pinocchio is the son of a carpenter whose name derives from Giuseppe or Joseph. Humans and animals are very hostile to Pinocchio. But animals are clearly his most dangerous opponents. There are many other possible literary comparisons. For example, the Fox and the Cat are pretentious con men close to the King and the Duke in *Huckleberry Finn* (1884). *Pinocchio* was not translated into English until 1892. It is interesting to notice that Huck feels pity for them when they come to a bad end. As to Pinocchio, when he sees the cat and the fox for the last time in chapter 36, he doesn't feel sorry for them. The two animals are punished twice: they have really become miserable and they have lost Pinocchio's trust. He decides to ignore their cry for help. There is another interesting reference in *Pinocchio* : it is clearly an Italian story, full of Northern Italian landscapes and Italian dishes. The Fox and the Cat dine on at Pinocchio's expense. The cat says he is not hungry and eats "only thirty-five mullets with tomato sauce and four portions of tripe with cheese." As to the fox, he explains that "the doctor had put him on a diet, and he had to be satisfied with a small hare dressed with a dozen young and tender spring chickens." Then he eats "some partridges, a few pheasants, a couple of rabbits, and a dozen frogs and lizards." Pinocchio, thinking about the Field of Wonders, can't eat a thing. The cat and the fox talk about virtue and compassion, but lie and eat like pigs. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, people were poor and ignorant. They had only one or two clothes and were unable to read or to write. They had nothing to eat and by comparison, the meal eaten by the two animals looks like a royal dinner. Finally, there is a reference to the war of unification, even if it is not explicit in the text. Collodi fought in the Italian War for Unification in 1870. The war reduced the Pope's territory to one square mile in Rome, and made Italy into one

country that was ruled by a king with limited power. To Collodi and all the people who fought for the republic, education was a major concern. They wanted the population to be well-educated and to participate to the political life of the country. That is why Collodi insists so much in his story about the importance of learning, going to school and working hard to succeed. Pinocchio is misled by the fox and the cat who entice him with 'the easy life.' The cat and the fox offer Pinocchio the opportunity of a life time : to bury his pieces of gold in the Field of Miracles. If Pinocchio buries his gold there and waters the ground, then a tree filled with pieces of gold will grow. This repetition of pieces of gold reminds the reader of the biblical stories of the multiplication of fishes and loaves of bread. However, in *Pinocchio*, the miracle doesn't occur and Pinocchio loses his pieces of gold. Collodi wants the reader to understand that there is no easy way to success. Acquiring a good education and working hard is the most honorable way to succeed.

#### 4.1.3. The fox, his character and behavior

When the fox meets Pinocchio in chapter 12 [20], he greets him by his name and seems friendly. He talks about Geppetto and about his terrible condition : "he was in his shirt sleeves trembling with cold." At the beginning, the fox is quite nice and friendly. But, when Pinocchio says he is rich, the fox doesn't believe him and laughs. Pinocchio is not happy that the fox and the cat mock him and shows them the five gold pieces.

Then, everything changes : "at the cheerful tinkle of the gold, the Fox unconsciously held out his paw that was supposed to be lame." Of course he is in a perfectly good health, like his friend the cat. From this moment on, the fox is going to do anything to steal Pinocchio's money. First he wants Pinocchio to feel sorry for him to gain his trust. The fox says he wanted to study like Pinocchio, but he was hurt and lost a paw. Then,

