

TALKING ANIMALS IN
BRITISH CHILDREN'S
FICTION, 1786-1914

TESS COSSLETT

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CHILDREN'S FICTION, 1786–1914

For Nico and Bobbin

Talking Animals in British Children's Fiction, 1786–1914

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The Nineteenth Century Series

General Editors' Preface

The aim of the series is to reflect, develop and extend the great burgeoning of interest in the nineteenth century that has been an inevitable feature of recent years, as that former epoch has come more sharply into focus as a locus for our understanding not only of the past but of the contours of our modernity. It centres primarily upon major authors and subjects within Romantic and Victorian literature. It also includes studies of other British writers and issues, where these are matters of current debate: for example, biography and autobiography, journalism, periodical literature, travel writing, book production, gender, non-canonical writing. We are dedicated principally to publishing original monographs and symposia; our policy is to embrace a broad scope in chronology, approach and range of concern, and both to recognize and cut innovatively across such parameters as those suggested by the designations 'Romantic' and 'Victorian'. We welcome new ideas and theories, while valuing traditional scholarship. It is hoped that the world which predates yet so forcibly predicts and engages our own will emerge in parts, in the wider sweep, and in the lively streams of disputation and change that are so manifest an aspect of its intellectual, artistic and social landscape.

Vincent Newey
Joanne Shattock

University of Leicester

‘I am sure I shall never kill anything without first magnifying it in my mind, and thinking what it would say for itself if able to speak.’ (Sarah Trimmer, *Fabulous Histories*, 1786)

Birds, beasts and fishes, are so learned grown,
They speak the English language as their own ...
(Anon., ‘Madame Grimalkin’s Party’, 1808)

‘No doubt ... this cat could tell us some entertaining adventures, if she could speak.’
(Elizabeth Sandham, *Poor Puss*, 1809)



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Introduction

As the parent of a small child, I was often struck by the plethora of animal stories on offer to children: why, I wondered, were contemporary children's books populated with talking elephants, rabbits or pigs? Where has this genre come from, and why do we think it is so suitable for children? To answer these questions we must go back to the rise of children's literature in the mid-eighteenth century, when the talking animal story began its career as a genre specifically for children. Like the fairy story, the animal story has migrated down the hierarchy of literary genres from adults to children, in consequence of an increasing polarization between adults and children. Adults were more and more seen as rational and cultured, while children were imaginative and primitive. At the same time, Enlightenment educational thought differentiated between fairy stories and animal stories, the one encouraging fear and superstition, the other encouraging benevolence and knowledge. Animals, even when talking, were allied with science, ethics and truth. Animal stories could bridge the gap between child and adult, combining delight with instruction. There was still a connection between the modern animal story and the fantastic talking animals of fairy story, but where fairy story had a large influence – for instance in Charles Kingsley's *Water Babies* – it was modernised and made to carry scientific messages.

The eighteenth and nineteenth-century children's animal story, then, was not just a repetition of the Aesopian fable, but added either an anti-cruelty message and/or natural historical information to the fabular genre. A connection was always made to the treatment or the understanding of animals in the world outside the book, allowing issues of animal protection, conservation and what was later called ecology to be raised in a child-friendly manner. This is something that has been lost in most present-day versions of the genre: in this book, I am concerned both to trace the origins of the children's animal story, and to investigate its distinctive nineteenth-century form. Parents are often shocked to discover the violence depicted in such classics as *Black Beauty* or *Peter Rabbit* (where children are told that Peter's father was put into a pie), a violence which is part of their realistic project. Animal characters do not guarantee a cosy, protected space. Another distinctive feature of these stories was a self-consciousness about allowing the animal protagonists to talk. This anxiety could be expressed in an explanatory preface, that reassured child readers that animals could not in fact talk, or only through the presence of an 'editor' or 'translator' or other type of human mediator with special powers of understanding. Sometimes comedy or metafiction were used to point up the fictionality of the talking animal device, and sometimes the first-person narration of animal to reader was juxtaposed with a story in which the human characters cannot understand the animal, reminding the reader of the true state of affairs. These devices provide complex ways

of presenting animals and animal consciousness, by being both anthropomorphic and not anthropomorphic at the same time.

