

"Sire, I told you so! But you scorned my words and called me a fool. Now those words are proven true and it is your own reasoning that brought you to ruin. I was a fool to cry 'fox' before you had actually seen him. Now Reynard has you and bears you off. Alas! Misery! I shall die! For if I lose my lord and master, my honor too is lost forever!"

The good old woman of the manor opened the door to her yard, for it was evening, and she wished to put her hens back in the coop. "Come, Pinte, Bise, Rosette!" she called, but none of them answered. She wondered what was wrong, until she heard her cock yelling, as best he could, and saw the fox running off with him. She knew she couldn't catch them and raised a cry for help. All the peasants on the farm came running when they heard her bawling so. They asked her what was wrong.

"Alas," she sighed heavily, "what a wicked thing has happened!"

"But what is it?" they demanded.

"I have lost my rooster—the fox has him!"

"You foul old hag!" shouted Constantine. "Didn't you stop him?"

"Sire," she replied, "You do me wrong. By holy God, I couldn't catch him. He wouldn't wait for me."

"Why didn't you hit him?"

"I couldn't find a stick. But anyway, he ran so fast, a Breton hound couldn't have caught up with him."

"Where did he go?"

"That way."

And off the peasants ran in great haste, shouting, "Over there, he's over there!"

Reynard leaped through the hole in the palisade and bore the cock to earth with him, but the noise he made was heard by all. "After him!" Constantine shouted, and called his mastiffs: "Mauvoisin! Bar-dol! Travers! Humbaut! Rebors! After him! After Renard the Red!"

Now Chanteclere was in great peril if he didn't think of some trick. And so he said, "Lord Reynard, don't you hear the shameful things those peasants say? Constantine recognized you and called you all sorts of names. When he shouts, 'Reynard is stealing my rooster!' you should say, 'In spite of all your efforts!' There's nothing that would annoy him more."

No one is so wise that he can't be fooled sometime: Reynard had tricked all the world, but this time he himself was deceived. The peasants raised the cry again, and Reynard turned to shout back, "In spite of all your efforts! I'll steal him any time I please!"

But with these words, Chanteclere felt those terrible jaws go slack, and beating his wings with all his might, he flew into an apple-tree. Reynard sat down on a dung-heap below him, chagrined, enraged, tormented by the cock who had escaped. Chanteclere just laughed: "Reynard," he said, "how's the world treating you these days?"

The traitor shook with rage and in sheer bad humor said, "Cursed be the mouth that speaks when it should be silent."

"Amen, amen," said the rooster. "Yes, and I wish him every evil who

shuts his eyes and goes to sleep when he should stay awake. Cousin Reynard," he continued, "no one should ever trust you. Cursed be your cousinage! It almost ruined me. Reynard, you liar, get out of here! If you wait around, you'll lose your hide!"

Reynard was always very careful of his fur coat. He spoke not a word more, but turned at once and ran. Through the hedge beside the plain, straight down the road he fled. But his heart was heavy because of the rooster, who had escaped when he'd had him in his hands.

MACROBIUS

[On Dreams]†

* * *

After these prefatory remarks, there remains another matter to be considered before taking up the text of *Scipio's Dream*. We must first describe the many varieties of dreams recorded by the ancients, who have classified and defined the various types that have appeared to men in their sleep, wherever they might be. Then we shall be able to decide to which type the dream we are discussing belongs.

All dreams may be classified under five main types: there is the enigmatic dream, in Greek *oneiros*, in Latin *somnium*; second, there is the prophetic vision, in Greek *horama*, in Latin *visio*; third, there is the oracular dream, in Greek *chrematizmos*, in Latin *oraculum*; fourth, there is the nightmare, in Greek *enypnion*, in Latin *insomnium*; and last, the apparition, in Greek *phantasma*, which Cicero, when he has occasion to use the word, calls *visum*.

The last two, the nightmare and the apparition, are not worth interpreting since they have no prophetic significance. Nightmares may be caused by mental or physical distress, or anxiety about the future: the patient experiences in dreams vexations similar to those that disturb him during the day. As examples of the mental variety, we might mention the lover who dreams of possessing his sweetheart or of losing her, or the man who fears the plots or might of an enemy and is confronted with him in his dream or seems to be fleeing him. The physical variety might be illustrated by one who has overindulged in eating or drinking and dreams that he is either choking with food or unburdening himself, or by one who has been suffering from hunger or thirst and dreams that he is craving and searching for food or drink or has found it. Anxiety about the future would cause a man to dream that he is gaining a prominent position or office as he hoped or that he is being deprived of it as he feared.

