

Bibliotekarstudentens nettleksikon om litteratur og medier

Av Helge Ridderstrøm (førsteamanuensis ved OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet)

Sist oppdatert 28.11.25

Om leksikonet: https://www.litteraturogmedieleksikon.no/gallery/om_leksikonet.pdf

Fabel

(_sjanger) Ordet “fabel” kan ha mange betydninger, og blant annet være en sjangerbetegnelse. Det er korte eksempel-fortellinger på vers eller prosa, ofte belærende eller kritiserende (Arnold og Sinemus 1983 s. 287).

“[T]he fable endows animals (or sometimes vegetable and mineral objects) with human capabilities” (Reid 1977 s. 36). Sjangeren fabel er en kort fortelling som ender med en “moral”, dvs. en moraliserende, allmenngyldig innsikt eller påstand i form av et ordtak, leveregel eller lignende). En fabel er en allegori som viser/illustrerer en moralsk sannhet og kan derfor oppfattes som en pedagogisk tekst (Reboul 2009 s. 154). Fabelens forteller er ofte resignert (Reboul 2009 s. 159). Hensikten med teksten er ikke primært underholdning, men belæring. Fabler kan fungere som tekst-gåter der tilhøreren eller leseren skal skjønne en dyp betydning av teksten.

En fabel er “a brief story illustrating a moral. Unlike the parables, fables often include talking animals or animated objects as the principal characters. The interaction of these animals or inanimate things reveals general truths about human nature, i.e., a person can learn practical lessons from the fictional antics in a fable. However, the lesson learned is not allegorical. Each animal is not necessarily a symbol for something else. Instead, the reader learns the lesson as an *exemplum* – an example of what one should or should not do.” (Bonaventure Balla i https://web.cn.edu/kwheler/documents/Parable_Allegory.pdf; lesedato 06.10.22)

Fabelen skal gi lytteren eller leseren en “lærdom”, og er slik sett en didaktisk (belærende, moralsk oppdragende) sjanger. Teksten fungerer som en slags gåte, der fortelleren eventuelt til slutt avslører svaret. Gåten er aldri så vanskelig å finne “svar på” som noen allegorier kan være. Både fabler og parabler/lignelser er former for allegorier. I de fleste fabler er det dyr som er aktører, men det kan også være mennesker, mytiske skikkelser og menneskeliggjorte abstrakter/kvaliteter i fortellingene (Arnold og Sinemus 1983 s. 287). I tillegg til dyr kan det det være mennesker, guder, snakkende planter og gjenstander (Atzbach 1975 s. 5). I fabler blir

ofte dyr “allegoriske kroppsliggjøringer av moralske verdier” (Lehmann og Wulff 2016 s. 10). Dyrene har bestemte sosiale egenskaper og kan kroppsliggjøre funksjoner i samfunnet, f.eks. den sterke løven som konge (Arnold og Sinemus 1983 s. 288).

Fabler kan formidle noe uforanderlig ved verden, f.eks. at de små utnyttes av de store (Bausinger 1968 s. 216). Fabler har blitt oppfattet som rådgivende tekster for hvordan man kan klare seg i et urettferdig og brutalt samfunn.

En fabels “moral” kan ha preg av ordtak (Bausinger 1968 s. 216). “In fable collections, the promythium and epimythium are short explanatory texts outside the frame of the fable narrative, addressing the reader, typically having no literary continuity with the world of the story. When it appears before (pro) the fable (mythos) begins, it is a promythium, and when it follows (epi) the fable [it is an epimythium]. [...] the plural forms are promythia and epimythia, respectively. [...] These framing devices – the promythium and epimythium – are tightly associated with the fable genre. As far back as the evidence of Greek literature can take us, the epimythium was already a fixed element of the form when fables begin to appear in the archaic Greek period. While fables without a promythium or epimythium are common enough, when one of the framing devices appears, it is a straightforward genre indicator that a given text is a fable.” (Justin David Strong i <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/id/e639d128-bf94-4c43-9788-ea2bd708fd9d/externalcontent.pdf>; lesedato 30.11.23)

“The function of the promythium was to index the fable under the heading of its moral application for the convenience of a writer or speaker who would consult the fablerepertoire for the purpose of finding a fable that would illustrate an idea that he wished to express effectively. In contrast to the promythium, the epimythium appears as early as Hesiod’s epic to tell the “moral of the story.” In narratives, the epimythium is normally used to make explicit how the fable applies to whatever is taking place in the narrative context. In the fable collections, where there is no overarching narrative to impose a context-bound limit on how it applies, any number of moral applications could be drawn out from a fable. In every context, the epimythium provides the bridge between the fable storyworld and the world in which it is told, making explicit the desired takeaway.” (Ben Edwin Perry gjengitt fra <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/id/e639d128-bf94-4c43-9788-ea2bd708fd9d/externalcontent.pdf>; lesedato 30.11.23)

“In the collections, the conclusions contained in an epimythium may be broken down into two main categories: first are morals that explain “the way things are,” that is, the natural order. The second class of epimythia are those that attempt to influence the reader’s behavior. The way the fable is supposed to exert this influence can be of two different sorts: the negative and the positive. The more prevalent of the two are cautionary fables that provide negative examples to warn against certain behaviors or

character traits, which are explicated in the epimythium. The other direction of influence is the positive example, exhorting the reader to emulate the behavior of one of the characters, with a particular trait or virtue extolled in the epimythium.

Especially when more than one moral is appended, it is also possible for a third type: the commendation of one character with the exhortation for the reader to emulate them, alongside the condemnation of the other character, warning the reader against their behavior by way of their negative example.” (Justin David Strong i https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/id/e639d128-bf94-4c43-9788-ea2bd708fd9d/external_content.pdf; lesedato 30.11.23)

Menneskelige egenskaper blir overført som dominerende egenskaper ved dyr: sluhet (rev), forfengelighet (påfugl), dumhet (esel), flid (maur), brutalitet (ulv), uskyldighet (lam), styrke (elefant) osv., og også når det gjelder sosial posisjon i samfunnet (løven som hersker) (Atzbach 1975 s. 4-5). Dyrene kroppsliggjør bestemte egenskaper, og valget av dyr til en fabel er ofte nok til å skape bestemte forventninger til handlingen. Men “A good parable has countless meanings” (Rabkin 1973 s. 23).

Fabelsjangeren kan brukes til å lage didaktiske/belærende fortellinger som ikke virker formanende på grunn av den underholdende historien (Lange m.fl. 1998 s. 34). Dyr speiler menneskers liv. Fortellingen gir lytteren eller leseren moralsk visdom i dyreforkledning. Fablenes moral fungerer som leveregler (eller overlevelsesregler) og kan enten formidle nødvendigheten av å tilpasse seg verden slik den faktisk er, eller uttrykke kritisk (eller satirisk) motstand mot det bestående (Arnold og Sinemus 1983 s. 288).

“The fable had been didactic in nature from the beginning [...] The didacticism, naturally never far from the fable at least before the twentieth century and the modern parodies of the form” (Pack Carnes i https://archive.org/stream/renaissanceref20victuoft/renaissanceref20victuoft_djvu.txt; lesedato 09.09.24).

Det er konflikter mellom de sterke og de svake, de mektige og de maktesløse. I noen fabler samler dyrene seg for å avsi en dom. Typisk for fabler er at de små og svake ofte takket være sin klokskap og karakterstyrke triumferer over de sterke og mektige. Sluttsituasjonen kan dermed være motsatt av slik fabelen begynte (<https://www.lernhelfer.de/schuelerlexikon/deutsch-abitur/artikel/fabel>; lesedato 20.02.20).

Ofte i fabler møter to dyr hverandre, der den ene synes å ha et klart overtak på den andre. Den ene kan skryte av f.eks. sin styrke og høye posisjon, mens den andre virker svak og uten evne til å hevde seg. På grunn av en uventet hendelse, eller et tredje dyr som dukker opp, snus rollene om: Den høye blir den lave og omvendt. Løven kan trenge musa for å overleve.

Moralen som kommer til slutt, det som tilhørerne/leserne skal “lære”, får en slags begrunnelse fra den foregående fortellingen (Atzbach 1975 s. 5). Det kan dreie seg om hendelser som mennesker i antikken og middelalderen ikke kunne snakke direkte om, på grunn av maktforholdene og undertrykkelsen i samfunnet. Forhold mellom mennesker ble overført til dyreverdenen og ble slik mer anskuelige og opprettholdt en avstand til det samfunnet som lytterne faktisk tilhørte. Det beskyttet også fortelleren, som kunne uttale noen ubehagelige sannheter uten å føle seg truet av maktpersoner (Atzbach 1975 s. 6).

Stoffet og historien er vanligvis ikke tidsfestet eller knyttet til et bestemt geografisk sted. Det som fortelles er ikke primært noe unikt, snarere noe typisk.

“To distinguish more clearly [mellom fabel, allegori og lignelse] we can take the old Arab fable of the frog and the scorpion, who met one day on the bank of the River Nile, which they both wanted to cross. The frog offered to ferry the scorpion over on his back provided the scorpion promised not to sting him. The scorpion agreed so long as the frog would promise not to drown him. The mutual promises exchanged, they crossed the river.

On the far bank the scorpion stung the frog mortally.

“Why did you do that?” croaked the frog, as it lay dying.

“Why?” replied the scorpion, “We’re both Arabs, aren’t we?”

If we substitute for a frog a “Mr. Goodwill” or a “Mr. Prudence,” and for the scorpion “Mr. Treachery” or “Mr. Two-Face,” and make the river any river and substitute for “We’re both Arabs ...” “We’re both men ...” We turn the fable (which illustrates human tendencies by using animals as illustrative examples) into an allegory (a narrative in which each character and action has symbolic meaning). On the other hand, if we turn the frog into a father and the scorpion into a son (boatman and passenger) and we have the son say “We’re both sons of God, aren’t we?”, then we have a parable (if a rather cynical one) about the wickedness of human nature and the sin of parricide.” (J. A. Cuddon m.fl. gjengitt fra https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/documents/Parable_Allegory.pdf; lesedato 06.10.22)

“[T]here may be a darker side to the tradition of using the fables to educate; as part of so many people’s childhood reading the fables are at “the very roots of that kind of humanisation which turns animals into facets of human character.” [...] Most such animal characters serve to displace human vices (as well as virtues) onto animals so that they can be confronted, examined, and satirized from a safe distance.” (Bousé 2000 s. 92)

“We identify ourselves [...] with the small animal being pursued, and we recognize our essential kinship to the world of the animal. At the same moment, as reasoning human beings, we stand apart from and above the animal world. It is perhaps this simultaneous double focus – our sense of both identification and spectatorship – which constitutes for us the comic discrepancy. Thus our animal heroes and villains appear with both factual and symbolic implications; and it is largely the latter which may provide the essential impulse for our laughter. [...] Obviously the fables, like the fabliaux of the Middle Ages, present a human world in terms of an animal world.” (Dauner 1948)

Vanligvis overholdes tidens, stedets og handlingens enhet. Dramatiske hendelser framstilles ofte gjennom dialog, eller gjennom handling (løven sparer musas liv) og “mothandling” (musa redder løvens liv). Handlingen kan ifølge Reinhard Dithmar i boka *Fabel* (1971) ofte reduseres til skjemaet: Situasjon – aksjon (tale/handling) – reaksjon (“mottale”/“mothandling”) – resultat.

Fablene kan virke illusjonsløse (Atzbach 1975 s. 7). Det kan være noe bittert og nedslående ved deres budskap.

“The Fable has always been a popular mode of conveying certain kinds of instruction. The brief and simple illustrations it affords give additional weight and point to moral apothegms or sententious criticisms. [...] A pertinent fact or an apt fiction breathes, even into a dry and curt axiom, a living and practical interest which opens to it hearts and heads that would otherwise pass it by with indifference, or revolt from it with impatience. Many of these unpretending allegories have been familiar to us all, in childhood, in a great variety of dresses, and have long formed a standard part of our literature – congenial alike to nursery days and to mature age.” (G. H. Devereux i <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/39640/39640-h/39640-h.htm>; lesedato 03.04.20)

Den greske dikteren Hesiod levde på 700-tallet f.Kr. I hans *Verk og dager* er det integrert en fabel: “In what is generally agreed to be the earliest attestation of a fable in Greek literature, we read about a hawk that has just captured another bird. The fable is embedded in the Hesiodic *Works and Days*, lines 202-212, where the captor is boastfully saying to his captive that he has the power to do anything with his prey. Since the hawk is a predatory bird, we can already guess what he will say next in the story. And he does say it: *I have the power to devour you*. [...] the hawk is like a predatory strongman, feasting on the lives of his fellow humans – since he has power over them. [...] a hawk captures a nightingale – who is described as a lamenting *aoidos*, ‘singer’. The capture is successful because the hawk is more powerful – or so he claims at lines 206, 207, 210, and that is why he has the ultimate power of devouring his prey, as indicated at line 209. The points of reference here are evident: For ‘hawk’, read ‘king’. For ‘nightingale’, read ‘poet’ as the singer of tales. [...] the

hawk/king who threatens to devour the lamenting nightingale/poet as proof of his power is utterly disqualified as an exponent of *dikē*, ‘justice’.” (Gregory Nagy i <https://classical-inquiries.chs.harvard.edu/on-a-fable-about-the-hawk-as-a-strongman/>; lesedato 02.11.20) Falken forklarer at en svak skapning ikke bør gjøre motstand, for det legger kun skam til skade.