One of the continuing themes of this book is the *variety* of different representational devices that are covered by the term ‘anthropomorphic’, involving degrees of animal speech, dress and thought. Too often, both literary and scientific representations of animals are dismissed as ‘anthropomorphic’. Interestingly, however, anthropomorphism is now being revalued as a tool in the study of animal behaviour, and as a means to teach science, while other critics have shown its inevitability.¹ I will be expanding on this topic in [Chapter Five](#). Nineteenth-century children's animal stories can show us ways of ‘doing’ anthropomorphism that are effective in animal advocacy and scientific education, while at the same time framing and questioning the practice. Another of my continuing themes is the relation of child and animal. The belief, differently expressed by Rousseau, the Romantics and Darwin, that children are somehow ‘nearer’ to nature and to animals than adults, means that these children's stories can explore the animal-human divide with more freedom and playfulness than literature directed at adults. Anthropomorphic animals meet theriomorphic children, often with the effect of blurring or questioning the difference between human and animal, and stopping in its tracks the ‘anthropological machine’ whose action Giorgio Agamben deplores in Western philosophy – a thought-machine that always reinstates the difference between *man* and animal.² *Child* and animal may not have the same distinction.

Another distinctively eighteenth and nineteenth-century feature of these stories is the inevitable framework of hierarchy on which they depend. This can be a religious hierarchy or an evolutionary hierarchy, and is nearly always an analogy for a social hierarchy. Margaret Gatty puts the concept at its starkest: ‘Animals under man – servants under masters – children under parents – wives under husbands – men under authorities – nations under rulers – all under God’.³ But stories for children about animals are implicitly taking a perspective from ‘lower’ down this hierarchy, and this can have the effect of upsetting its terms. Suffering or noble animals can seem ‘higher’ than cruel or degenerate men, and child-like vision can be truer than prideful grown-up science. At this point, ideas of carnival become relevant, as hierarchies are inverted, and animals usurp the place of humans, often to comic effect. However, hierarchical social ideas are often reinstated when we find there is a ‘natural’ hierarchy among the animals themselves, with different species standing for different classes. One question I ask in this book is just how subversive

1 Eileen Crist, *Images of Animals, Anthropomorphism and the Animal Mind* (Philadelphia, PA, 1999); J. S. Kennedy, *The New Anthropomorphism* (Cambridge, 1992); Kim A. McDonald, ‘Scientists Rethink Anthropomorphism’, *Chronicle of Higher Education* 41/24 (1995): A8–A9, A14; Robert W. Mitchell, Nicholas S. Thompson and H. Lyn Miles (eds), *Anthropomorphism, Anecdotes, and Animals* (New York, 1997); Anat Zohar and Shlomit Ginossar, ‘Lifting the Taboo Regarding Teleology and Anthropomorphism’, *Science Education*, 82/6 (1998): 679–99.

2 Giorgio Agamben, *The Open, Man and Animal* (Stanford, CA, 2004).

3 Margaret Gatty, *Parables from Nature* (London, 1907), p. 268.

these various carnivalesque inversions of hierarchy are. I am also concerned to show the variety of ways in which the concept of hierarchy is deployed. Just as with ‘anthropomorphism’, so the term ‘hierarchy’ covers a number of different moves, and can be used in unusual ways – for instance, Mary Wollstonecraft is concerned to stress the lowly position of children, perhaps in order to elevate the position of women. Gender is an important aspect of the hierarchies deployed in these books. In some cases, woman writers identify with small, powerless creatures, while male writers celebrate large, powerful carnivores. On the other hand, Beatrix Potter’s domestic spaces are full of threat and violence, while Kenneth Grahame’s all-male animal world celebrates the cosy, womb-like homes of small animals.

The political and scientific contexts for these stories, with their anti-cruelty messages and their natural historical dimensions, encompass the rise of the animal protection movements, and the advent of evolutionary theory. The story of animal protection, and its adult literature, has been skilfully told by a number of writers: Barbara Gates, Hilda Kean, Christine Kenyon-Jones, Douglas Perkins, Brian Turner.⁴ Key dates are the founding of the SPCA (1824) which became the RSPCA in 1840, the first legislation to protect animals (1822), and the founding of Frances Power Cobbe’s anti-vivisectionist Victoria League (1876). [Chapter Three](#) charts the contribution of the animal autobiography to these movements, and the effectiveness of animal ‘voices’ in testifying against human cruelty. There is a change towards the end of the period from a concern with animal protection to a concern with conservation, shown in Thompson Seton’s work, and implicit in Potter’s and Grahame’s creation of separate animal ‘worlds’ worthy of conservation. Earlier texts too, however, use a natural theological framework to teach versions of what we would call ecological understanding. Natural theology uses the evidence of nature to demonstrate the existence and goodness of God. The scientific study of Nature was seen as part of this project.