Since these dreams and others like them arise from some condition or circumstance that irritates a man during the day and consequently

† From *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia UP, 1952), pp. 87-90. Copyright © 1952 Columbia University Press. Reprinted by permission of the publisher. Stahl's notes have been omitted.

As one bored with both singing and scratching, one eye open, the other shut, the cock at last flew up under the eaves and took his rest. Roosting there in delicious sleep, Chanteclere began to dream. (Now don't think I'm making this up—it's the whole truth, and you can find it written down.) He dreamed that something entered the courtyard, although it was securely locked, and came up to him, face to face. Chanteclere shuddered at this. The creature had a fur mantle of red and white, its collar trimmed in bone. Here Chanteclere tossed and turned in his sleep. Suddenly the cloak was wrapped about him, by force. And most strange, he was forced into it through the narrow collar, so that his head was at the creature's tail. Great was the pain that Chanteclere suffered for that dream, and he thought himself cursed in that vision. At last he struggled into wakefulness and heaved a sigh, saying "Holy Spirit, save my body from that prison, and keep me safe!" Off he rushed, no longer quite so secure, and came upon the hens, who pecked beside the hawthorn. He did not cry out to them at once, but called Pinte aside to take counsel with her first.

"Pinte," he said, for he trusted her, "I can't hide my sorrow and despair. And fear. I think some bird of prey or wild beast is going to harm us."

"Dear sweet lord," cried Pinte, "never say that aloud! For shame! You'll frighten us all. You betray yourself in saying you are afraid. By all the saints to whom we pray, you're like the dog who whines before the stone is cast. Why are you frightened? What's the matter with you?"

"You don't know," he answered, "what a strange dream I've had. It seemed to me there was an evil apparition within the enclosure of this very farm. That is why you see me pale and trembling. It seemed to me some animal came in, wearing a mantle of red fur, sown together without scissors or seam, trimmed in bone, all white and hard. He forced me to dress in his mantle, and I had to put it on over my head, collar first. When I awoke I was no longer wrapped up in fur, but I marvel still at the tightness of that collar, and at the tail that seemed to be in front of my face. That is why I despair. Pinte, I am tormented by this dream. By the loyalty you owe me, tell me, do you know what this signifies?"

Pinte, his trusted one, answered then, "You have told me your dream, but please God, it won't come true. If you wish an explanation of it, I know well what it is, for what you have seen while dreaming, that thing dressed in a red cloak—that is the fox. He's easily known by his red fur coat. The trim of bone, that was his teeth, by which he forced you inside him. The collar that did not fit, that was so horribly tight for you—that is the gullet of the beast, that's how you entered his belly. The tail means, no doubt—by all the saints in all the world—that when the fox has swallowed you, his tail will be before your nose! Now you know the meaning of your dream, God help me. Gold and silver can't save you. And it will all come to pass before high noon. But if you still don't believe me, take a look over there, for he lies in wait, quietly, in the cabbage patch, ready to betray and deceive you."

When Chanteclere had heard this interpretation of his dream, he

said, "Pinte, these are traitorous words! You say I'll be conquered by a beast who is even now inside our stockade. Cursed is the man who believes that! You've told me nothing I care to hear. No matter what, I won't believe I'll suffer for this dream."

"Sire," she answered, "God forbid it should be so, but I swear to you, if things don't turn out as I've predicted, I am no longer your true love."

"Oh, Pinte," said Chanteclere, "never mind!"

Chanteclere considered that interpretation a wild tale, and walked back to take his pleasure in his patch of dust, where he soon began to slumber again.

Meanwhile, Reynard had waited patiently and looked on, much amused. Once certain the cock had fallen asleep, Reynard crept up, one paw after another, soundlessly. If once the fox had Chanteclere in his teeth, he would make a meal of him. He longed for chicken dinner, but when he sprang, heavy-handed, he missed. While Chanteclere flew to the top of a dung-heap, well out of reach, Reynard cursed himself for failing. But at once the fox began again to plot a way to trick poor Chanteclere. If he did not eat that rooster, his time was wasted.

"Dear Chanteclere," he called, "don't fly away for this trifle. After all, you and I are first cousins, quite closely related."

Chanteclere gained confidence at this, and sang a little song for joy. Reynard said to his cousin, "Do you remember Chanteclin, your dear father, who begot you? No other cock could sing the way he did. The country folk miles away could hear him. When he sang, he took a good deep breath and closed his eyes tight. Ah, but his voice was grand. He wasn't always peering about him, when he let go in the pleasures of song."