“In the ancient Greek poem “Works and Days,” Hesiod (ca. 800 B.C.) offers to a certain Perses a compilation of rustic wisdom and prophetic statements, discussions of the seasons, advice on marriage, and suggestions on how to avoid offending the gods. Relatively early in the poem, Hesiod includes a fable. He states:

And here’s a fable for kings, who’ll not need it explained:
It’s what the hawk said high in the clouds
As he carried off a speckle-throated nightingale
Skewered on his talons. She complained something pitiful,
And he made this high and mighty speech to her:
“No sense in your crying. You’re in the grip of real strength now,
And you’ll go where I take you, songbird or not.
I’ll make a meal of you if I want, or I might let you go.
Only a fool struggles against his superiors.
He not only gets beat, but humiliated as well.”
Thus spoke the hawk, the windlord, his long wings beating. (235-45)

Presumably the oldest recorded fable in European literature, Hesiod’s tale of the hawk and the nightingale, which follows a discourse on the five ages of humankind, clearly illustrates the genre and its didactic context.” (William F. Hodapp i Kline 2003 s. 12-13)

“In his influential commentary on Cicero’s *Dream of Scipio*, Macrobius argues for the philosophical value of certain types of fables. He writes, “Fables ... serve two purposes: either merely to gratify the ear or to encourage the reader to good works” (1.2.7). Fables that serve the latter purpose, he continues, “draw the reader’s attention to certain kinds of virtue” (1.2.9). This didactic aim most often comes to mind when we think of fable as genre. As suggested by Hesiod’s hawk and the nightingale, the fable is typically a brief narrative in verse or prose that either implicitly or explicitly offers a moral or pithy message. Characters are usually animals, inanimate objects, or personifications that behave like humans, or they are human types, such as the Old Man or the Youth.” (William F. Hodapp i Kline 2003 s. 13)

Aesop “legend has it was a freed slave from Samos living in the sixth century B.C. [...] While Aesop, if he was indeed an actual person, probably never wrote down his

stories, several later Greek writers published fable collections that purported to be from him. In particular, Demetrius of Phalerum, writing in the fourth century B.C., composed a collection of fables in Greek prose that, according to H. J. Blackham, “seems to have been Aesop for the classical world” (7).” (William F. Hodapp i Kline 2003 s. 13-14)

Aesops fabler med deres avsluttende ordtaklignende moral framstår som korte allegorier. Aesops fabler handler om vanlige mennesker i en hard og til tider brutal virkelighet. Perspektivet og sympatien ligger hos de svake og undertrykte, men uten noe stort opprørspotensial; snarere er det list og gode ideer som trengs for å klare seg (Barner m.fl. 1981 s. 223). Det er en glidende overgang mellom dyreeventyr og fabler (Woeller og Woeller 1994 s. 173). Dyreskikkelsene egner seg godt til å vise fram “animalske” sider ved mennesket (Reboul 2009 s. 159). I Aesops verden “er det aldri bra å være misfornøyd med sitt liv” (Bessières 2011 s. 66). (Navnet Aesop fornorskes ofte til Æsop, og skrives også Esop.)

Hvis det stemmer at Aesop var en slave fra Frygia i Lilleasia, kan det sies å være betydningsfullt at hans fabler har oppstått i en konkret situasjon med ufrihet og undertrykkelse (Lange m.fl. 1998 s. 35), og kanskje med tekstene som protest mot ulike former for urettferdighet. Aesop er på parti med de maktesløse i samfunnet og framstiller de mektige som stormannsgale, maktbegjærlige, hyklerske og brutale. Maktmennesker blir i fablene minnet om sin dyriskhet (Fritz Dichtl i <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/35096854.pdf>; lesedato 15.12.20). Reinhard Dithmar oppfatter fabelsjangeren som samfunnskritisk og “en språkform for kritisk tenkning” (sitert fra Lange m.fl. 1998 s. 37).

“Ben Edwin Perry’s *Aesopica* [1952] remains the definitive edition of all fables reputed to be by Aesop. The volume begins traditionally with a life of Aesop, but in two different and previously unedited Greek versions, with collations that record variations in the major recensions. It includes 179 proverbs attributed to Aesop and 725 carefully organized fables, for which Perry also provides their eldest known sources. To better evaluate the place of Aesop in literary history, Perry includes testimonies about Aesop made by Greek and Latin authors, from Herodotus to Maximus Planudes.” (<https://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/?id=c031922>; lesedato 23.09.24)

Den greske filosofen Sokrates ble dømt til døden for sine kritiske tanker. Han tilbrakte sine siste timer blant annet med å lage vers-versjoner av noen av Aesops fabler og reflektere over en tenkt fabel: “Socrates composed the night before a hymn to Apollo and versified some Aesopic fables as a response to a dream that he had. [...] 60c1-7: “And it seems to me that if Aesop had thought on these two [i.e. pleasure and pain], he would have composed a fable, saying that god wanted to reconcile these two that

fought each other and since he could not achieve this, he fastened their heads and therefore [since then] whenever one of them appears to someone the other follows after. This is exactly the case with me, because first I felt the pain from the fetters after my release from them, but now it seems that pleasure has followed.” So here stands the master at his very last moments, when his pupils are anxious to grasp every word he utters, and he thinks of Aesop and conceives an aetiological fable to explicate his feelings, starring a surreal creature that reminds us of Aristophanes’ androgynon in the Symposium. As for its generic references, Socrates’ fable meets perfectly both the narrative patterns of Aesopic fables [...] The implied message here is that being a philosopher, Socrates can overcome such sentimental turbulences, contrary to the common man who listened to Aesop’s fables.” (Christos A. Zafiroopoulos i https://digilib.phil.muni.cz/bitstream/handle/11222.digilib/118197/1_GraecoLatinaBrunensia_16-2011-2_14.pdf; lesedato 02.11.20)

“I Vesten og vidare har somme fablar ofte blitt knytt til Esop (Æsop). Det er svært lite vi kan seie for sant om Esop, dersom han fanst. Han kan ha levd på 500-talet før vår tidsrekning. Dei fleste “esopsfablane” er eigentleg ikkje av han, men somme kan ha vore det. Om Esop blir det også sagt at han ikkje skreiv ned nokon fablar sjølv. Og dei som har komme til oss ifrå oldtida, er resultat av mange sitt arbeid. Jamvel Sokrates sysla med å forme om fablar til vers mens han sat i fengsel og venta på å døy. Den atenske filosofen Demetrius Phalereus tilverka den første Esopsamlinga om lag 300 fvt. (= før vår tidsrekning, f.Kr.), og slaven Phaedrus (Fedrus) imiterte dei på latin, og så bra at keisar Augustus let han bli fri mann for det. Talekunnige og filosofar var vane med å bruke fablane til å øve seg i å finne moralske hovudpoeng, og innbaud lærde til ordskifte om moralane i dei. Somme esopsfablar syner seg å vere eldre enn frå Esop si tid. Og mange andre esopsfablar stammar frå tida etter Esop, mellom anna frå munkar i Mellomalderen (ca. 500 e.Kr.-1500 e.Kr.). I nesten sju hundre år forsvann fablane frå det danna selskap, men på 1300-talet laga ein lærd, gresk munk i Konstantinopel (Istanbul i dag) – Maximus Planudes (1260- ca.1330) – ei samling med rundt 150 fablar i prosa. [...] I 1610 gav den lærde sveitsaren Isaac Nicholas Nevelet ut den tredje trykte utgåva med fablar i boka *Mythologia Aesopica*. Han tok med Planudes sine fablar og 136 andre frå andre kjelder, som også var Vatikanmanuskript. Førte fablar blir tillagt Aphthonius frå rundt 315 e. Kr. i Antiokia, og førtitre er tillagt Babrius. Nesten ingenting er kjent om han, men han samla mange av fablane som er kjent som Esopsfablar i dag. Nevelet-samlinga inneheld dessutan dei latinske versjonane av fablane etter Phaedrus (Fedrus), Avienus og andre i oldtida. Takk vere Nevelet-samlinga har Esop ry som klok moralist, og fablane har i hundrevis av år vore “lest mest i Vest”, nest etter bibelen, og dessutan omsett til mange språk.” (Tormod Kinnes i <http://oaks.nvg.org/esinnl.html>; lesedato 25.10.18)

Grekeren Babrios og romeren Phaedrus skrev Aesops fortellinger om til versefortellinger. Den første fabelsamlingen som ble utgitt under Aesops navn var en “tilbake-oversettelse” av disse versene til latinsk prosa (Atzbach 1975 s. 6).

Phaedrus kom antakelig til Roma som slave ved keiser Augustus’ hoff og ble frigitt av han. I prologen til det tredje bindet av hans fabelutgivelser skriver han at det en slave ikke våger å si åpent, kan han utforme som en fabel (gjengitt fra <http://strebersdorf.historicus.at/Realien/Fabeldichtung.pdf>; lesedato 21.09.20). Augustus’ sin arvtaker, keiser Tiberius, mente likevel at Phaedrus gjennom en av sine fabler hadde fornærmet en embetsmann, men det er usikkert om Phaedrus på grunn av dette ble landsforvist eller fikk skriveforbud. Den første samlede utgaven av hans fabler kom i år 1596.

Babrius (eller Babrius) var en italiensk-gresk fabeldikter som levde på overgangen til 100-tallet e.Kr., antakelig i Syria. Det er bevart 123 av hans fabler i håndskriftet *Codex Athous*, som i 1842 ble funnet i klosteret på fjellet Athos i det nordlige Hellas (<http://www.fabelnundanderes.at/babrius.htm> ; lesedato 20.02.20).

I 1975 oversatte Mentz Schulerud 143 av Aesops fabler til norsk, utgitt på Schibsted forlag. De 30 første fablene i denne utgivelsen er:

“Løveklo og musetann”

“Eselet og saltet”

“Lerken”

“Leoparden og reven”

“Den gamle konen og tjenestepikene”

“Haren og jakthunden”

“Løven som var forelsket”

“Gutten som falt i vannet”

“Eselet og helgenbildet”

“Papegøyen og katten”

“Varmt og kaldt”

“De løse hundene”

“Det ulydige eselet”

“Vandrerne og lønnetreet”

“Doktor Ulv”

“Reven og gamle hønemor”

“Ulven og tranen”

“Astronomen”

“Løven, hanen og elefanten”

“Reven og druene”

“Biene og vepsen”

“Gårdshunden og ulven”
“Hornblåseren”
“Løven og oxen”
“Reven og storken”
“Eiketreet og sivet”
“Gutten og neslen”
“Reven og løven”
“Den syke løven”
“Eselets skygge”

En av Aesops fabler handler om ei flue som faller ned i en gryte full av kjøtt, og som før den dør sier: “Jeg kan spise, drikke, vaske meg, bade av hjertens lyst. Hvilken rolle spiller døden nå!” Fabelens moral er at døden er lett å godta når den kommer mildt, men denne moralen er tvetydig. Kan fluas ord oppfattes ironisk: at det er en svakhet av folk lettere å godta døden når den ikke er smertefull? Er det et slags bedrag? Eller skal fluas ord tas som en klok oppfatning av å dø uten nytteløse protester og heller være glad for at det skjer uten lidelse? (Renault 2013 s. 58)

Dyrefabler har gjennom tidene vært et middel til å skrive delvis skjult kritikk av samfunnsinstitusjoner. I middelalderens dyrefabler kunne maktmennesker være forkledd som dyr. Et esel kunne ha likhetstrekk med en prest i sin oppførsel, og en glupsk og farlig ulv kunne fungere som representant for adelen i all sin griskhet. Fabler kan også være ideologiske forsvar for sitt eget samfunnssystem, slik som i stalinisten Sergej Vladimirovich Mikhalkovs satiriske dyrefabler.

I det første århundret e.Kr. publiserte romeren Phaedrus – som etter eget utsagn hadde vært keiser Augustus’ slave – fem bøker med fabler, delvis versifiserte versjoner av kjente fabelmotiver fra Aesop. I senantikken ble det utgitt fabelsamlinger av Babrios (2. århundre e.Kr.), Avianus (4. århundre e.Kr.) og Romulus (også 4. århundre e.Kr.). Romeren Avianus’ samling er mest gjendiktninger av greske fabler, men samlingen ble viktig som skolebok. Romulus sin samling er den eneste samlingen av latinske prosafabler (Barner m.fl. 1981 s. 216).

Fabler ble brukt i de romerske skolene i grammatiske og stilistiske øvinger og for moralfilosofisk refleksjon. Tekstene ble altså brukt både i retorisk og etisk øyemed (Barner m.fl. 1981 s. 223). I 1747 ble det i Tyskland utgitt en versjon av Aesops fabler som inneholdt metodiske tips for lærere. I denne boka ble det anbefalt at skoleelevene skulle lære fablene utenat, slik at tekstenes moral så å si ble morsmelk for dem. Den antikke retorikk-eksperten Quintilian (1. århundre e.Kr.) beskriver skolens språkopplæring slik den foregikk i hans samtid: “Læreren leste opp en fabel, gjerne av Æsop. Hver setning ble analysert og fortolket. Elevene gjengav så fabelen i en

passende språkdrakt. Slik fikk de øvelse i å huske og gjengi noe, og å variere noe. De skulle merke seg elementære innholdsmessige og formelle forskjeller: F.eks. mellom dyrefabler og andre, mellom fabler med og uten direkte tale, mellom fabler der det moralske poenget blir formulert innledningsvis, og der det kommer til slutt. De lærte seg at det var mange måter å gjøre tingene på, og at hver måte fulgte et mønster og hadde et navn.” (professor Øivind Andersen i *Norsklæreren: Tidsskrift for språk og litteratur*, nr. 3 i 1998, s. 9)

Den franske forfatteren Charles Perrault ga kong Ludvig 14. råd i forbindelse med en labyrint i Versailles-hagen. Labyrinten skulle være til ære for både kongen og fabeldikteren Aesop. Det ble lagd fontener med dyr fra Aesops fabler, og vannspruten fra deres munn simulerte at dyrene snakket med hverandre. Perrault skrev en guidebok til labyrinten i 1677, da arbeidet med byggingen var ferdig.

Det buddhistiske verket *Jataka* fra ca. 500 f.Kr. handler om Buddhas mange liv, og om dyr han møter. I en av historiene fortelles det om rasende slaver som kaster en ond prins i sjøen. Han redder seg opp på en flytende trestamme. Der søker også en slange og en rotte tilflukt. I sine tidligere liv har de vært gjerrige handelsmenn og må nå i dyreskikkelser bøte for sine synder. En papegøye kommer og setter seg på tømmerstokken. Så kommer Buddha forkledd som en eneboer og redder både dyrene og mannen. Slangen og rotta takker eneboeren og vil gi han av sine skatter. Papegøyen vil gi han velsmakende ris. Prinsen blir rasende fordi eneboeren behandler dyrene så godt. Han lover hyklersk å gi eneboeren de fire tingene som mennesket trenger for å leve, men først må han bestige tronen sin som konge. Når han har blitt konge, lar han eneboeren piske. I hvert av hjørnene der eneboeren blir slått, sier han et vers som handler om det som hendte med prinsen og dyrene på tømmerstokken. Slik blir sannheten kjent, kongen blir drept, og eneboeren innsatt som konge.