The scientific framework of the stories moves from natural theology to a Darwinian evolutionary world, via some combinations of the two. Both natural theological and evolutionary frameworks, like anthropomorphism and hierarchical ordering, take a variety of forms in these books. Natural theology is investigated in [Chapter One](#), and the impact of evolutionary thought in [Chapters Four and Five](#). It is interesting that many of the writers were themselves naturalists: Margaret Gatty, Charles Kingsley, Ernest Thompson Seton, Beatrix Potter. The movement from natural theology to Darwinism does not produce as big a change as might be thought: writers still preserve some element of hierarchy, and they still cast the child as closer to nature than the adult. The ‘red in tooth and claw’ aspect of Nature was not discovered by evolutionists: both earlier and later writers are open about animal violence and suffering, and the exigencies of the food-chain. Similarly,

⁴ Barbara T. Gates, *Kindred Nature* (Chicago, IL and London, 1998); Hilda Kean, *Animals Rights* (London, 1998); Christine Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes* (Aldershot, 2001); David Perkins, *Romanticism and Animal Rights* (Cambridge, 2003); James Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast* (Baltimore, MD and London, 1980).

Romantic conceptions of Nature and childhood are not necessarily at variance with scientific evolutionism. Kingsley makes great use of Wordsworth in his synthesis of Darwinism and theology, and the impetus behind the Boy Scout movement, with its literary ties to the animal stories of both Kipling and Seton, has been characterised as a combination of Rousseauesque and Darwinian ideas. The implication of this combination of ideas in the ideologies of Empire and colonialism are investigated in [Chapter Five](#).

These children's animal stories, then, engage with some of the big issues of their day – nature, class, gender, empire – casting a new light on them, from a different perspective. They also offer different ways of representing animals and their relation to human beings that are of great relevance to current debates about animal rights, ecology and anthropomorphism. As children's books, they illuminate the ways children and their literature have been constructed by our culture in the past, and might make us question the way we now construct childhood and our assumptions about what is suitable or not for children's reading.

The structure of this book is both chronological and generic. In [Chapter One](#), I investigate the eighteenth-century context in which animals became a staple of an emerging children's literature. I consider a number of related topics: Lockean educational theory; the publishing history of children's books; the preceding traditions on which the earliest children's books drew; the natural theological context; attitudes to animals and children; ideas of sentimentalism and sensibility; Rousseau's ideas on education. Wherever possible I illustrate these ideas by reference to the many varied appearances of animals (not necessarily talking) in children's books of the time. John Newbery's *Goody Two-Shoes* combines Lockean educational ideas and entrepreneurship in the emergence of a separate children's literature, a development in which talking animals play a part. Samuel Pratt's *Pity's Gift* shows the structures and limits of sentimental attitudes to animals. Sarah Trimmer's *Easy Introduction* demonstrates the natural theological framework within which most children's animal stories took place. Thomas Day's *Sandford and Merton* combines Rousseauesque and Lockean approaches to animals and children, and foreshadows Kipling's *Jungle Books*. Mary Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories from Real Life* has a more conflicted attitude to Rousseau, and an interesting turn to the hierarchical scheme that usually accompanies animals in children's stories. Anna Barbauld and John Aikin's *Evenings at Home* exemplifies the range and eclecticism of children's animal stories at the end of the eighteenth century. The multi-faceted nature of Barbauld and Aikin's enterprise belies the Romantic critique of instructional children's literature, which Charles Lamb focuses on one of their dialogues about animals.

[Chapter Two](#) begins with a consideration of the founding text of this study, Sarah Trimmer's *Fabulous Histories*, later published as *The History of the Robins*. Trimmer inaugurates a tradition of talking animal stories that use the fabular to inculcate kindness to animals and to convey accurate natural historical information. At the same time, Trimmer and other writers in this tradition exhibit an anxiety that their child readers will be misled into thinking animals really can talk. This self-

consciousness about animal language as a literary device continues to haunt most nineteenth-century animal stories. Trimmer uses the device partly in order to amuse her readers, but also as a way of educating them into sympathy with animal's-eye views. This sympathy is sometimes at odds with the hierarchical arrangement the book puts forward, by which human dominion over the animals is justified. The second part of the chapter deals with two sets of comic animal poems for children from the beginning of the nineteenth century, which have been characterised as purely entertaining, as opposed to instructional works like Trimmer's. I argue that these poems do nevertheless, in what may seem a very incongruous way, endeavour to teach children about natural history, or to educate them into being kind to animals. Their strange mixture of the fantastic and the scientific, the anthropomorphic and the natural, provides an 'ancestry' for later works such as Kingsley's *Water Babies* and Beatrix Potter's *Tales*. The two sets of poems come out of different carnivalesque traditions, the eighteenth-century masquerade and the more populist 'World-turned-upside down' chapbooks. Both raise questions about the relation between carnival and hierarchy, and the alleged liberating effects of carnival for those at the bottom of a hierarchy – children and animals in this case.