"Reynard, cousin," said Chanteclere, "are you trying to pull a trick?" "Of course . . ." answered Reynard, "I am not. But now, please sing! Shut those eyes and go to it! You know we are of one flesh, one blood—and I would rather lose a leg than see you come to grief."

Said Chanteclere, "I don't believe you. Remove yourself a little way before I sing a song. There won't be a neighbor far or near who cannot hear my falsetto!"

Reynard smiled broadly: "Well, do it loudly, then! Sing, cousin! Let it be known you were born of my uncle Chanteclin."

The cock began quite loudly, letting out a terrific din, but with only one eye closed, and the other open, watching Reynard, whom he strongly suspected of mischief.

Reynard said, "This is nothing. Chanteclin sang far differently. He'd close his eyes tight and his great crowing could be heard for miles beyond the palisade."

Chanteclere at last believed him, and screwing his eyes up tight in the effort, he sent forth his melody. Reynard did not hesitate a moment, but seized the cock by the neck, and off he raced in high spirits, for he'd won his prey.

Pinte saw that Reynard had her love, and she fell into a frenzied despair when she saw the cock being carried off. She wailed after them,

of the evylle people and the argument of the im-probes.^o He techeth also to be humble and for to use wordes, and many other fayr ensamples re-herced and declared here after, the whiche I, Romulus, have translated oute of Grekes tongue in to Latyn tongue, the which yf thou rede them, they shalle agryse^o and sharp thy wytte and shal gyve to the cause of joye.

adorn

MARIE DE FRANCE

The Cock and the Fox†

This is the story of a cock, who was standing on a dunghill, singing. A fox came up alongside and spoke to him with pleasant words: "How very handsome you are, sir," he said. "I've never seen such a noble bird; you have the clearest voice of any creature. Except for your father, whom I knew well, no bird has sung better—but he was better at it than you, because he kept his eyes closed." "I can do it that way," said the cock. He flapped his wings and shut his eyes, thinking that he would sing all the more beautifully. The fox jumped, seized him, and fled toward the forest with him.

As the fox passed through a field, all the shepherds ran to catch him, and the dogs all around ran barking after him. So here is the fox holding the cock: he will lose what he's won if he comes too close to them. "Go ahead," the cock said, "call out to them that you've got me and will never let me go." The fox was determined to shout loudly, at which point the cock bolted out of his mouth and flew up to a tall trunk of a tree. When the fox realized what had happened, he knew he had been completely fooled by the cock's clever trickery. In vexation and sheer anger at himself he began to curse his own mouth for speaking when it should have been silent. The cock said in response: "I should do likewise: curse the eye that would close when it ought to keep watch and be alert that no evil comes to its lord."

This is how many foolish people act: they speak when they should be silent and stay silent when they should speak.

wicked

FROM LE ROMAN DE RENART, BRANCH 2†

How Chanteclere Makes a Fool of Reynard

It happened on a day that Reynard the Fox, well-versed in evil arts and guile, came trotting up to a farm set in the woods. The farm possessed many chickens, ducks, and geese. The lord of that land was Constantine of Noyes, a farmer of great wealth. His house was full to the bursting with fowl and bacon and salted meat. He also had plenty of grain set by, and the orchards bore their many and various fruits in season. It was here that Reynard came for his own amusement.

The courtyard was enclosed by a palisade of sharp oak stakes and spiny hawthorn, and there Sir Constantine had placed his hens, as in a kind of fortress. Reynard addressed himself to the palisade, but though his resourcefulness was great, the spines were sharper still. At last he squatted in the road, angry and upset, yet not wanting to abandon the hens. If he tried to leap the stockade wall, he would be seen, and the hens that pecked the dirt not two feet beyond would disappear. The fox paced angrily up and down, until he spied a broken stake. At once he plunged through the wall. Where the stockade was broken, the farmer had planted cabbages, and Reynard dropped down among them, hoping he had not been seen. But the chickens had heard the noise of his fall, and every one of them took flight.

Master Chanteclere the Cock, who had been scratching in a dusty path, came toward the band of chickens. Plumes spread and neck outstretched, he demanded haughtily why they had fled. Pinte of the Large Eggs, who roosted at the cock's right hand, was the wisest, and she told him what had happened: "We were all terrified," she said.

"But why?" the rooster demanded. "What have you seen?"

"Some kind of wild beast, who would have done great harm, if we hadn't fled the garden."