he proposes to double Pinocchio's gold pieces. He offers him to go to the City of Simple Simons. Pinocchio has no idea what and where it is, but refuses firmly. The fox acts like he wants to help him : "if you really want to go home, go ahead, but you'll be sorry." Intrigued, Pinocchio asks why he would be sorry. The fox talks about a place called the Field of Wonders. According to him, it is outside the City of Simple Simons. The fox explains that if Pinocchio buries his money in the ground and waters it, one day later he will find a tree loaded with gold pieces. His story sounds absurd, especially because if it was true, the fox and the cat would be immensely rich. So the fox pretends to be honest and to work only to help others : "we do not work for gain," and "we work only to enrich others." Pinocchio is terribly naïve and accepts to follow the cat and the fox. In this chapter, the fox seems friendly and polite at first, but when he sees the gold, he becomes vicious, lies and treats Pinocchio like a fool. The moral is that good people are not touched by greed and don't try to harm innocent and naïve beings. Bad people can turn from polite to vicious liars at the sight of a few pieces of gold. The fox is quite smart and uses his intelligence to fool people. He is the leader and plans all the tricks. The Fox is also a vagabond. Even if he looks poor and miserable, he is quite wealthy and doesn't need to work. He is persuasive and succeeds by telling lies. However, instead of living a wealthy life, he can't help himself lying to people and playing the role of a poor vagabond. He is a nomadic liar, always looking for an easy pray. He has a manipulating intelligence and his joy is to push others to do what he wants. He sounds believable because he looks like a serious person. He inspires confidence and could easily pass for an aristocrat. It is the funny part of his character: he acts like a nobleman and dresses like a tramp. In chapter 18 [21], Pinocchio, on his way home, meets the fox and the cat again. Of course, they do as if they are happy to see him. In fact, they are quite happy



because they are granted another opportunity to steal his money. When Pinocchio talks about his misfortune, they are sad for him : “Oh, my poor friend!” They do as if they are angry at the assassins : “The worst sort of rascals!” The fox explains that it is Pinocchio’s last chance if he wants to be rich. He has to hurry because the “field has been bought by a very rich man, and it is the last day that it will be open to the public.” They finally arrive at the field and Pinocchio digs a hole, puts his money into it and waters the ground. The fox tells Pinocchio to leave and come back 20 minutes later. He thanks the two animals. The fox answers : “It is enough for us that we have helped you to become rich with little or no trouble. For this we are as happy as kings.” The words “rich with little or no trouble” must sound very disturbing to Pinocchio as well as to the reader. In chapter 19 [22], Pinocchio realizes that there is no tree and no money. A parrot laughs at him and says that “in order to come by money honestly, one must work and know how to earn it with hand or brain.” It could be the end of the story. Pinocchio has learned an important lesson. However, it appears quickly in the following chapters of the book that he still prefers ‘the easy life’ .

## **4.2. The fox in chapter 21 of the *Little Prince***

### **4.2.1. The prince, the fox and the rose**

The famous French writer and pilot Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900-1944) [23] wrote the *Little Prince* in America (New Jersey) during the summer of 1942. He dedicated his book to his best friend Léon Werth, a French essayist and novelist. The *Little Prince* [24] is one of the most famous books for children ever written. This story of a child from another planet watching the strange behavior of grown-ups is candid, poetic and quite easy to read. During his journey on our planet, the young boy encounters many strange creatures. In chapter 21, the little prince meets a fox. Contrary to the fox met by Pinocchio, this one

is particularly wise and kind. He accepts to be tamed and to become the young boy’s friend. The fox helps the boy to understand mankind. More important, he teaches him the meaning of friendship and love. The young prince understands the importance of the rose he left on his planet. In the first part of chapter 21, the prince meets the fox and learns the meaning of “tame” ; in the second part, the prince leaves the fox for a while. He meets the roses for the second time and makes a monologue to explain to them that they are not unique. Finally, in the third part, the young boy meets the fox for the last time. As a farewell gift, the fox tells him his “secret.” The relation between the fox and the prince is sweet and profound. The little prince would like to learn and to make friends and the fox fits perfectly this double role of best friend and teacher. It is important to understand that the little prince is Saint- Exupéry himself. Like him, the young boy is an aviator who flies through the universe. Saint-Exupéry’s friend Silvia Reinhardt was his model to create the character of the fox. Saint-Exupéry was missing his friends when he was in America and decided to write a story for them. It is also clear that the *Little Prince* is a story about love, the love Saint-Exupéry had for a rose : his wife Consuelo. The writer met Consuelo Suncin, the widow of a journalist from Argentina. The rose of the little prince, like Saint-Exupéry’s wife, was whimsical and temperamental, nonconformist and funny.