Chapter Three focuses on a popular and numerous genre, the animal autobiography, which spans the whole of the period I am concerned with in this book. Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* is the only one of these texts remembered today, but it can usefully be seen as part of a long tradition. Mice, rats, donkeys, cats, dogs, all wrote their life stories. Explaining just how these come to be written, or 'translated', creates some problems for the human writers of these texts. The animal autobiography develops the anti-cruelty message of other eighteenth-century animal stories, inviting the reader to experience life from an animal's perspective. Children are addressed by these books, as they are considered effective agents in promoting the better treatment of animals, and at the same time they can learn lessons in good behaviour from the animals and their owners. In creating a subjectivity for their animal autobiographers, writers often draw on analogies with human types or classes: children, women, slaves and servants. The animal autobiography has much in common generically with the slave narrative, also an autobiographical account written as part of a campaign to change the law. Issues of testimony and witness are investigated here, in particular the courtroom analogy suggested by the phrase 'animal advocacy'. The analogy of animal and servant suggests a different way of reading these texts, not as testimony, but as testimonials to the respectability and faithful service of their animal speakers. In return, the animals are rewarded, like old servants, with a peaceful retirement.

The next chapter deals with Margaret Gatty's *Parables from Nature* and Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies*. Both writers use children's animal stories to debate evolutionary issues, Gatty attacking Darwin and Kingsley promoting a synthesis of Darwinian and theological thought. Neither is particularly interested in animal protection, or creating animal subjectivity. Instead, they use talking animals to convey natural historical information. Both writers were serious amateur naturalists, who nevertheless deploy parable, analogy and fairytale to convey their scientific and theological messages. Their books derive from both the serious, moral, semi-realistic

animal story, and the fantastic, grotesque, carnivalesque comic animal poem. Their stories are, however, not as rigorously child-directed as, for instance, Trimmer's *History of the Robins*. Writing for children provides them with the opportunity to debate momentous scientific issues of great interest to adults, and to deploy the attributes of the Romantic child to argue against materialistic science. They both engage with the Romantic and post-Romantic poetry of the time, Gatty striving to counteract the despair of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, and Kingsley making use of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Longfellow in support of his own polemic. Gatty appears to be a fierce supporter of social and natural hierarchy, but the animal's-eye perspectives she takes sometimes upset her hierarchical scheme, and introduce a barely controlled carnivalesque element. Kingsley unsettles hierarchy in a different way, through his promotion of the concepts of evolution and degeneration. Human individuals and also whole species can move up or down an evolutionary ladder. Both writers place their talking animals within a strongly maternalist vision of Nature.

Chapter Five concerns stories about wild animals – not the small wild creatures of the English countryside that concern Trimmer and Potter, but large, destructive beasts in exotic foreign locations that offer scope for masculine adventure and violence. Kipling produces his *Jungle Books* in the context of Empire, while Ernest Thompson Seton's stories are set on a colonial 'Frontier'. Both writers reveal Darwinian affinities, and I begin the chapter by tracing the ways in which the Romantic child is reconstituted as the evolutionary child by Darwin and others. Kipling, with his use of myth and fable, might seem at first not to belong to the tradition I am concerned to trace. But he too insists that his animal stories are modern and not 'superstitious', as opposed to the degraded native Indian variety. A comparison of the *Jungle Books* to *Man and Beast in India*, a book by Kipling's father, reveals both Kiplings busy at a demystifying task, purifying native beliefs of inaccuracies and distortions, preserving the poetic and childlike qualities of the 'primitive', while discarding what they see as its superstitious and childish elements. Kipling plays with the talking animal convention, developing the idea of a 'translation', while Seton claims to be translating actual animal noises into their real meanings. Seton became embroiled in a controversy about the accuracy of his animal stories, which raises questions about the methods of animal behaviour as a study. His work has much in common with the anthropomorphic and anecdotal method of Darwin and his follower George Romanes, a method discredited by subsequent behaviourists, but now being revalued. What is 'scientific' and what is 'childish' is not so easily decided.