"I beg your pardon," Chanteclere replied, "but this is just a trifle. Don't worry yourself about it further."

"By my faith," said Pinte, "I loyally swear to you I saw him clearly."

"And how did you catch sight of whatever it was?"

"How? I saw the enclosure shake and the cabbage leaf tremble where he lies in wait."

"Pinte," exclaimed the cock, "you're a fool! I don't know of any fox or polecat strong enough to breach our walls. I promise you by the loyalty I owe you, there is nothing there. Go on back!" And the rooster returned to his dust.

He who fears nothing, except a dog or fox, will always be quite confident—as long as he thinks himself safe. And thus Chanteclere acted quite disdainfully, for he feared nothing but the fox.

† Translated for this volume by Elizabeth Hanson-Smith from *Le Roman de Renart*, ed. Ernest Martin (Strasbourg: Trübner, 1882), I, 91–104. For texts and translations of this and other sources of the *Narris Priest's Tale*, see Edward Wheatley's chapter in *Sources and Analogues of The Canterbury Tales*, Vol. I, ed. Robert M. Corrae and Mary Hamel (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002), pp. 449–89.

† Translated by Glending Olson from Marie de France, *Les Fables*, 2d ed., ed. and trans. Charles Brucker (Paris and Louvain: Peeters, 1998), pp. 238–41. For a complete text and English translation, see Marie de France, *Fables*, ed. and trans. Harriet Spiegel (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1987).

Ther nis no tong^o may telle in tale
 The joi^e that was at that bridale^o
 With menske^o and mirthe to mithe,^o
 For ther was al maner of gle^o
 That hert might think^e other eyghe se,^o
 As ye may list and lithe.^o

Heris,^o barouns hende and fre
 That ther war gadred^o of mani cuntre,
 That worthliche were^o in wede,^o
 That yoven glewemen^o for her gle
 Robes riche, gold, and fe.^o
 Her giftes were nought gnede.^o
 On the fiften^o day, ful yare,^o
 Thai toke her leve for to fare^o
 And thonked hem her gode dede.^o
 Than hadde Gii, that gentil knight,
 Feliis^o to his wil day and night,
 In gest also we rede.^o

tongue
 wedding party (lit., bride-ale)
 courtesy / to be seen
 music, entertainment
 or the eye see
 As it may please and soothe you

Earls
 Who were gathered there
 Who were nobly dressed
 They gave to the entertainers
 fee (payment)

stingy
 fifteenth / fully prepared
 journey
 i.e., for their hospitality

Felice
 As we read in the story

The Nun's Priest's Prologue and Tale

Beast fables were popular throughout the Middle Ages. The preface to William Caxton's translation of Aesop's fables provides a summary of conventional views about the genre and its purposes. Sometime around 1200 Marie de France wrote a collection of fables in Anglo-Norman; one of them, "The Cock and the Fox," tells the story that is the nucleus of the *Nun's Priest's Tale*. For the expansion of fable into beast-epic, Chaucer knew of the tales of Reynard the Fox, which circulated widely in France and elsewhere. Robert A. Pratt has argued that the confrontation of Reynard and Chanteclere in branch 2 of the *Roman de Renart* is one of Chaucer's direct sources. The learned and mock-heroic inflations of the *Nun's Priest's Tale* derive from many places; we include Macrobius's authoritative chapter on dreams and Geoffrey of Vinsauf's rhetorical lament on the death of King Richard I. The courtly elements of Chaucer's story may even have been suggested by the encyclopedic tradition, as may be seen in a portion of Bartholomaeus Anglicus's description of the cock, here printed in John of Trevisa's fourteenth-century English translation.

WILLIAM CAXTON From Aesop's Fables[†]

[Book I]

Here begy^meth the preface or prologue of the fyrst book of Esope.

I, Romulus, son of Thybere¹ of the cyte of Atyque,^o gretynge. Esope, man of Grece, subtyll and ingenyous, techeth in his fables how men ought to kepe and rewle them^o well. And to th'ende that he shold shewe the lyf and customes of al maner of men, he induceth^o the byrdes, the trees and the beestes spekyng, to th'ende that the men may knowe wherfore the fables were found.^o In the whiche he hath wretton the malyce

Athica

themselves

introduces

invented

† Text based on Caxton's 1484 edition as printed in *The Fables of Aesop*, ed. Joseph Jacobs, 2 vols. (London: David Nutt, 1889), 2.3.

1. Tiberius. The "Romulus" version of Aesop's fables circulated widely in the Middle Ages; the author is unknown, but it was certainly not the Roman emperor's son.