### **4.2.2. The fox and his secret**

At the end of chapter 21, the fox, before he says “adieu” ( “farewell” ) to the little prince, offers him his secret: “It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.” It is nowadays a very popular quote. These two sentences are the most famous of the book. To fully understand what Saint-Exupéry means, it is important to remember that the story was written during WWII, in 1942.



The writer tries to understand why people are killing each other and destroying the world. The fox is a personification of wisdom. He explains to the little boy why his rose is important : “Go and look again at the roses. You will understand now that yours is unique in all the world.” The fox also adds : “It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important” and “you become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed.” The most important word in the book is “unique.” It could well be used to define art : art is neither ugly nor beautiful, it is unique. Especially in the West, people value the uniqueness of an object ; they value the original over the copy. It can also be applied to people and to Nature : when we value the uniqueness of each human being and of every plant and every creature in the world, we feel responsible, like the fox says, and feel love and respect. It reminds me of a very famous American movie, *Little Big Man* (Arthur Penn; 1970) [25]. In this story, a white man (Dustin Hoffman) is raised by Indians in America, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His adoptive Indian grandfather one day tells him that to white men everything is dead. They don't respect other beings and they look down on Nature. As a result, they have no scruples in killing and destroying everything around them. What is essential in life? According to Saint-Exupéry, it seems to be love and friendship. The fox explains to the little boy that his rose is unique because he has spent a lot of time with her. The fox has become unique to the little prince because he has spent a lot of time to “tame” him. But the little prince is disturbed. Soon the little boy has to live and he knows he will never see the fox again. He will certainly cry and feel very sad. Is it worth? The fox explains to him that it is worth it” because of the color of the wheat.” Each time the fox will look at the wheat fields, it will remind him of the blond hair of the little boy and he will feel happy.

## 5. Conclusion

The lion has always been associated with majesty and nobility. Even if he is sometimes considered as ruthless and cruel, he is not feared and despised like the wolf. He is the king of the beasts. He is respected and people love this symbol of power and grandeur, even if he sleeps around 20 hours a day.

The fact that the wolf has always been represented as evil and cruel might explain why people are so afraid of wolves. Many animals are much more dangerous and more violent, such as the hippopotamus. However, who fears a hippopotamus nowadays? The big bad wolf is famous from fairy tales like *Little Red* and from fables written by Aesop and La Fontaine. The wolf is evil, vicious, rapacious, and cruel. He is a bloodthirsty killer. No wonder why he has been persecuted for centuries. In mythology too, the wolf represents mysterious powers and death. From Egypt to Sweden, the wolf symbolizes evil. For example, Odin, the Norse god of war and death, was accompanied by two wolves, Freki (translated as “fierce” ) and Geri (translated as “greedy” ). Jack London [26] helped rehabilitating the wolf. However, after centuries of writings acknowledging the wolf's cruelty, the impact of London's novel could not be important. The fox too was considered as a demonic creature, cunning and vicious.

Before the publication of the *Little Prince*, the fox was a liar and a cheater, always ready to fool naïve people and to flatter the powerful. Even if fables and fairy tales are funny and teach moral lessons, they do a lot of harm to some animals. By making animals speak and act like human beings, it makes people believe that animals can be human, it means good or evil. However, *Genesis* makes it clear that “God created man in his *own* image.” When people believe that wolves are evil, it is in total contradiction with the *Bible*. Animals are neither good nor bad. We should insist on that point, when we read stories to children.

With the invention of cinema, the problem has amplified. Movies and cartoons perpetuate the clichés about animals (the *Lion King*; frightening stories about wolves and werewolves...). It is also quite ironic that humans often dress like animals on the silver screen. When the *Little Prince* became a musical a few years ago, one of the performers was dressed like a fox. On the one hand, animals are anthropomorphized to criticize humans at a point that is extreme. On the other hand, humans dress like the animals depicted in stories for children.

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