The final chapter deals with Beatrix Potter's *Tales* and Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows*. Potter has some interesting connections back to eighteenth-century animal stories. She also, like Gatty, Kingsley and Seton, combines natural history expertise with her story-telling. The natural historical element of her stories is largely carried by her illustrations, while the tales themselves play with different degrees of anthropomorphism, involving animal speech, dress and behaviour. The dividing line between humans and animals is not clear. The 'world' that Potter creates is by no means Arcadian, and her stories do not purvey conventional morals or hierarchical messages. They are, however, strongly identified with a particular Lake District

location, which carries a conservationist implication. *The Wind in the Willows* takes the confusion of animals and humans even further, with animal characters who seem to change size in order to interact with the human world, driving cars, riding horses and catching trains, while at other times they are small creatures living in holes. Grahame is clearly influenced by the Romantic poets and their views of Nature: his animal speech emerges out of a 'talking', numinous landscape. The appearance of the god Pan not only helps to create this numinousness, but also represents an attempt at constructing a religion for and of animals. On another level, the story has been read as a political allegory, with the animals representing various classes. As such, it reinforces a hierarchical social structure, but it can also be read as a subversive hymn to pleasure, idleness and uselessness, in the face of mechanical efficiency and the destruction of the natural environment.

The Afterword concerns some recent discussions of anthropomorphism as a strategy for the animal rights movement, and as a teaching tool. In both cases, current concerns have been anticipated by the stories I investigate in this book.



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Chapter One

Animals in Eighteenth-Century Children's Books

The animal story was central to the rise of a separate children's literature in the eighteenth century, and was intimately linked to the progressive attitudes that prevailed in enlightened educational circles at that time. In order to understand how animal stories became such a staple of children's fiction, we must look first at the eighteenth-century context in which they arose. This will involve a brief consideration of a number of related topics: Lockean educational theory; the publishing history of children's books; the preceding traditions on which the earliest children's books drew; the natural theological context; attitudes to animals and children; ideas of sentimentalism and sensibility; Rousseau's ideas on education; and finally the many varied appearances of animals (not necessarily talking) in children's books of the time by writers such as Thomas Day, Mary Wollstonecraft, Anna Barbauld and John Aitkin.

Samuel Pickering confesses he was at first surprised to find eighteenth-century literature for children permeated not by religion, as he had anticipated, but by the ideas and influence of the philosopher John Locke.¹ While Locke too had his predecessors and influences, he can be credited with initiating a liberalisation in the way children were treated, and a new interest in their education and reading matter. In his influential *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), Locke had argued that the mind was formed by the association of ideas through experience. He opposed the concept of innate ideas, and, famously, saw the infant mind as a 'tabula rasa', a blank sheet on which ideas and habits could be inscribed. Locke's arguments were later taken up by more radical thinkers, such as Godwin and Hartley, and the young Wordsworth and Coleridge, but initially they were not seen as threatening to the status quo, and were adopted by orthodox and unorthodox alike. His theories have several consequences for children: childhood becomes very important, as the stage when the mind is most malleable; if there are no innate ideas, children are freed from the notion of original sin; education becomes crucial, and parents have a new responsibility to provide it; children's reading matter becomes a vital part of the mind-formation process; and it is necessary to amuse and to respect children in order that the proper associations of ideas can be formed. If instruction is linked to pain or force, it will not succeed.

¹ Samuel F. Pickering, *John Locke and Children's Books in Eighteenth-Century England* (Knoxville, TN, 1981).

In his *Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), Locke followed up these implications of his theory, and, interestingly, animals and literature about animals are seen as crucial to children's development. The only suitable reading matter for children he can find to recommend, is *Aesop's Fables*:

When by these gentle ways he begins to be able to *read*, some easy pleasant Book suited to his Capacity, should be put into his Hands, wherein the entertainment, that he finds, might draw him on, and reward his Pains in Reading, and yet not such as should fill his Head with perfectly useless trumpery, or lay the principles of Vice and Folly. To this purpose, I think, *Aesop's Fables* the best, which being Stories apt to delight and entertain a Child, may yet afford useful Reflections to a grown Man. Even better it has pictures – ; it will entertain him much the better, and encourage him to read, when it carries the increase of Knowledge with it.²

When Locke comes to consider the best way to learn Latin, he again recommends that 'the Fables of *Aesop*, the only Book almost that I know fit for Children, may afford them Matter for this Exercise of writing *English*, as well as for reading and translating to enter them in the *Latin* tongue.'³ Locke himself published a version of *Aesop*, with English and Latin parallel texts.