De indiske eventyrene og dyrefablene i samlingen *Panchatantra* (trolig fra 200-tallet e.Kr.) ble skrevet på sanskrit. På 1200-tallet oversatte Johann von Capua noen av historiene til latin, og dermed kunne de spre seg i Europa og påvirke europeisk fortellertradisjon (Woeller og Woeller 1994 s. 136).

“In the year 570 CE [Common Era], a Persian physician named Burzoy or Burzoya (Burzawayh in Arabic) living in the Sassanid kingdom of Persia travelled to India in search of a book of wisdom: a book greatly sought by then King of Persian Khusroy I (Anoshagruwa or “the immortal”) who ruled from 531 to 579 CE. Burzoy succeeded in his endeavours, returning to Persia with the knowledge he had gained. His book was in turn written down by the king’s wazir, Wuzurgmihr and included, at Burzoy’s own request, in the story of his journey to India. The object of his search: the *Panchatantra* (Sanskrit for five principles) and even the versions of it then existent (the early

centuries of the first millennium CE) are now lost, as is Burzoy's book, with its suggested title, *Karirak ud Damanak*, written in Middle Persian (Pahlavi, part of the Indo Iranian language family). The title is derived from the two jackals who appear in the first sections of the *Panchatantra*. More than animal fables, the stories were narratives in how to live a wise, good life, and were meant especially for princes born to rule. The similarities of stories found in the *Panchatantra* with those in the *Aesop's Fables* and the *Jatakas* attest to how these stories travelled widely and orally in the ancient world. The *Panchatantra* is among the most widely travelled of literary texts and different versions of it exist in most of the world's languages. [...] It was Burzoy's book that formed the basis of the Arabic work written two centuries later (750 CE) titled *Khalil wa Dimnah*. This latter book was in turn copied several times, and formed the basic text from which later versions in New Persian, and in the various European languages were written – and which exist today.” (Anu Kumar i <https://scroll.in/bulletins/280/revisiting-stories-of-indias-eco-heroes-a-journey-towards-sustainability>; lesedato 30.10.20)

“The reputed author of a widely circulated collection of fables, known as the “Fables of Pilpay,” which originated from an old Indian collection in Sanskrit, entitled “Panchatantra.” It was first translated into Pahlavi about 550 A. D., and subsequently through the Arabic was transmitted to all the peoples of Europe. Versions are found even in the Malay, Mongol, and Afghan languages.” (<https://elfinspell.com/Pilpay.html>; lesedato 06.05.21)

“Fables are a tradition of short tales meant to teach a lesson or make a moral point – and often there are talking animals involved. [...] The tradition of fables seems to go back a long way, at least to the Panchatantra – a collection of instructional stories created to educate royalty in India around 300 BCE. Many of them appear to be sources for Aesop fables. [...] The canon of fables also includes stories that riff off of the tradition of fables – the “fractured” fable, if you will. For example, Ambrose Bierce wrote parodies of fables that make fun of the famous Aesop fables but which are also perfect modern fables. His version of the “Milkmaid and Her Pail” involves a corrupt senator who imagines the huge sums he'll get from supporting an absurd bill. [...] The morals attached to the very same tales in different editions and versions of Aesop vary quite a bit. Many scholars think the “original” tales probably didn't have morals. Today we're used to seeing them at the end, but some older texts have them at the beginning.” (Chris Duffy i <http://blogs.slj.com/goodcomicsforkids/2015/09/21/interview-chris-duffy-on-fable-comics/>; lesedato 17.07.18)

Araberen Luqmān (eller Lokmān) levde noen århundrer etter Muhammed. Han skrev fabler som ligner Aesops og som ble samlet på 1200-tallet, et verk som så ble brukt i arabiske skoler. En av fablene handler om en løve og to okser: Løven angriper oksene,

men de to samarbeider om å stange angriperen. Løven sier til den ene oxen at han lover å spare den, men skal spise den andre, og denne oxen går med på dette. Deretter dreper løven først den ene oxen og så den andre, fordi oksene ikke samarbeider lenger. Samarbeid sikrer overlevelse, mens splittelse og egoisme fører til undergang (http://www.fabelnundanderes.at/lokman_1.htm; lesedato 15.12.20).

“One of the more curious characters in the folklore of the Arabs is Luqman bin ‘Ad, a member of that mysterious tribe descended from giants that once roamed southern Arabia and built the great dam of Marib. Luqman is mentioned in the Koran as “one to whom Allah brought wisdom.” [...] In Arabic literature, 49 animal fables are attributed to Luqman, all but two identical to fables in the collection of Aesop. It is obvious that either the Greek fables are translations from the Arabic or that the Arabic fables are translations from the Greek. The latter alternative is the more likely, as the Aesopian fables are older than their Arabic counterparts, but it is perfectly possible that the animal fable was originally an oriental literary genre and that both Aesop and Luqman adapted it from the same Babylonian source. It says much for the basic identity of Classical and Islamic culture that the story of the tortoise and the hare, the wily fox, the proud but rather stupid lion are equally at home in Greek and Arabic. No matter how far Eastern and Western cultures have subsequently diverged they both have their roots in a common East-Mediterranean culture of great antiquity.” (Paul Lunde i <https://archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/197402/aesop.of.the.arabs.htm>; lesedato 30.11.23)

“The Blind Men and the Elephant is a famous Indian fable that tells the story of six blind sojourners that come across different parts of an elephant in their life journeys. In turn, each blind man creates his own version of reality from that limited experience and perspective. In philosophy departments throughout the world, the Blind Men and the Elephant has become the poster child for moral relativism and religious tolerance.” (<https://www.allaboutphilosophy.org/blind-men-and-the-elephant.htm>; lesedato 10.05.19)

En tysk middelalderforfatter er kun kjent under navnet Der Stricker, som kan ha vært et kallenavn. Han levde på 1200-tallet, og skrev blant annet “Den nakne ridderen”, “De tre ønskene”, “Hanan og perlen”, “Haren og løven”, “Hannkatten som frier”, “Ravnen med påfuglfjærene”, “Fuglen og spurvehauken” og “Ulven og beveren” (http://www.fabelnundanderes.at/der_stricker.htm; lesedato 20.02.20).

Den franske middelalderkvinnen Marie de France sitt verk *Ésope* (eller *Ysopet*) ble skrevet ca. 1170 og “represents not only the first literary work by a French woman fabulist, but also the first collection of fables written in the vernacular in Western Europe. Scholars have paid some attention to the sources of the first forty fables of the

Esop, believed to be ultimately derived from the Romulus Nilantii, but have tended to neglect those of the second half of Marie's collection, and particularly the ones drawn from Eastern fables and folklore. [...] several ancient Sumerian, Akkadian, Egyptian, Indian, Jewish, and Arabic texts have come to light, thanks to the efforts of folklorists in various parts of the world. These texts and recorded tales provide new insights into the entire domain of fable-literature, including Marie's collection." (<https://digital.library.tulane.edu/islandora/object/tulane%3A25988>; lesedato 23.02.21) "The earliest known Sumerian fables would have been as old to Aesop as Aesop is to us." (Carnes 1993)

Marie de France sin samling inneholder 103 fabler. "[H]er collection addressed primarily a courtly audience and was an intellectual endeavor, addressing often rather extreme political concerns such as treason (no. 23), trust (no. 25), wickedness (no. 29), outward deception (no. 41), ignorance (no. 43), etc." (Classen 2021) "In fable 53, Marie subverts the traditional negative symbolism of woman in medieval literature by questioning the very basis of this representation, that is by re-writing the episode of the Temptation. This fable highlights, through the absence of woman in a scene strongly reminiscent of Original Sin, the arbitrariness of (male) moralists' condemnations. [...] Marie describes woman in multiple, often contradictory ways, thereby defying her consistently negative and fixed depiction in much of the didactic literature of the time. Marie demonstrates that the univocal symbolism associated with woman is in fact the result of a power struggle, in which men silence women for fear of their voice, and of the polyvocality that would ensue if women were allowed to speak. By blaming woman for the Fall, male preachers thus perform a linguistic castration which upholds their own (male) voice as unique, authoritative and unchallenged. As she liberates woman from the role imputed to her in Original Sin, Marie de France also liberates her own work from potential rejection and thus marks the emergence and affirmation of the female voice." (Sahar Amer i <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1004209612766>; lesedato 23.09.24)

Tyskeren Gerhard von Minden ga på 1200-tallet ut en fabelsamling, med bl.a. en fabel om en mann og en drage. De to er venner, og da dragen for en tid må forlate landet, overlater han til mannen å passe på dragens skatt. I tillegg gir han mannen et egg som gjelder dragens liv, for hvis egget knuses, dør dragen. Mannen sverger troskap og å ta godt vare på egget, men egget knuser rett etter at dragen har flydd bort. Da kommer dragen tilbake og røper at han har satt mannen på prøve, og mannen blir fordrevet fra landet (https://drachen.fandom.com/de/wiki/Der_Mann_und_der_Drache; lesedato 15.01.24).

Den franske forfatteren Vincent de Beauvais skrev på 1200-tallet at Æsops fabler egner seg godt i prekener fordi de er underholdende for folk å høre, men fablene må i

prekenene kobles direkte til religiøs oppbyggelse slik at de bidrar til å styrke den kristne tro (gjengitt fra <https://journals.openedition.org/carnets/5820>; lesedato 30.05.25).

Den tyske middelalderdikteren Hugo von Trimbergs *Løperen (Der Renner)* består av over 24.000 vers og tar utgangspunkt i de syv dødssyndene. Verket ble til tidlig på 1300-tallet og rommer fabler, eksempler, allegorier og sitater av autoriteter. Mange håndskrifter er bevart, som tyder på at *Løperen* var et utbredt verk. Tittelen hentyder på at teksten skulle dekke store deler av de tyskspråklige områdene, som om en kurér beveget seg fra sted til sted. Verket er didaktisk og inneholder mye kritikk av borgere, adelsfolk og kirkens menn. Adelen kritiseres for vilkårlig behandling av sine undersåtter og hemningsløse utskielser, mens presteskapet anklages for grådighet og uvitenhet. En gartner som heter Werner brukes som et dårlig eksempel på en mann som klatrer på samfunnsstigen og ender som adelsmann. Tonen i hele verket er dyster og pessimistisk, som underbygger en opplevelse av det forgjengelige ved alt jordisk (Eva Rummer i <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz35922.html>; lesedato 20.02.20). Trimberg skrev også det latinske verket *Solsequium*, som er en samling eksempelfortellinger og fabler som skulle brukes av predikanter og lærere.

“Sometime between 1476 and 1478 there appeared from the press of Johann Zainer in Ulm a bilingual collection of Aesopica that was to prove to be the final statement of a long medieval fable collection tradition as well as the beginnings of modern fable scholarship in Germany. Heinrich Steinhöwel’s *Esopus* was to be of great significance for the history of the fable from the last quarter of the fifteenth through the first half of the sixteenth centuries, not only for Germany, but for all of Europe. The *Esopus* was the German Aesop for well over half a Century. Internationally, Steinhöwel’s edition strongly influenced, even determined, the form and content of fable collections from Spain to Denmark.” (Pack Carnes i <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/23973596.pdf>; lesedato 16.05.23)

Den såkalte Aesop-romanen fra senantikken er en gresk tekst som handler om slaven Aesop og filosofen Xanthos. Filosofen bor på øya Samos og eier Aesop, som bruker sine fabler til delvis å hjelpe og noen ganger forvirre og narre sin eier. På grunn av sin klokskap blir Aesop satt fri, og på sine reiser møter han blant andre herskere i Babylon og Egypt. Han reiser også til Delfi, der han blir anklaget for et tyveri han ikke har begått og henrettet ved å dyttes utenfor et stup. I romanen er det gudinnen Isis som har gitt Aesop hans klokskap og talegaver, som han på sine reiser bruker til å kritisere sosial urettferdighet og menneskelige svakheter. Han våger å kritisere makthavere gjennom fablene og prøver å få herskere til å forbedre seg. Han tar alltid de svake, undertrykte og mishandlede i forsvar. Prestene i Delfi fryktet Aesops innflytelse og sørget for at han med falske bevis ble anklaget for tyveri. På vei til den klippen som

han skulle henrettes ved, fortalte han fabelen “Musa og frosken”, der frosken lurer musa, men på grunn av lureriet blir spist av en hauk. Denne fabelen brukte han til å advare prestene: Den som som ved falskhet skader andre, skader seg selv (<https://www.udoklinger.de/Deutsch/Fabeln/Absicht.htm>; lesedato 11.09.25).

