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AESOP'S FABLES

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"THE FOX AND THE GRAPES"

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...AND 200 OTHER FAMOUS FABLES



Edited and with an Afterword by Jack Zipes
With a New Introduction by Sam Pickering

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JACK ZIPES

WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION BY
SAM PICKERING

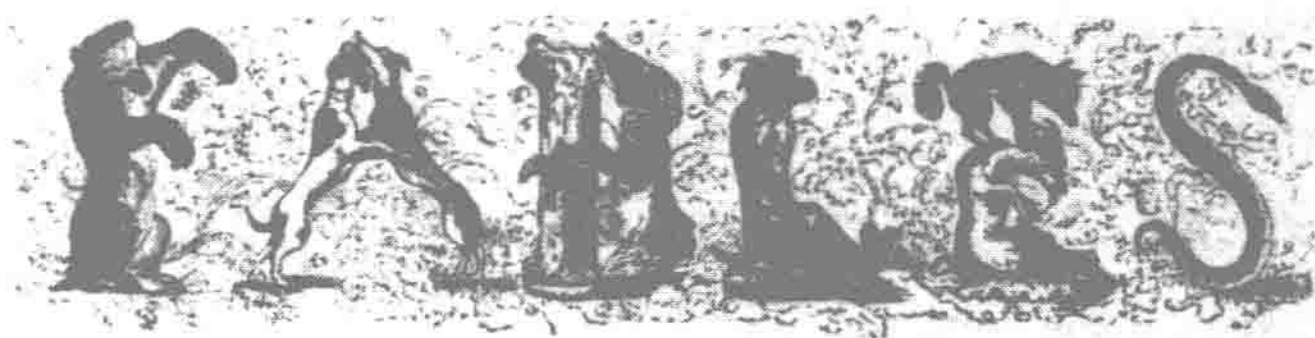


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Aesop, according to legend, was born either in Sardis, on the Greek island of Samos, or in Cotiaeum, the chief city in a province of Phrygia, and lived from about 620 to 560 B.C. Little is known about his life, but Aristotle mentioned his acting as a public defender, and Plutarch numbered him as one of the "Seven Wise Men." It is generally believed he was a slave, freed by his master because of his wit and wisdom. As a free man, he went to Athens, ruled at that time by the tyrant Peisistratus, an enemy of free speech. As Aesop became famous for his fables, which used animals as a code to tell the truth about political injustice, he incurred the wrath of Peisistratus. Eventually, Aesop was condemned to death for sacrilege and thrown over a cliff. Later, the Athenians erected a statue in his honor. In about 300 B.C., Demetrius Phalereus of Athens made the first known collection of Aesop's fables, which then spread far beyond the Greek world.

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A Note on the Text and Illustrations

This edition of *Aesop's Fables* is based on the Reverend Thomas James's *Aesop's Fables: A New Version, Chiefly from Original Sources* (New York: Robert B. Collins, 1848). While adapting this version of the fables, I consulted numerous other nineteenth-century translations and made various changes in keeping with the traditional plots. As has been the custom with translators and adapters of Aesop's fables, I have taken a good deal of poetic license at times. Since Mr. James's style is somewhat archaic, I have used a more modern American idiom in adapting them and have occasionally conceived new morals so that the fables might ring more "true" to the situation of the contemporary reader.

The illustrations are from *Fables de La Fontaine* illustrated by J.J. Grandville (Paris: H. Fournier, 1838). Grandville was a pseudonym for Jean Ignace Isidore Gérard (1803–1847). Born in Nancy, he arrived in Paris during the 1820s and soon made a name for himself as a lithographer and political caricaturist. He was especially interested the theater and animals and was known for incorporating political satire into his complex and fastidious drawings. During the 1830s he turned to book illustration and composed 120 woodcuts for La Fontaine's fables, which were largely based on Aesop's work; he caused quite a stir by turning many of the animals into types of human beings. In doing this, Grandville's figures often appear gro-

tesque and have a surreal quality to them. The distinction between beast and human is blurred, or rather, Grandville's keen eye captures stunning similarities between humans and animals that often make humans appear in a ridiculous light. In addition, Grandville takes pains to give a clear indication of the social status of the figures through their clothing and behavior to comment on the French mores of his time. There are many emblematic references to urban life in Paris, and in this respect Grandville was one of the first artists to address modern problems of the city and industrialization. Grandville also illustrated the *Fables de S. Lavalette* (1841) and the *Fables de Florian* (1842), two minor French fabulists, in the same unique manner and is considered one of the greatest interpreters of Aesop's fables (through La Fontaine) for the modern age.

—J.Z.

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