As well as recommending *Aesop*, Locke also links this reading matter to the treatment of actual animals. A passage in his *Letters to Edward Clarke on Education* (1684–91) laments children's cruelty to animals, and suggests ways of preventing it:

One thing I have observed in children, that when they have got possession of any poor creature, they are apt to use it ill, and they often torment and treat ill very young birds, butterflies, and such other poor things, which they get into their power, and that with a seeming of pleasure. This, I think, should be watched in them, and if they incline to any such cruelty they should be taught the contrary usage. For the custom of tormenting and killing of beasts will by degrees harden their minds even towards men, and they who accustom themselves to delight in the suffering and destruction of inferior creatures, will not be apt to be very compassionate or benign to those of their own kind ... I cannot but commend both the kindness and prudence of a mother I know, who was wont always to indulge her daughters when any of them desired dogs, squirrels, birds, or any such things, as young girls use to be delighted with. But then, when they had them, they must be sure to keep them well, and look well after them, that they want nothing, or were not ill-used.⁴

Here Locke uses what becomes a standard eighteenth-century argument against cruelty to animals: that it will lead on to cruelty to men. Animals provide a testing ground for benevolence and humanity. This passage in Locke is immediately followed by another recommendation of *Aesop* as reading matter, making the link

² James L Axtell (ed.), *The Educational Writings of John Locke* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 259.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

between animal fable and animals in the real world which is so much in evidence in texts like Fenn's *Fables* and Trimmer's *Fabulous Histories* (see pp. 37–39 below).

Why did Locke recommend Aesop so strongly? It seems that stories about animals, as natural beings, are to be preferred to superstitious fairy-tales, even if the animals do talk. The Fables also carry acceptable and useful morals about human life, combining instruction and delight. Locke, like many of the eighteenth-century writers for children, notes that children delight in animals, without speculating on why this might be so. Aesop was very popular – perhaps just because there was so little other reading matter for children. There were twenty-six English editions between 1647 and 1700.⁵ Mary Jackson and David Whitley have traced the history of Aesops in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, noting an increased adaptation to a child audience.⁶ As well as Locke's version, there is one by Samuel Richardson (1739), which Whitley calls 'a remarkable contribution to the emerging tradition of writing for children in its own terms', in the way it develops 'the potential of the fable to speak for and about children', by emphasising values of playfulness and curiosity in the morals drawn from the Fables.⁷ Whitley also reminds us of the political uses to which the Fables were put by different translators and editors: as we will see, political implications are not absent in later animal stories for children. Jackson remarks on the existence of many 'multipurpose' books, 'for example, pictorial Aesops that are also language texts; emblem works that might have been used as encyclopaedic books of knowledge'.⁸ This kind of heterogeneity is also very characteristic of later animal stories for children.

Jackson also points here to other traditional genres that contributed to the children's animal story: emblem books and bestiaries. Though the animals in these books do not talk, they are imbued with moral and religious meanings. The emblem books used pictures of animals to convey moral and religious allegories. They rest on a belief in the divine meanings encoded in natural phenomena: 'an Emblem is but a silent parable ... what are the heavens, the earth, nay, every creature, but Hieroglyphics and Emblems of his glory?' asks an address to the reader in a 1777 edition of Frances Quarles' *Emblems Divine and Moral* (1635). The editor worries about 'the pious education of youth' in an 'age of dissipation and levity'.⁹ He clearly expects his book to be read by the young. Quarles was republished in the nineteenth century too, and influenced Margaret Gatty's *Parables from Nature* which I will be discussing in [Chapter Four](#). Bestiaries were medieval forerunners of natural histories, consisting of 'illustrated catalogues or compendia of actual and fabulous beasts'.¹⁰ Their purpose was not scientific description or categorisation,

⁵ Ibid., p. 271, footnote 2.

⁶ Mary V. Jackson, *Engines of Instruction, Mischief, and Magic* (Lincoln, NB, 1989); David Whitley, 'Samuel Richardson's Aesop', in Mary Hilton and Morag Styles, (eds), *Opening the Nursery Door* (London, 1997), pp. 65–79.

⁷ Whitley, pp. 66, 76.

⁸ Jackson, p. 36.

⁹ Frances Quarles, *Emblems Divine and Moral* (London, 1777), pp. 11, iii–iv.

¹⁰ Harriet Ritvo, 'Learning from Animals', *Children's Literature* 13 (1985): 73.