“Heinrich Steinhöwel’s 1477 collection of Aesop’s Fables starts out with a Life of Aesop. Below are illustrations from that section of the book [...] Aesop convicts the fig eaters. In his sleep, Aesop receives the gift of intelligent speech from the goddess of hospitality as thanks for entertaining a traveling priest. Aesop carries the bread basket on the journey, which is quickly emptied. Aesop is for sale as a slave in the Samos market. His new master, the philosopher Xanthus [...] Aesop shows Xanthus how he can win the bet that he can drink up the sea. Xanthus, who always feels that Aesop is in the best of hands, has him strip naked and whipped. Xanthus finds his wife asleep at the dining table with her rump bared. Aesop deciphers the inscription on a funerary monument and brings the gold treasure discovered thereby to his master. Xanthus has Aesop imprisoned. Aesop explains to the Sami the omen of an eagle who has thrown the chamberlain’s ring into a slave’s lap. Aesop tells the Sami the fable of the sheep that dogs defended against wolves. Aesop tells the Lydian king Croesus the fable of the cricket that was caught with the locusts. Aesop, who is highly regarded at the Babylonian court for his cleverness, is slandered by his adoptive son and hidden in a burial chamber by a student. The king rehabilitates Aesop and hands over his adopted son to him. Aesop treats him mildly and dismisses him with wise admonitions. Aware of his guilt, the adopted son throws himself to death. Aesop shows the Egyptian king flying people. The Babylonian king honors Aesop with a golden statue for his successful mission to Egypt. Aesop is admired as a sage in Greece, where he tells his fables. The Delphians slandered him out of envy as a temple robber. Aesop, who took refuge in the temple of Apollo, is dragged away by the Delphians. The Delphians overthrow Aesop from a steep rock to his death. This story of Aesop’s life is fairly standard among many translations. While parts of it might be true, in general most researchers consider it a fabrication.” (<https://fablesofaesop.com/illustrations-from-steinhowels-life-of-aesop.html>; lesedato 16.05.23)

Den skotske middelalderdikteren Robert Henryson er kjent for verket *Morall Fabillis*, som er “an impressive, many-layered collection of thirteen fables, translated into Scots from the European tradition of Aesop. [...] Henryson seeks to reprimand man’s wickedness by analogy and moral instruction. He intends to delight as well as teach and promises ‘Amangis ernst to mix ane merie sport’ – to mix solemnity with joviality. Throughout the cycle of Fables, Henryson compares men to ‘beistis’, and urges them to abandon bestial ‘carnall and foull delyte’ to embrace their noble spiritual side. [...] the popular and comic ‘Taill of the Lyon and the Mous’ blends with less known, but equally powerful Reynardian fables, such as ‘The Cock and the Fox’

and ‘The Fox and the Wolf’, to create a masterful collection which deals in the universals of human life and which surpasses its originals in its ambition and detail. Many of the Fables translated by Henryson have become part of public consciousness. ‘The Taill of the Uponlandis Mous, and the Burges Mous’, or ‘The Two Mice’, for example, relates the legendary story of the town and country mouse, often anthologised in children’s literature to this day. While Henryson remains faithful to his European originals, he adds his own distinctive touch to his tales. As well as translating the fable itself into luxurious vernacular Scots, Henryson provides a clear ‘Moralitas’, or moral, in which the central message is communicated. The moral of ‘The Two Mice’, for example, is a common one in medieval literature, and counsels that one should stay in one’s allotted place in life [...] The tone of the Fables darkens as Henryson approaches the end of his collection, and the final tale, ‘The Paddock and the Mouse’, faces the dark reality of man’s transitory life on earth. Henryson asserts that death can come at any time, and so we must always be spiritually ready” (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/profiles/hBvQ6XDpZpRF9vxT8Q6JZ2/robert-henryson;lesedato 08.08.19>).

Seamus Heaney var en irsk dikter som fikk Nobelprisen i 1995. “One of the last projects Seamus Heaney ever collaborated on was adapting his translations of a series of 15th-century animal fables into a series of short animated films. The original fables were the work of Scottish poet Robert Henryson and, admiring the inventiveness and delicate humour in Henryson’s writing, Heaney set about translating them with the hope of bringing the work to a new audience. They were published in 2009 as *The Testament of Cresseid & Seven Fables*. When approached a couple of years later with the idea of adapting these charming tales into animations, Heaney had the idea to approach the actor and comedian Billy Connolly to narrate the films. Connolly agreed and the result was a series of five short films – *The Five Fables* – made by Belfast-based animators Flickerpix” (<https://www.seamusheaney.com/news-and-events/2019/3/12/five-fables-five-years-on;lesedato 08.08.19>).

“Reynard the Fox, trickster of the medieval French tales, becomes Anansi Spider in the Caribbean culture and Rabbit in the Gullah [Angola] tales or the jackal in India and the wolf in Western America. What explains the fascination of these stories for so many hundreds of years? Maybe we turn to them for laughter and wisdom, the people’s wisdom. As these tales reflect human needs, it is not surprising that food, and more specifically, the search for food, is the main topic in all these traditional stories. The conflicts that are generated by the lack and acquisition of it are many. Aesop, the mythical narrator of fables, was a dumb slave – we cannot forget how the concepts of fable and slavery are related. As the legend has it, the Goddess Isis and the Muses gave him the “gift of gab” [dvs. veltalenhet] and the virtue of telling stories. He used to tell stories in order to entertain and teach his consecutive masters’ children but they

also served other purposes, mainly political, and that is the reason why all the vices of human beings are reflected in them. Likewise, other fabulists used their tales not only for entertainment but also for hidden objectives. Therefore, social and political writers used fables to express their grievances. In England, it is worth mentioning John Gay who, in his stories, attacked the corrupt politicians of his time. In Spain the fable was an instrument for introducing neoclassical ideas, as Don Tomás de Iriarte did.” (Fraile 2007)

Den tyske renessansedikteren Hans Sachs skrev ca. 200 fabler. Eksempler er “Mauren og gresshoppa”, “Den late bonden med sine hunder” og “Reven og katten”.

“At no time and in no other place did the fable find a more receptive audience than in sixteenth-century Germany. Nowhere was the ground more fertile than in Germany, and no one made better use of the fable than the Reformers. The fable was everywhere apparent and served the Reformers in a wide variety of ways. They had, first of all, specific uses for the fable as an integral element within the general framework of educatory materials. Second, as rhetorical devices, in both complete and truncated forms (much as a proverb or as a proverbial phrase), the fable served as a particularly pointed and familiar metaphor to drive home a specific point or to allude to a previous scoring blow.” (Pack Carnes i https://archive.org/stream/renaissancerefor20victuoft/renaissancerefor20victuoft_djvu.txt; lesedato 09.09.24)

Martin Luther oversatte fabler av Aesop til tysk, og mente de var lærerike, f.eks. om forholdet mellom myndighetene og borgerne. Luther skrev: “Alle hater sannheten når den treffer dem. Derfor diktet kloke og høytstående folk fablene og lar et dyr snakke med et annet dyr, som om de ville si: Javel, ingen vil høre eller tåle sannheten, men vi kan likevel ikke unnvære sannheten, så vi vil gjøre den vakker og kle den i lystige løgnfarger som kjærkomne fabler; og selv om man ikke vil høre det fra menneskemunn, så hører man det fra munnene til dyr og udyr. Derfor hender det mens man leser fablene, at et dyr sier sannheten til et annet, en ulv til en annen, ja stundom leser den framstilte ulven, løven eller bjørnen i boka teksten for en tobeint ulv eller løve, en tekst som verken en prest, venn eller fiende ville fått lov til å lese.” (her sitert fra Atzbach 1975 s. 7)

Luther skrev: “Not only the children, but also the great Princes and Lords can not be better deceived to the truth and to their improvement than that they be told the truth by fools. They will listen to those same fools when they would or could not stand to hear the truth from a wise one. Yes, everyone hates the truth when he meets with it.” (oversatt av Pack Carnes og sitert fra https://archive.org/stream/renaissancerefor20victuoft/renaissancerefor20victuoft_djvu.txt; lesedato 09.09.24)

Luther var klar over at barn liker fabler og mente derfor at slike historier egnet seg til å formidle “kunst og visdom” til barn (Luther sitert fra Hilzinger, Zymner m.fl. 2002 s. 99). Luther mente også at fabler var egnet til å uttrykke sannheter for alle mennesker, sannheter som det var lettere å høre indirekte via dyr enn direkte fra mennesker (Hilzinger, Zymner m.fl. 2002 s. 104).

Luther så i Aesops fabler noen likheter med Jesu lignelser i Det nye testamente. Derfor oversatte han noen av fablene og henviste til dem i prekener (<https://www.ziereis-faksimiles.de/martin-luther-briefe-und-aesop-fabeln>; lesedato 02.03.20). I en fabel om en løve og et esel representerer det dumme eselet de som tror på pavens guddommelige rett. Luthers bruk av fabler inspirerte den katolske predikanten Abraham a Sancta Clara, som levde på 1600-tallet, til å inkludere fabler i sine prekener (Fritz Dichtl i <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/35096854.pdf>; lesedato 15.12.20).

Tyskeren Erasmus Alberus var på 1500-tallet en reformistisk teolog som skrev salmer og fabler. “Fable 33 about the ass who found a lion-skin and thought himself pope. This is good reformation propaganda. Alberus was of course a fervent disciple of Martin Luther. In fact, this fable praises Luther for revealing the lion-skin that the pope as ass had been wearing. The formal title of Alberus’ 1550 book [...] Das Buch von der Tugend und Weisheit [*Boken om dyden og visdommen*].” (<https://dspace2.creighton.edu/xmlui/handle/10504/83280>; lesedato 02.03.20)

I likhet med Erasmus Alberus brukte tyskeren Burkhard Waldis på 1500-tallet sine egne fabler som et religionspolitisk kampmiddel mot den katolske kirken (<http://www.deutschonline.de/Deutsch/Fabeln/Gattung.htm>; lesedato 21.09.20). Også motreformasjonens teologer skrev fabler for å bruke dem i denne kampen, og Alberus skal ha uttalt at “også Djevelen skriver fabler” (Julia Brenner i <https://www.grin.com/document/82770>; lesedato 21.09.20).

Perioden fra 1500-tallet til 1700-tallet var “an age that expected and obviously enjoyed didactic materials and a rather large number of writers used fables in their works. Luther of course used them generally to make a point, so also Johann Eberlin von Günzberg [...] and a host of others from the earlier part of the century. In the later decades, Johannes Fischart uses a number of fables in various works, all strongly Protestant in flavour. His fables are clearly those of the oral tradition and not dependent upon any single collection. He rarely tells the full fable, but simply gives a line or two recalling the motif, and assumes the reader is able to recognize the narrative and make the application desired. Such is the course of the fable in the sixteenth century. It had been carried through the Middle Ages by the era’s love for the didactic and by the pedagogical possibilities inherent in the short form. It was re-

discovered and brought to bud by the Humanists who clearly saw new possibilities in the re-discovery of the Greek Prose tradition for the philological inclinations of that movement. The Reformers drew from the traditional materials and attitudes, and from the Humanists' revitalization of the form as they found the short, moralistic pieces of "secular scripture" most admirably suited to their purposes." (Pack Carnes i https://archive.org/stream/renaissancerefor20victuoft/renaissancerefor20victuoft_djvu.txt; lesedato 09.09.24)

Spanjolen Sebastián Meys bok *Fabulario* (1613) er en samling av fabler fra Aesop og andre forfattere. Den spanske dikteren Félix María Samaniego skrev *Moralske fabler* (1781) for sine adelige skoleelever, basert på Aesop og La Fontaine. De 160 diktene som utgjør fablene, understreker verdien av flid, orden og sparsommelighet (Strosetzki 1996 s. 262). En annen spansk fabeldikter i samme periode var Tomás de Iriarte, med 76 fabel-dikt i *Litterære fabler* (1782).

I 1742 kom første utgave av et tysk moralsk tidsskrift kalt *Den tyske Aesop*, som kun inneholdt fabler. Det kom ut hver uke, og profiterte på at fabelen på denne tida var en mote-sjanger i Tyskland (Barner m.fl. 1981 s. 217). Mange av datidens fabeldiktere, f.eks. Johann Ludwig Meyer von Knonau og Justus Friedrich Wilhelm Zachariae, er helt glemt i dag.

Den tyske dikteren Christian Fürchtegott Gellert ga i årene 1746-48 ut boka *Fabler og fortellinger*. Under tittelen på forsideomslaget er det bilde av en naken kvinne som skal illustrere at fabler rommer den nakne sannhet (Barner m.fl. 1981 s. 221-222).

Den tyske 1700-tallsforfatteren Gottlieb Konrad Pfeffel skrev mange fabler (fram til 1759 da han ble nesten blind). Tekstene ble publisert i almanakker og tidsskrifter. Hans fabler regnes som "politiske" fordi de handler om uheldige politiske og sosiale sider ved samfunnet, eller de kan tolkes slik. Et eksempel er "Pinnsvinet" (her oversatt av HR):

“Løven satt på sin trone av knokler
og tenkte på slaveri og død.
Et pinnsvin krøp forbi på sin vei;
Ha! Krek! brølte despoten,
Og holdt han mellom sine klør.
I en eneste bit kan jeg sluke deg!
Pinnsvinet svarte: Sluke meg kan du,
men fordøye meg kan du ikke.”

(https://www.teachsam.de/deutsch/d_literatur/d_gat/d_epik/txtsor/epi_klein/fabe/fab_txt_10.htm; lesedato 03.03.20)

“Hos noen forfattere – August Christian Fischer med hans politiske fabler fra 1796 eller Gottlieb Konrad Pfeffel – ble fabelens sosiale kritikk skjerpet til å bli en revolusjonær antiføydalisme.” (Gianpiero Rismondo i <https://www.bglerchenfeld.at/deutsch/literaturzeitung5a/epikfabel.htm> ; lesedato 15.12.20)

Den engelske boktrykkeren og forfatteren Samuel Richardson ga i 1757 ut boka *Aesop's fables with reflexions instructive morals*, et verk som ble oversatt til tysk samme år av Gotthold Ephraim Lessing med tittelen *Herr Samuel Richardsons sedelære for ungdommen i de mest utsøkte aesopske fabler* (Barner m.fl. 1981 s. 218). Lessing skrev selv fablene Lessing skrev bl.a. “Løven og haren”, “Gresshoppen og nattergalen”, “Spurvene”, “Den krigerske ulven”, “Ulven på dødsleiet” og “Eselet med løvene”.

Den franske presten François-Joseph Desbillons ga ut en fabelsamling i 1779, der mange av fablene er satiriske. Eksempler på hans fabler er “Apen og speilet”, “Hunden og oxen”, “Svalen og nattergalen” og “Den gale løven og haren”.

Jean-Jacques Boisard publiserte i 1777 en samling på 1001 fabler, skrevet på vers, blant annet “Den reisende og kolibrien”, “Skilpadden og endene”, “Den angrende ulven” og “Hjorten og pilen”.

Tomás de Iriarte skrev på 1700-tallet en rekke fabler på vers, bl.a. “Geita og hesten”, “Flaggermusa og katten”, “Forfatteren og rotta” og “Strutsen, dromedaren og reven”.

En fabel kan fungere som angrepskamouflering, som i Et kjent eksempel på angrepskamouflering er Frithjof Sælens barnebok *Snorre Sel: En fabel i farger for voksne og barn*, utgitt i et naziokkupert Norge i 1941. Dyrene i denne boka representerer Norge, Nazi-Tyskland, England, Russland, norske nazimedløpere osv. Tyskland angripes, men på en kamuflert måte som gjorde at boka ikke ble stoppet i sensuren.

Noen ganger er det tolkningen som gjør en dyrefortelling til en dyrefabel. Frithjof Sælens *En modig maur* (1948) kan leses som en enkel naturfortelling, men historien kan også tolkes som en moralsk fabel om det lille, tilsynelatende ubetydelige menneskes opprør mot tyranni.

Flere eksempler:

Jean de La Fontaine: *Fabler* (1668-92)

Antoine Houdar de La Motte: *Nye fabler* (1719)

John Gay: *Fables* (1727 og 1738)

Friedrich von Hagedorn: *Fabler og fortellinger* (1738)

Christian Fürchtegott Gellert: *Fabler og fortellinger* (1748)

Magnus Gottfried Lichtwer: *Fire bøker med aesopske fabler i bunden skriveform* (1748)

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: *Fabler: Tre bøker* (1759)

Félix María de Samaniego: *Moralske fabler* (1781-84) – spanske fabler, skrevet for skoleelever

Tomás de Iriarte y Oropesa: *Litterære fabler* (1782)

August Christian Fischer: *Politiske fabler* (1796)

Cristóbal de Beña: *Politiske fabler* (1813)

Victor Cholet: *Æsopen: Politiske fabler* (1832)

Wilhelm Hey: *Femti fabler for barn* (1835)

Maurits Hansen: *Halvhundrede Fabler med Billeder for Børn* (1838)

Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch: *Fabler* (1843)

Jean-Pons-Guillaume Viennet: *Fabler* (1843)

Christian Winther: *Fabler for Børn* (1844)

Hans Vilhelm Kaalund: *Fabler og blandede Digte* (1844)

Pamphile Lemay: *Kanadiske fabler* (1882)

Jean Anouilh: *Fabler* (1962) – dessuten skrev Anouilh i 1967 mer enn 40 fabler, og noen av dem ble adaptert til marionett-teaterstykker

Arnt Birkedal: *Det indre Tasta: Ei kattehistorie* (1996)

Vikram Seth: *Dyriske fabler herfra og derfra* (på norsk 1998)

Jean de La Fontaine skrev på sine fabler i ca. 30 år. Hans *Fabler* inneholder 242 historier. Han ville gi et portrett av det franske samfunnet forkledd som en rekke dyreskikkelser (Lanson og Tuffrau 1953 s. 291). Han henvender seg til voksne som om de var barn, og dette ga en spesiell glede til hans voksne lesere på 1600-tallet (Patrick Dandrey i <https://journals.openedition.org/feeries/755>; lesedato 07.09.23).

Sjangeren har egenskaper som gjør at den har unngått sensur. La Fontaine framstilte seg som en slags oversetter av Æsops fabler, og dermed som en forfatter som bød publikum på harmløs, morsom underholdning (Suzanne Pouliot i <https://corpus.ulaval.ca/jspui/handle/20.500.11794/29254>; lesedato 04.05.22). Fablene hadde dessuten en moral som det var vanskelig å kritisere, selv når historiene hadde satirisk preg. Med litt fantasi kunne imidlertid noen av La Fontaines historier oppfattes som svært samfunnskritiske, med kritikk av konkrete personer, til og med av kong Ludvig 14. (Suzanne Pouliot i <https://corpus.ulaval.ca/jspui/handle/20.500.11794/29254>; lesedato 04.05.22).

Da La Fontaine i 1663 skrev sin første fabel, hadde sjangeren lav status og var i ferd med å forsvinne som en litterær sjanger. Han brukte den som et middel til å unngå sensur, fordi det ville være for drøyt å anklage hans underholdende dyrefortellinger for å undergrave kongemakten og samfunnet (Suzanne Pouliot i <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=3287488>; lesedato 10.02.21).

Den første samlingen med fabler av La Fontaine har blitt tolket som et budskap om å resignere overfor verdens uunngåelige vansker, å bøye seg for dermed ikke å brette, men også med en påminning om at frihet i fattigdom er bedre enn rikdom som krever underkastelse (Clarac 1969 s. 67).

La Fontaine framhever mange ganger den urettferdigheten som de svake så ofte blir offer for, og anklager de sterke for at de ikke tar hensyn til det fellesskapet som samfunnet er (Ligny og Rousselot 2016 s. 49). I hans fabel "Mannen og huggormen" blir leseren på ironisk vis minnet om at mennesker kan oppføre seg som dyr:

"[...] this the animal perverse
(I mean the snake;
Pray don't mistake
The human for the worse)"

La Fontaine "alluded to the instructive aspect or value of fables. Fénelon stated that the fabulist, after telling a fable, should wait and allow the child's curiosity to grow to the point where he begs to hear another. Antoine Furetière, one of La Fontaine's friends and followers, claimed that animals reprove and correct much more effectively

than the teachings of members of our own species. La Motte pointed to the fact that a fable is an instruction disguised under the allegory of an action. Finally, Breitinger, a German fable critic, established that there is a close relationship between animals and human beings. [...] Furthermore, according to certain theories, fables have a conscious double meaning. On the one hand, they are used as a means of entertainment but also as a means of denouncement; they are a concealed criticism against an adverse reality. The message the fable transmits is such an appalling truth that the author hides it behind short allegorical animal stories. It is a hard world in a constant fight to survive. The natural thing is for the weakest animal to be destroyed by the strongest.” (Fraile 2007)

La Fontaine vekslet på verseformene slik at det ikke skulle bli monotont å lese (Atzbach 1975 s. 7).

Den franske forfatteren Jean-Jacques Rousseau skrev i *Émile, eller om oppdragelsen* (1762) at alle barn lærer å kjenne Le Fontaines fabler, men at moralen i fortellingene dessverre peker mer mot ondskapen enn mot godheten (gjengitt fra Charles 1995 s. 340-341). Rousseau mente at dette fører til at barna velger det verste alternativet, det motsatte av fabelforfatterens intensjon. Valget i fablene står nemlig mellom å være slue eller å være dum, og ingen vil være dum, men heller egne oppnå fordeler (Charles 1995 s. 345-346). Barnet vil heller ha osten for seg selv enn å være rettferdig.

La Fontaine “aner fellen som lurte bak smilet og bak naturens sjarm dens urettferdighet og grusomhet” (Clarac 1969 s. 107).

Moralen i La Fontaines fabler kan i mange tilfeller uttrykkes som paradokser, f.eks. at den minste skapningen ofte er den vi bør frykte mest (Peyrouet 1994 s. 77).

La Fontaines fabel “Gartneren og hans herre” handler om en gartner som vil ha borgherrens hjelp til å kvitte seg med en hare som ødelegger hagen hans. Gartneren ber om hjelp fordi han ikke har rett til å jakte selv. Men herren velger å spise sammen med alle sine bekjente i hagen, slik at den blir enda mer ødelagt. De spiser opp gartnerens mat og plager dessuten hans datter. Av dette trekker fortelleren en ganske merkelig lærdom: Det er dumt å henvende seg til sine overordnede. Fabelen oppretter en parallell mellom haren og herren, som begge ødelegger, men herren ruinerer mer enn “alle harer i området til sammen” kunne ha gjort. Både haren og herren spiser opp menigmanns ressurser. Adelsmannen framstår som en destruktiv hare, ja som en parasitt, langt verre enn haren. Moralens om å ikke plage de høye herrer med sine egne problemer er derfor ambivalent, og kan være skrevet for å skjule et helt annet og samfunnskritisk budskap (Renault 2013 s. 59).

La Fontaines “Sangsikaden og mauren” (en sangsikade er et insekt), som består av bare 22 verselinjer, har blitt tolket som et angrep på Colbert (mauren) i saken om Fouquet (sangsikaden) (Suzanne Pouilot i <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=3287488>; lesedato 10.02.21). Politikeren og embetsmannen Jean-Baptiste Colbert var medansvarlig for arrestasjonen av Nicolas Fouquet for økonomisk vanskjøtsel av statlige midler. Fouquet var venn og beskytter av La Fontaine.

Det har blitt hevdet at kongen i La Fontaines fabler ikke framstilles som en suveren person, men er avhengig av sosial solidaritet i samfunnet, slik at fablene nesten er sosialistiske (Spitzer 1970 s. 181).

La Fontaine lagde sin egen versjon av eventyret “Krukken med melk”, der en kvinne mister krukken fordi hun fantaserer for mye. I La Fontaines fabel blir fantasien hyllet fordi den fungerer som en livstrøst (Clarac 1969 s. 96).

La Fontaines fabler var så populære at det mellom år 1700 og 1800 kom over 100 utgivelser av dem (Renaud 1994 s. 79).

Den franske forfatteren Marie-Catherine Desjardins, mer kjent som Madame de Villedieu, har i sin *Fabler eller allegoriske historier* (1670) skrevet fabler med insekter, fugler og pattedyr. I en av fablene “she describes with an almost pathetic tenderness the tale of a disconsolate widowed dove trying to find new love by recounting the qualities of her late husband to a less-than-noble woodpigeon. [...] The satire, irony, and relative simplicity that characterized the fable in Louis XIV’s era served as good cover for a woman with a controversial agenda. In addition to advancing a favorable portrait of the female gender, Villedieu ridicules the political and personal foibles of men. Consequently, the fable serves as a means of conveying a controversial message in a safe and creative manner that allows the poet to contribute to the genre by adding a feminine perspective. [...] Dialogue – whether conducted explicitly between the characters in the fable or implicitly between the poet and the reader – is essential to the narrative framework [...] Unlike La Fontaine’s cicada, who is more or less gender-neutral, Villedieu’s is clearly identified as a female, with the poet alternately calling her “Épouse” (vv. 7, 23) and “Dame Cigale” (v. 22). To a degree, this feminization is stereotyped in that the cicada is first represented as a loyal, loving wife, only to be transformed into a harpy upon learning of her husband’s infidelity. At the same time, however, there is the sense that this worthy spouse and lady has been wronged and that her wrath is justified. [...] To rise up in mutiny and to accuse the spouse of violating the marital bond suggests a kind of feminine strength and self-assertion that resonates in Villedieu’s *Fables*. [...] the beetle, or “escarbot”, counsels the June bug that both members of married couples should opt for infidelity as a means of staying together. What Villedieu challenges, then, is the cultural and

literary “ideal” of masculine power, as well as that of everlasting love. [...] The result is a highly paradoxical, mildly cynical portrait of human-kind, the tone of which is ironic but also understanding and appreciative of humanity’s shortcomings.” (Russell J. Ganim i <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=modlangfrench>; lesedato 07.10.25)

I Villedieus fabel om ulven og lammet sprer lammet en sykdom ved å die alle hunnsauene (søyene) som har lam i flokken, slik at landsbyidyllen blir til et mareritt. I en fabel om de tre insektene sikade, oldenborre og tordivel er det tydelig at Villedieu mener at det vil styrke et ekteskap hvis både ektemann og kone kan ha erotiske forhold ved siden av ekteskapet uten at ekteparet blir sjalu på hverandre (Edwige Keller-Rahbé i https://www.persee.fr/doc/lefab_0996-6560_2020_num_31_1_1434; lesedato 07.10.25).

Franskmannen Jean-Pierre Florian ga i 1792 ut *Fabler*, sterkt inspirert av La Fontaines fabler. Tekstene i denne fabelsamlingen hører tydelig til i tradisjonen fra de franske moralistene på 1600-tallet og opplysningstiden på 1700-tallet, men vitner indirekte også om de store omveltningene som den franske revolusjonen i 1789 hadde ført med seg. Florian kritiserer urettferdighet og inkluderer små mengder av sosial og politisk satire (Stéphane Labbe i <https://actualites.ecoledeslettres.fr/philosophie-2/redecouvrir-fables-de-florian-de-lecole-lycee/>; lesedato 02.11.20).

Den engelske forfatteren John Gay er mest kjent som dramatiker, men publiserte også fabler. “Published in 1727 the first volume (printed by J. Tonson and J. Watts) contains an assortment of fables which were dedicated to Prince William Augustus (later Duke of Cumberland), third son of King George II. Written in verse with rhyming couplets and purportedly drawing inspiration from classical works, the moralizing tales were originally composed to educate and amuse the six year old prince. Each was preceded by detailed copper engravings [...] to capture the spirit of the allegories [...] Fable II, for example, is entitled “The Spaniel and the Cameleon” [sic] which warns against flattery and falsehood in order to win favour. The consequences in this instance were severe, as a companionable spaniel is cautioned by a passing stranger. Jove, seeking to teach a sycophantic [dvs. som driver med falsk smiger] courtly gentleman a lesson, one day turns him into a chameleon – a changeable figure indeed.

“When near him a Cameleon seen,
Was scarce distinguish’d from the green...”

A particular favourite in the library is “The Elephant and the Bookseller” (Fable X). An elephant is to be found browsing in a bookshop, taking books from the shelves and

reading the many and varied works that are available – from Greek literature to Natural History. However, the wise and knowing elephant dismisses the written works of man as inaccurate. [...] The fables proved popular and would go through numerous reprints over the years, entertaining both young and old. [...] with the royal dedication of his fables Gay had hoped to secure himself a prestigious (and indeed lucrative) position at court. [...] A second volume of his fables was published posthumously by J. and P. Knapton and T. Cox in 1738, produced from manuscripts left behind by Gay. The tone of the work is slightly darker than those in the first edition, but equally varied in scope – from the Degenerate Bees to the Ant in Office.” (<https://lambethpalace.library.wordpress.com/2015/05/22/the-fables-of-john-gay-2/>; lesedato 03.03.20)

Ludvig Holbergs, med *Moralske fabler* (1751), “må reknast som ein original dyrkar av fabelsjangeren, og samlinga inneheld mange gode historier. Dei fleste er korte, og her kan ein sjå at Holberg drar nytte av sine erfaringar frå epigrammet, særleg når han gir replikkane satirisk snert. I innleiinga hevdar han også – i opposisjon til La Fontaine og Chr. Gellert – at fabelen skal og må vera kort, men denne programerklæringa går ikkje heilt ihop med hans eigen praksis. Mange av stykka er lange, f.eks. den 81. fabel, av mange rekna som hans beste: “Midernes Art og Egenskab”. Bruken av dyr er litt problematisk hos Holberg. Det vanlege for sjangeren er at dyra tener til å reindyrka eigenskapar hos aktørane, men Holberg vel dyr ofte heilt vilkårleg.” (Eiliv Vinje i https://nbl.snl.no/Ludvig_Holberg; lesedato 24.11.22)

Russeren Ivan Andrejevitsj Krylov oversatte Fontaines fabler og skrev over 200 egne på slutten av 1700-tallet og i første halvdel av 1800-tallet. Han brukte sine egne tekster til å kritisere de sosiale forholdene i tsar-regimets Russland, med dyr som talerør. Han ble overvåket av myndighetene på grunn av sin kritiske stemme. De første fablene hans var sterkt påvirket av Aesop og La Fontaine, men etter hvert utviklet han sin egen stil. Krylov bruker eselet som symbol på den russiske statsansatte/byråkrat, noe som innebar selvkritikk fordi han selv var statsansatt. Dyrene lever i et menneskemiljø som er påfallende likt det russiske samfunnet. Noen fabler har imidlertid ingen dyr, men bønder, filosofer og adelige. Andre fabler dreier seg om kampen mot Napoleon. Den første bokutgivelsen med hans fabler kom i 1809, og den ble en stor suksess. Også senere utgivelser solgte i store opplag. Krylov regnes som en pioner for den russiske realismen både på grunn av miljøet historiene foregår i og det hverdagslige språket han bruker (Manfred Orlick i <https://literaturkritik.de/ein-russischer-beamter-und-fabeldichter-zum-250-geburtstag-von-iwan-krylow,25313.html>; lesedato 03.03.20).

“Krylov has been loved by Russian people for two hundred years for his Fables, works in which he gently satirizes the manifold weaknesses and failings of human beings, especially figures of authority, while at the same time praising and holding up for emulation the qualities in ordinary people of selflessness, industry, loyalty, love,

friendship, perseverance... Solid, earthy common sense and a long acquaintance with the ways of the world lie at the root of Krylov's observations. Some of the Fables are no more than humorous glimpses of life and human nature, or snapshots of the bizarre preoccupations of fantasists, eccentrics, idealists and dreamers. Others offer wry, sardonic glimpses of life, and human relationships and behaviour. Yet others offer wise advice on the conduct of life, or are "cautionary tales": warnings about the consequences of ill-considered behaviour. Like other great allegorical writings the Fables can be read on different levels, and enjoyed by all, from young children to the very old." (<http://www.dedalusbooks.com/our-books/book.php?id=00000318>; lesedato 09.08.18) Krylovs bok *Fabler* kom på norsk i 1978.

"This fable is said to have been written by the great Napoleon when he was a youth. It was entitled, "The Dog, the Rabbit, and the Hunter." Caesar, a renowned sporting dog, had cornered a rabbit. "Surrender," he commanded, with a loud voice. "I am Caesar, famous for his bravery all over the world." "And if I surrender, what then?" the rabbit asked with a trembling voice, while recommending her sinful soul to God. "Then you'll die." "Die! And if I flee?" "Even then you will surely die." "Thus, whatever I do, I must lose my life," said the little rabbit. "Well, since I cannot avoid death, I shall, with your kind permission, take my chances in flight." And saying this, the rabbit run away. But no sooner did the hunter perceive it than he shouldered his gun, fired and killed the dog. And the moral of the fable? God helps those who help themselves. It is a moral those who are in business should remember." (<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/271001191>; lesedato 14.06.25)

"I 1842 udgav [Frederik] Schaldemose *Danske Fabler*, hvor han selv var forfatter til ca. halvdelen af de 148 tekster; andre forfattere var Ludvig Holberg, J.C. Tode og H.V. Kaalund, og i 1852 udgav han *Fabler for Ungdommen*, som næsten udelukkende indeholder hans egne fabler. Men da er i mellemtiden sket meget, og fabelgenren er langsomt ved at miste den betydning, den har haft, selvom den i nogen grad overlever i skolens læsebøger." (Torben Weinreich i <https://bornelitteratur.lex.dk/Fablen>; lesedato 08.05.23)

H. C. Andersens korte tekst "Det er Dig, Fabelen sigter til!" lyder slik: "Oldtidens Vise have snildt opfundet, hvorledes man uden at være Folk grov lige op i Ansigtet, kunde sige dem Sandheden. De holdt nemlig foran dem et sælsomt Speil, i hvilket alle Slags Dyr og forunderlige Ting kom tilsyne og frembragte et lige saa morende som opbyggeligt Skue. Det kaldte de en Fabel, og hvad Taabeligt eller Klogt nu Dyrene der udrettede maatte Menneskene føre over paa sig og derved tænke: det er Dig Fabelen sigter til! Saaledes kunde nu Ingen blive vred derover. Vi ville tage et Exempel: Der vare to høie Bjerge, og øverst oppe paa hvert Bjerg stod et Slot. Nede i Dalen løb en Hund, den snusede henad Jorden ligesom om den, for at stille Hungeren, søgte efter

Muus eller Agerhøns. Da klang med eet, fra det ene Slot, Trompeten, som forkyndte, at man nu skulde der til Bords. Hunden løb strax op ad Bjerget for at faae lidt med, men i det den var kommen Halvveien, holdt Trompeterne op at blæse, og en Trompet fra det andet Slot begyndte. Da tænkte Hunden, her har man nu afspist før jeg kommer, men derovre vil man nu først til at spise; den løb derfor ned igjen og opad det andet Bjerg. Men nu begyndte igjen Trompeten paa det første Sted, derimod holdt den anden op. Hunden løb igjen ned ad, og igjen opad, og blev saaledes ved, til endelig begge Trompeter taug stille, og Maaltidet var endt paa hvilket Sted den kom. Gjæt nu engang, hvad Oldtidens Vise ville sige med denne Fabel og hvem der er den Nar, som saaledes løber sig træt uden at vinde, hverken her eller der.”

“Flere af H. C. Andersens eventyr har således fabeltræk, bl.a. “Boghveden” (1842), som mest af alt er en prosafabel, og “Den grimme Ælling” (1844), som afsluttes med en morale efter en historie, som på fabelvis foregår i dyreverdenen. Fabeltræk findes også i eventyr som “Kjærestefolkene” (1844) og “Det er ganske vist!” (1852). Andersens kendteste og mest klassiske fabel er dog den rimede “Konen med Æggene” fra 1836. Samme år skriver H. C. Andersen selv om fabelgenren i det lille essay “Det er Dig, Fabelen sigter til!” i *Dansk Folkeblad*: “Oldtidens Vise have snildt opfundet, hvorledes man, uden at være Folk grov lige op i Ansigtet, kunde sige dem Sandheden. De holdt nemlig foran dem et sælsomt Speil, i hvilket alle Slags Dyr og forunderlige Ting kom tilsyne og frembragte et lige saa morende som opbyggeligt Skue.” Meget mere præcist kan fabelgenren vel ikke defineres. Andersen fortsætter essayet med et eksempel, nemlig historien om en hund, som hører trompeten forkynde, at nu serveres der mad i slottet på den ene bjergtop, hvorefter den skynder sig af sted. Da den kort efter hører en trompet fra det andet slot på den anden bjergtop meddele, at nu er maden dér serveret (og dermed nok friskere), så iler den ned ad det ene bjerg og op ad det andet, indtil den igen hører trompeten fra det første slot, osv. Andersen konkluderer: “Gjæt nu engang, hvad Oldtidens Vise ville sige med denne Fabel og hvem der er en Nar, som saaledes løber sig træt uden at vinde, hverken her eller der.” ” (Torben Weinreich i <https://bornelitteratur.lex.dk/Fablen>; lesedato 08.05.23)

“The nonconformist British and Foreign School Society set about publishing its own series of school textbooks towards the end of the 1830s, and the anglican National Society about five years later [...] Other organisations followed suit. All the textbook series contained a substantial quota of political economy, which might appear as a formal subject in its own right, or in the guise of fable, fairy tale or poem. [...] Twelve-year-olds were taught the interdependence of the classes through a fable: “Once on a time,” says the fable, “all the other members of the body began to murmur against the stomach, for employing the labours of all the rest, and consuming all they had helped to provide, without doing anything in return. So they all agreed to strike work, and refused to wait upon this idle stomach any longer. The feet refused to carry

it about; the hands resolved to put no food into the mouth for it; the nose refused to smell for it, and the eyes to look out in its service; and the ears declared they would not even listen to the dinner-bell; and so of all the rest. But after the stomach had been left empty for some time, all the members began to suffer. The legs and arms grew feeble; the eyes became dim, and all the body languid and exhausted. ‘Oh, foolish members,’ said the stomach, ‘you now perceive that what you used to supply to me, was in reality supplied to yourselves. I did not consume for myself the food that was put into me, but digested it, and prepared it for being changed into blood, which was sent through various channels as a supply for each of you. If you are occupied in feeding me, it is by me in turn, that the blood-vessels which nourish you are fed.’ ” ” (Shinn og Whitley 1985 s. 265-266)

Noen av den tyske tegneren og dikteren Wilhelm Busch sine bildehistorier fra 1800-tallet er fabler/fabeldikt, f.eks. “De to endene og frosken” og “Finken og frosken”. Busch er kjent for sin ganske bitre humor. Mange av hans fortellinger handler om grådighet, forfengelighet og egoisme, der vi både skal føle medlidenhet med dyrene og le av dem (<https://www.exlibris.ch/de/buecher-buch/deutschsprachige-buecher/wilhelm-busch/die-fabeln-von-wilhelm-busch/id/9783730813010>; lesedato 21.09.20).

Østerrikeren Franz Grillparzer skrev “Diplomatisk råd” på 1800-tallet:

“En mår spiste gjerne høner,
men visste ikke hvordan den skulle få tak i dem.
Den spurte reven, en gammel herremann
som var så støl at den ikke lenger kunne stjele.
Reven svarte: “Min venn, dette rådet er gammelt:
Hva hjelper det å nøle? Bruk vold!”
Måren stormet fram i fullt firsprang,
men hønene flakset vekk,
den ene kaklende, den andre hvinende,
rett i revens tenner.
For han lå på lur
og kunne uten strev høste inn.

Hvis du er lysten på høner,
ikke spør noen som også liker dem.”
(på tysk har teksten rim m.m.)

Den amerikanske forfatteren Guy Wetmore Carryls *Fables for the Frivolous (with Apologies to La Fontaine)* (1898) fungerer som parodier på fabler av Aesop og La Fontaine. “Some of Carryl’s better-known works were his humorous poems that were

parodies of Aesop's Fables, such as "The Sycophantic Fox and the Gullible Raven" [...] His humorous poems usually ended with a pun on the words used in the moral of the story." (<https://www.poemhunter.com/guy-wetmore-carryl/>; lesedato 15.06.22)

Den tyske 1800-tallsfilosofen Arthur Schopenhauer inkluderte en fabel i en av sine tekster for å illustrere sitt pessimistiske livssyn: En gruppe pinnsvin trykket seg en kald vinterdag tett sammen for å gi hverandre nok varme til ikke å fryse ihjel. Men de ble raskt plaget av hverandres pigger. Så de fjernet seg fra hverandre igjen. Når de igjen trengte varme og klumpet seg sammen, gjentok dette seg, slik at de vekslet mellom de to ulempene, helt til de fant en passe avstand som var til å holde ut. Slik, forklarer Schopenhauer, driver samfunnet mennesker sammen som vil flykte fra sin egen tomhet og tilværelsens monotoni, men menneskenes motstridende egenskaper og uutholdelige feil støter dem så fra hverandre igjen. Slik oppstår konvensjoner i samfunnet som balanserer de to menneskelige tendensene (her gjengitt fra Pothast 1989 s. 336-337).

Den russiske 1800-tallsforfatteren Leo Tolstoj skrev dyrefabelen "Kholstomer: The Story of a Horse" (Lettenbauer 1984 s. 86). I denne historien forteller en gammel hest om sitt liv. "Tolstoy's Fables: Tools for a Vision [...] While writing his two most famous works, *War and Peace* (1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1878), he also produced two primers, *The ABC Books* (1872 & 1875), and four readers for the children in his schools. Included in these publications were fables, written and adapted to appeal to his audience. Tolstoy used these ancient literary forms to gain his own revolutionary, complex ends. [...] Fables often clarify and simplify feelings that are obscure or difficult to put into words." (Kristin Lehman i <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/article/248293/pdf>; lesedato 06.03.25)

Den britiske forfatteren Rudyard Kipling gjorde seg til talsmann for hard arbeidsdisiplin, bl.a. i fabelen "How the Camel Got His Hump" i *Just so Stories* (1902) (Pfister og Schulte-Middelich 1983 s. 244). "When the animals began to work for Man, the Camel lived in a desert because he was idle and refused to help. The Dog, the Horse and the Ox all urged him to join in their work, but he only answered "Humph!" They complained to the Man, who said he was sorry, but they would just have to work longer hours themselves. Then they complained to the Djinn in charge of All Deserts. So the Djinn went to see the Camel and told him to work, but still all he would say was "Humph!" The Djinn made a magic that puffed up the Camel's back into a hump (or hump) and condemned him to work for three days without eating, living on his hump instead, to make up for the days he had missed. He still has his hump, he never did make up the lost time, and he still behaves badly." (http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/rg_camelhump1.htm; lesedato 08.01.16)

“Few literary fables have been written in the 20th century. Among Jewish works, the most important is probably that written by Eliezer Steinberg and published in Romania (*Shriftn*, 2 vols., 1932-33), shortly after the death of the author. The two volumes, written in rich, rhythmic Yiddish verse, include 150 fables of animals and inanimate objects alike. (His fables were published earlier (1928) with wood-cuts by A. Kolnik.) Some of the fables have *epimythia* [the proverb-like statements concluding the narrative]; others convey the moral lesson through the tale itself.” (<https://www.encyclopedia.com/literature-and-arts/language-linguistics-and-literary-terms/literature-general/fable>; lesedato 21.04.23)

En fabel kan hevdes å skape avstand mellom temaet og fortellingen. “[D]en drepende satiren i “Kamerat Napoleon” [= *Animal Farm* (1945) av George Orwell] ble på et vis også litt ufarliggjort av fabelformen: Selv glitrende satire får en distanse når fortellingen er lagt til dyreverdenen.” (Andreas Wiese i *Dagbladet* 12. januar 2008 s. 44) I motsetning til Wieses synspunkt kan det hevdes at meningen blir mer kunstnerisk og dermed mer effektiv ved å være utformet som en fabel. I *Animal Farm* (1945) blir grisen Napoleon av mange kritikere og lesere oppfattet som Stalin, Napoleons farlige hunder er det hemmelige sovjetiske politi, hesten Boxer er det russiske folk, mens Snowball er Trotskij som må gå i eksil.

Orwell ble sterkt preget i forfatterskapet av sine personlige erfaringer utenlands og i politisk kamp, “først som politimann i det britiske imperiets tjeneste i Burma og siden som frivillig på antifascistenes side i den spanske borgerkrigen. Siden borgerkrigen, skriver Orwell, har “hver eneste linje av seriøst arbeid jeg har gjort vært skrevet direkte eller indirekte mot totalitarisme og for demokratisk sosialisme”. I motsetning til mange andre forfattere velger altså Orwell helt eksplisitt å gjøre sitt forfatterskap til politikk, for som han skriver er også “holdningen om at kunst ikke skal ha politisk slagside i seg selv en politisk holdning”. [...] Allerede i debuten avviser Orwell ideen om at noen fortjener å være likere enn andre, enten det skjer under kapitalistisk eller selverklært sosialistisk styresett. [...] Det er dette som er Orwells viktigste innvending mot Moskva-kommunistene, nemlig at det klasseløse samfunnet de sto for utviklet seg til et nytt klassesamfunn. [...] I “*Animal Farm*” kan man spore en viss kritikk av revolusjonære forsøk på å starte historien på ny når den forfengelige hesten Molly ikke lenger får bære sløyfe eller andre menneskelige pyntegjenstander. [...] Satt på spissen var ikke Orwells kritikk av Stalin at han var revolusjonær, men tvert imot at han ikke var det. “*Animal Farm*” og “1984” har lite til felles med den borgerlige kritikken av radikal sosialisme som sådan. Orwells forfatterskap er derimot en god påminnelse om det også på den radikale venstresida tidlig fantes en sovjetkritisk impuls.” (Mímir Kristjánsson i *Klassekampens* bokmagasin 12. april 2014 s. 4-5)

Pingvinøya (1908) av den franske forfatteren Anatole France er en tydelig allegori (Suleiman 1983 s. 11). Romanen “details the history of the penguins and is written as

a critique of human nature, and is also a satire on France's political history, including the Dreyfus affair. Morals, customs and laws are satirised within the context of the fictional land of Penguinia, where the animals were baptised erroneously by the myopic Abbot Maël. The book is ultimately concerned with the perfectibility of mankind. As soon as the Penguins are transformed into humans, they begin robbing and murdering each other. By the end of the book, a thriving civilization is destroyed by terrorist bombs.” (https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/346024.Penguin_Island; lesedato 12.12.23)

I den zimbabwiske forfattere NoViolet Bulawayos “*Den gamle hesten*, som nyleg kom ut på norsk [i 2023], vert landets eks-president Robert Mugabe framstilt som ein despotisk hest, som herskar over ein nasjon av gardsdyr. Her er alt frå svinepredikantar, tidlegare geriljakyr og visjonære geiter – både *malar* og *femalar* – representerte. Så blir makta i Jidada kuppet av ein ny hest – Tuvy – som omtalar seg med titlar som “Korrupsjonens fiende”, “Åpner av forretninger” og “Giver av ny giv”. Kvar gong den nye presidenten høyrer dette siste uttrykket, “som det geniale teamet hans har funnet på for å snakke om dette nye kapittelet i et nytt Jidada, følte han seg større enn Jidadas gjeld til Verdensbanken”. Som i George Orwells klassikar *Animal Farm* (1945) vert det raskt klart at det nye regimet ikkje er så nytt likevel. Men det er også nok av element som skil Bulawayos forteljing frå det over sytti år gamle førelegget. Handlinga er tydeleg lagt til åra etter kuppet mot Mugabe i 2017: presidenten i USA, til dømes, har blitt ein tvitrande bavian, og alle hendingar vert dissekerte av eit kommentarfelt-klingande kor av dyrestemmer. Ein blir også slått av munnlege forteljetrekk, som bruk av repetisjon og faste formuleringar, som i gamle epos. [...] For ein lesar som nyleg har fått i seg Bulawayos bok, er det likevel vondt å la vere å flire når ein ser bileta av den sigrende presidenten Emmerson Mnangagwa. Han har på seg same skjerf som hesten Tuvy i boka, skjerfet som der blir omtala som *Nasjonens skjerf*, ein talisman velsigna av hoffmagikaren.” (Helene Hovden Hareide i *Morgenbladet* 15.–21. september 2023 s. 40)

Franz Kafkas “Liten fabel” (1920; publisert posthumt) er en eksistensialistisk tekst om utveisløshet og den uomgjengelige veien til døden: ““Å,” sa musen, “verden blir trangere for hver dag. Først var den så bred at jeg var redd. Jeg løp videre, og var lykkelig da jeg endelig så murer til høyre og til venstre [...] disse lange murene løper så fort sammen at jeg allerede er i det siste værelset, og der i kroken står fellen som jeg går i.” – “Du behøver bare å løpe i annen retning,” sa katten og åt den.” (oversatt av Waldemar Brøgger) Det skal ha vært Kafkas venn Max Brod som ga teksten tittelen “Kleine Fabel” (http://www.fachdidaktik-einecke.de/9b_Meth_Umgang_mit_Texten/kafka_fabel_textanalyse_und_interpretation.htm; lesedato 14.12.18). Denne fortellingen har ingen åpenbar moral eller lærdom å gi leseren, slik det er vanlig med fabelsjangeren.

“Many of Kafka’s fables contain an inscrutable, baffling mixture of the normal and the fantastic, though occasionally the strangeness may be understood as the outcome of a literary or verbal device, as when the delusions of a pathological state are given the status of reality or when the metaphor of a common figure of speech is taken literally. [...] The fable *Vor dem Gesetz* (1914; *Before the Law*, later incorporated into *The Trial*) presents both the inaccessibility of meaning (the “law”) and humankind’s tenacious longing for it. A group of fables written in 1923-24, the last year of Kafka’s life, all centre on the individual’s vain but undaunted struggle for understanding and security. Many of the motifs in the short fables recur in the novels.” (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Franz-Kafka>; lesedato 23.10.18)

I Kafkas fabler kan personer ha en slags “sanse-angst” slik at de ikke stoler på sine egne sansninger, og slik at noe harmløst og hverdagslig blir truende (Bohrer 1983 s. 198).

Den tyske dramatiker Bertolt Brecht skrev dyrefabler, antakelig primært tiltenkt hans egne barn (Kesting 1959 s. 77).

Den tsjekkiske animasjonsfilmskaperen Bretislav Pojars *Løven og sangen* (1959) er en fabel: En mann i harlekin-drakt spiller for dyrene og skaper mye glede. Bare løven misliker musikken og den gleden som strømmer ut av harlekinskikkelsen. Løven sluker mannen og trekkspillet, men straffes hardt. Fordi trekkspillet blir liggende i magen hans, kommer det trekkspill-lyder hver gang løven beveger seg, slik at han ikke lenger kan gå på jakt og er dømt til å dø av sult (Vrielynck 1981 s. 83).

“Fables are an age-old way to get a moral across through telling a story. [...] We may also have learned the lesson about not “crying wolf,” or telling a lie to get attention because people may not believe us when we tell the truth. Prominent graphic artists bring these tales and others to life in *Fable Comics*, a collection edited by Chris Duffy. Most, though not all, of the stories are based on fables from Aesop. A note in the back of the book defines a fable as “a story with a lesson, usually – not always – starring animals.” The oldest fables may come from many authors and many sources, but some of the more modern ones come from people who are well known, like the Russian satirist Ivan Krilof or the American author Ambrose Bierce. This collection is accessible for kids as young as six, and should be fun for the whole family. Each tale is reimagined by the artists with both words and graphics, and the origin of the fable is labeled. Because different artists illustrate each fable, many styles and color schemes appear in the book.” (<https://motherdaughterbookclub.com/2015/10/book-review-fable-comics-edited-by-chris-duffy/>; lesedato 17.07.18)

Amerikaneren Ambrose Bierce “wrote nearly 850 fables in a literary and journalistic career that spanned more than forty years. [...] Bierce himself reprinted scarcely more than a third of them in the two editions of his *Fantastic Fables* (1899, 1911). Bierce’s fables are unique of their kind, and yet they reveal a thorough familiarity with the long history of the fable as a literary form; indeed, much of their brilliance resides in their adaptation and expansion of that form. What sets Bierce’s fables apart from others of their kind – aside from their sheer quantity and their consistent brilliance – is their pungently satirical “morals,” their skewering of a wide array of political, social, and even literary foibles, and their exemplification of Bierce’s sharp skepticism in regard to human character and endeavor. The man who urged a budding writer to remember that “this is a world of fools and rogues, blind with superstition, tormented with envy, consumed with vanity, selfish, false, cruel, cursed with illusions – frothing mad!” spent a lifetime enunciating that view in his fables. [...] in the fable Bierce seemed to find an ideal means to convey his pungent opinions on life, literature, and society” (S. T. Joshi i <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/j.ctv177tggw.3.pdf>; lesedato 14.06.25).

Den italienske biologen og forfatteren Alessandro Boffas bok *Du er et dyr, Viskovitsj* (1998, på norsk 2002) handler om en hann som i alle tilfellene heter Viskovitsj, men i én historie er han en rotte, i en annen et murmeldyr osv. Han er alltid viklet inn i en (kjærlighets-)historie med en hunn som heter Ljuba. Boka kan oppfattes som en fabelsamling.

“William Millman, who worked at the mission station Yakusu [i Congo], reported in the early 1900s that he had translated forty of Aesop’s fables, but burnt the lot after being questioned by a young man if they were God’s word. Millman interpreted the comment as ignorance on the questioner’s part, which it could well have been. But it might also have been an interesting generic classification at work in which a fable and the Bible belong together because they both use similar literary and explanatory techniques.” (Towheed, Crone og Halsey 2011 s. 408)

“En ledende akademiker, grunnleggeren av Asia-instituttet Chung Mong-joon, bruker Æsops fabler for å illustrere det som foregår på Den koreanske halvøya [våren 2013]. Solskinnspolitikken ble tilnærmingspolitikken overfor Nord-Korea kalt under den sørkoreanske presidenten fra 1998 til 2008, Kim Dae-jung. Da ble det investert mye penger til utvikling i nord. Felles interesser skulle binde Nord-Korea til en strategi for økonomiske reformer og vekst. Men i nord drev man som vanlig dobbelt bokholderi, og utviklet atombombe i strid med FNs forutsetninger, og dessuten rakettsystemer i strid med ånden i solskinnspolitikken. Chung Mong-moon bruker derfor historien fra Æsops fabler om nordavinden og sola som konkurrerte om hvem som var best til å få den reisende til å ta av seg frakken som bilde på tingenes tilstand. Nordavinden brukte alt den hadde av krefter for å blåse frakken av mannen, men det førte bare til at

mannen knyttet frakken enda tettere rundt seg. Men da det var solas tur, så varmet den sånn at mannen snart tok av seg frakken. Frivillig, og helt uten tvang. Men Nord-Korea unndrar seg både moralen og logikken i Æsops fabler. År med solskinn hjalp ikke. Nå slipper verdenssamfunnet nordavinden over Nord-Korea vel vitende om at landet trolig er det eneste i verden der sanksjoner ikke biter. Diktaturets allmakt og kontroll er ennå av en slik karakter at opprør ikke er noen mulighet selv når millioner av mennesker dør av sult på grunn av det systematiske vannstyret, slik som på slutten av 1990-tallet. To millioner – ti prosent av folket – døde, uten at det ble registrert opptøyer i landet.” (*Dagbladet* 11. mars 2013 s. 5)

Årboka *Bestia: Yearbook of the Beast Fable Society* ble fra slutten av 1980- og til på 00-tallet utgitt med Benjamin Bennani som redaktør. Det første nummeret i 1989 hadde dette innholdet: “Items included in this inaugural issue were read at the Society’s First International Congress in Agadir, Morocco, in August of 1988. Items in this yearbook are: “Marc Shell, *Beauty and the Beast*”; Robert Lima, “Borges and the Beast: Numerology in *The Book of Imaginary Beings*”; Margaret Parker, “*The Libro de Buen Amor, El Libro de Calila e Digna* and the Picaresque Connection”; Charles Cantalupo, “Anima/1”; Josephine Bloomfield, “Rediscovering Henryson: An Exploration of Obstacles in Canon Formation”; Marijane Osborn, “‘The Fox and the Wolf’: A Verse Translation of Robert Henryson’s Fable”; Henry Kratz, “Three High Points of the Beast Fable in Germany: Der Stricker, Luther, Lessing”; Servanne Woodward, “The Nature of the Beast in Jack London’s Fiction”; Teo Savory, “Free-Form Pentacles: A Fable”; Joyce Hope Scott, “Excising the Other: Liberation Ethics and the Politics of Deference – A Perspective on the Afro-American Animal Tale”; W. Brian Altano, “The Beast Fable As Evasive Anti-Fascist Commentary: *The First Book of Fables* of Carlo Emilio Gadda”; Ronald Cere, “The Theme of Social Protest in the Literary Fables of Thomas de Iriarte”; and Yve Hannah Jourdain, “Two Fables: I. And the Eye Wept Clouds, and II. Shepherds Were No Leopards.” ” (<http://aesop.creighton.edu/jcupub/bestia.htm>; lesedato 10.11.09)

Norske aviser på 1700-tallet inneholdt “biter av en virkelighet vi synes vi kan kjenne igjen i dag, med rubrikkannonser, bekjentgjørelser om høymesser og giftermål, furtne leserbrev eller nyhetssaker om været. Midt oppe i alt dette kommer de litterære tekstene. Men dem er det lite som er velkjent ved: Den desidert mest utbredte sjangeren i 1760-tallets aviser er for eksempel den klassiske dyrefabelen. [...] Sensursituasjonen [i Danmark-Norge på 1700-tallet] gjorde i tillegg de litterære sjangrene attraktive: I fortellinger og fabler kunne en kommentere forhold og personer som ellers ikke kunne snakkes direkte om.” (*Dagbladet* 3. desember 2007 s. 38-39)

“Det var en gang at fabelen var den dominerende sjangeren i den norske litterære offentligheten. Det høres ut som et eventyr, men det er sant: I de første tiårene vi

hadde aviser her til lands, i siste del av 1700-årene, var spaltene stapp fulle av litterær kortprosa. Og de fleste av disse tekstene igjen var fabler, små moralske fortellinger, ofte med dyr i hovedrollene, skrevet av leserne, eller rappet fra utenlandske bøker og tidsskriftet. Kortformen passet perfekt for datidas trange avisformater. Samtidig som fabelens allegoriske og underfundige form hadde lett for å få innpass i et debattklima og en sensursituasjon som ikke tålte alt for mye. [...] slik fablene i gamle dager gjerne ble plassert helt på slutten av avisene, der trykkeren hadde ledig plass [...] Den lille novellesamlingen [Einar Øklands *Forteljingar og fablar frå andre tider*, 2010] som utgis i forbindelse med 70-årsdagen inneholder 14 korte tekster av ganske forskjellige slag. Ingen av dem er fabler i tradisjonell forstand. Men de fleste er fabel-aktige. I de klassiske fablene blir dyr eller andre objekter gitt menneskelig liv for å illustrere et moralsk poeng. I de beste tekstene her er det snarere slik at grensen mellom de fremmede objektene (en manet, en løsevet fot, en kenguru) og det menneskelige oppløses, på både ekkelt og foruroligende vis. Samtidig blir også moralen usynlig, slik at bare tekstens skremmende løfte om visdom står igjen. Resultatet minner mest om det Freud kalte “unheimlich”, u-hjemlig: opplevelsen av at det som er kjent og det som er ukjent går over i hverandre og bytter plass.” (Trygve Riiser-Gundersen i *Dagbladet* 18. januar 2010 s. 44)

Fabler har blitt brukt for å unngå sensur, men likevel bli forstått av de tiltenkte leserne (Gourfinkel 1956 s. 12). Såkalt æsopisk tale er en kode utviklet under politisk forfølgelse. “An example of Aesopian language was the technique worked out in the Russian press between the late 18th and the early 20th century – that is, the system of “deceptive means,” or of encoding (and decoding) freely conceived ideas – as a reaction against the ban that forbade mention of certain ideas, subjects, events, and persons. Specific examples of such techniques were the use of images derived from fables and of allegorical “fairy-tale descriptions,” particularly in the work of M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, who in fact popularized the term “Aesopian language”; semi-transparent circumlocutions and pseudonyms, such as those used by A. V. Amfiteatrov in *The Obmanovs* (Deceivers), his feuilleton about the tsar’s family (the Romanovs); more or less covert allusions; and irony – which, when “clothed in tactfulness,” was invulnerable to censorship. “Foreign” subject matter was used to disguise condemnations of actual conditions in Russia, and common phrases became gibes” (<http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Aesopian+Language>; lesedato 18.01.12)

Fabler kan romme skjulte politiske budskap når de skrives i diktaturstater, skrevet på et slags “slavespråk” for folk flest som myndighetene ikke forstår (Kristin Wardetzky gjengitt fra Hotzel 2013 s. 100).

Amerikaneren James Thurber skrev *Fables for Our Time and Famous Poems Illustrated* (1940) og *Further Fables for Our Time* (1956). Han var “known for his

humor. He wrote a series of fables, which were parodies of the type of fables told by the ancient Greek author Aesop. He also used the fables to satirize contemporary society. A satire is a work that reveals flaws in a subject in order to bring about a positive change.” (https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/2084/0507/files/Thurber_Fables.pdf; lesedato 28.09.20) “Aesop’s fables mirror Greek life around the sixth century B.C.; James Thurber’s depict sophisticated, neurotic Americans in the twentieth century A.D. [...] Aesop’s fables are reassuring – they reinforce conservative moral values. Aesop recommends simple virtues like loyalty, patience, honesty, moderation and industry, etc. The bad or foolish usually get what they deserve, or they must make amends for their errors. [...] Thurber demonstrates the complexity of life by depicting the world as an uncertain, precarious place, where few reliable guidelines exist. He exposes the falsities of clearcut distinctions between right and wrong, good and bad, and tears apart traditional beliefs. In “The Shrike and the Chipmunk” a wife who urges her husband to be an industrious early riser is rewarded by his death: “Early to rise and early to bed/makes a male healthy and wealthy and dead.” A swallow who decides not to rush headlong into danger in “The Glass in the Field” escapes death because “he who hesitates is sometimes saved.” The fairly intelligent fly joins a group of less intelligent flies on a piece of flypaper; hence, “there is no safety in numbers or in anything else.” Thurber’s hen who runs around yelling that the heavens are falling down would have had the last laugh, because the heavens do fall and everyone dies. [...] Despite his emphasis on war, destruction, and mass behavior, Thurber echoes Aesop’s theme of individual folly; but unlike Aesop, he suggests that man cannot know, find, or follow his own inherent character.” (Ruth A. Maharg i <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/248295>; lesedato 28.09.20)

Thurbers “version of the tortoise and the hare has the tortoise ironically remind us that there is a fable about a tortoise and a hare; he “read in an ancient book” a story in which a tortoise beat a hare in a race and never read anything about a hare that beat a tortoise in a race, and thinks therefore that he could beat a hare and sets out to find one, to challenge him to a race. The tortoise loses, naturally (Thurber, *Fables* 83). [...] Thurber’s “Lion’s Share” fable (Thurber, “Further Fables” 23-2) has King Lion lose all the booty in the form of taxes and hunting licenses. Helmut Arntzen’s lion (6) does not fare any better: he is informed that, although he is still technically “King of the Beasts,” he is now only a constitutional monarch in a parliamentary democracy.” (Carnes 1993)

Thurber har en “fatalistic view [...] which were influenced by the spread of Nazism before World War II, the war itself and the McCarthy trials in the fifties. [...] man’s greatest fear is man himself. [...] In “The Rabbits Who Caused All the Trouble,” Thurber attacks American indifference to the Nazis; a group of wolves who decide they don’t like rabbits blame them for all natural catastrophes. The wolves imprison

the rabbits and eat them when they try to escape. The other animals blandly accept the wolves' explanation of the rabbits' deaths. In "The Green Isle in the Sea," Thurber warns of oncoming war. An old man wants only to enjoy what is left of his life, so he hobbles to a park where the barren trees offer no protection from the "hundred planes which appeared suddenly overhead [and that] had an excellent view of the little old gentleman through their bombing sights." Thurber saw the postwar period as a time of intellectual and moral confusion. In "The Bears and the Monkeys" the monkeys give the bears freedom and explain, "Now you are free to do what I tell you to do"; their motto is, "Why stand on your own two feet when you can stand on ours?" Thurber's moral emphasizes his point: "It is better to have the ring of freedom in your ears than in your nose." Thurber attacks McCarthyism in "The Trial of the Old Watchdog." A court of foxes finds an innocent watchdog guilty, and banishes a peaceable mongoose because he doesn't exhibit "normal" mongoose tendencies. When an old hen misunderstands the complimentary phrase "very proper gander" to mean something about propaganda, rumors fly; the animals eventually drive the gander out of the country." (Ruth A. Maharg i <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/248295>; lesedato 28.09.20)

Den amerikanske forfatteren Arnold Lobel skrev fabler på 1970-tallet og *Fables* (1980). "The lobster occurs as a character in no "canonical" (i.e., Aesopic) fable of which I am aware, nor does the rhinoceros or the kangaroo. The use of these characters proclaims Lobel's independence from some of the traditional constraints of the Aesopic fable as much as his title and the familiar structuring of his stories claim the advantages of it. Yet Lobel has taken from all along the fable tradition. [...] "A Crocodile in the Bedroom" (2) begins with a Kafka-like (not Kafkaesque, but Kafka-like) opening: "A Crocodile became increasingly fond of the wallpaper in his bedroom." That situation is the problem. The crocodile stared at the ordered patterns of flowers and leaves (well-illustrated in the accompanying drawing which catches this aspect of the fable and not its moral or the "action"). The crocodile becomes so accustomed to the order that the comparative disarray of even the "ordered" growth of Mrs. Crocodile's garden is abhorrent to him. Overcome with distaste for the untidiness everywhere around him, he returns to his room, takes to his bed, and (we assume) slowly slips from life. Without making too much of the similarity, the moral is as much like Kafka as anything else: "Without a doubt there is such a thing as too much order." [...] Lobel's use of traditional characterization is best seen in "King Lion and the Beetle" [...] The lion's role in society and his comical vain insistence upon his "kingliness" is the point of the fable and causes the lion's (literal) downfall. His vanity, expressed physically with robes, heavy jewels and a crown, causes the lion to fall into the mud, down to the level of the beetle from whom he demands acknowledgment. None of Lobel's other fables depends upon traditional characterization as much as this one does." (Carnes 1993)

I Lobels “The Baboon’s Umbrella” er det “two characters: the baboon, who complained that he was unable to close his umbrella, and his obliging friend the gibbon, who suggested the cutting of large gaping holes in it. The action is easily foreseen as the rain begins to fall. The baboon and the gibbon here are not disturbingly out of character at all. Although they are not drawn from standard fabular characters, they do function quite well as actors. This is a very well-constructed fable, and a great deal of its strength and appeal comes from the moral tag line: “Advice from friends is like the weather. Some of it is good and some of it is bad.” [...] “The Crab and the Lobster” [...] As the two crustaceans set sail on the sea, they encounter a storm and the boat begins to sink. The lobster answers the crab’s horrified cries with:

Of course, we are sinking. This old boat is full of holes.
Have courage, old friend. Remember, we are creatures of the sea.

Of course they are. The marvel here is that we, too, as fable readers, are not accustomed to having fable creatures operate in their own natural elements, as natural creatures, or falling back upon natural abilities to save themselves. Even the crab seems to have forgotten that although he is playing a costumed human in the fable, he can still live under water. The epimythium, “Even the taking of small risks will add excitement to life,” is effective again for its irony. There are, of course, no risks involved at all.” (Carnes 1993)

Den britiske forfatteren William Goldings *Lord of the Flies* (1954), “one of the most widely-read, widely-admired novels in the English language in the last quarter of a century, has been called a fable. John Peter, in a pioneering article on Golding’s work, has this to say in explanation of the term: “Fables are those narratives which leave the impression that their purpose was anterior, some initial thesis or contention which they are apparently concerned to embody and express in concrete terms.” [...] The fabulist is a moralist. He cannot make a story without a human lesson tucked away in it.” (Whitley 1970 s. 7) *Lord of the Flies* “is a heavily loaded fable of the “darkness of men’s hearts.” The schoolboys’ efforts to build a civilised order on their island are inevitably undermined by violence and sectarianism. I call the fable “heavily loaded” because it is easy to prove that civilisation is only skin-deep if the people you show trying to build it are only partly civilised animals in the first place (i.e., children). It is as easy as proving in the manner of George Orwell’s novel *Animal Farm* that human beings cannot run their own affairs by portraying them as farmyard animals. In both cases, the form of the fable determines the moral outcome.” (Eagleton 2010 s. 29)

Franskmannen Jean Anouilh er mest kjent for sine skuespill, men skrev også fabler. I 1962 publiserte han *Fabler*, en samling med 47 tekster, bl.a. “Sjiraffen og skilpadden”, “Ulven og huggormen” og “Hanulven, hunulven og ulvungen”. I noen av fablene

opptrer det bare mennesker, f.eks. i “Astronomen” og “Den altfor vakre konen”, og i andre er det kun gjenstander, som i “Badekaret” og “Praktvogna”. Hans fabler kan være sentrert om en bestemt hendelse, som i “Begravelsen” og “Rettsaken”. Noen av tekstene henspiller direkte på fabler av La Fontaine, som får ny og til dels helt omvendt mening hos Anouilh. Det gjelder blant andre “Eika og sivet”. Her blir sivet til en ubetydelig og umoralsk skikkelse, mens eika er sterk og moralsk (<https://www.kartable.fr/ressources/francais/profil-d-oeuvre/fables-anouilh/25187>; lesedato 28.09.20). Det er ikke lenger eika som er arrogant, som hos La Fontaine, men sivet. Eika bøyer seg ikke for vinden, mens sivet straks bøyer seg for det som er sterkere enn det. Sivet retter seg opp igjen, men det er svakt og feigt. Eika bevarer sin verdighet selv når den er hugget ned – den vil heller dø enn å svikte sin overbevisning (<https://www.etudier.com/fiches-de-lecture/fables-anouilh/une-vision-critique-de-la-societe/>; lesedato 28.09.20).

Tyskeren Günther Anders publiserte i 1968 fabelsamlingen *Blikket fra tårnet*. “It was one of his principles that fable could explain fable. In Anders’ tale “Die Umdrehung,” two listeners exclaim to Aesop their amazement: “How can it ever be,” they cry, “that you always have such success translating your insights into metaphorical language!” Not so, says Aesop. They have it the wrong way around. He does not begin with insight and proceed to translation, as allegorists do. Rather, the work is to turn imagery to insight. “What you call fables,” he concludes, “are allegories in reverse” (*Blick* 101). [...] Anders’ interest in using hyperbole, fable, aphorism, and other stylistic strategies as tools to overcome the imaginative failure – the Promethean discrepancy – which prevents men and women from fully comprehending the power of the social and technical systems they have created and in which they are embedded.” (Daniel C. Costello i <https://escholarship.org/content/qt5nr2z210/qt5nr2z210.pdf>; lesedato 03.06.20)

Den tyske litteraturforskeren og forfatteren Helmut Arntzen skrev noen fabler. En av dem er svært kort: “Ulven gikk ned til elva, og lammet løp bort. Bare bli – du forstyrrer ikke meg, ropte ulven. Takk, ropte lammet tilbake, men jeg har lest Aesop.” Tyskeren Wolfdietrich Schnurre skrev bl.a. fabelen “Politikk”:

“En gås hadde i løpet av natten frosset fast i isen. Dette oppdaget reven og snek seg nærmere mens den slikket seg om munnen. Rett ved gåsa gikk reven igjennom isen og måtte svømme rundt i hullet for å holde seg flytende. “Vet du hva”, sa den etter en stund, “la oss glemme vårt fiendskap og være venner”. Gåsa trakk på skuldrene: “Det kommer an på.” “På hva da?” gispet reven. “Om det tiner eller fryser mer” sa gåsa.”

Schnurres tekst handler om den antatt svakere (gåsa) som på grunn av ytre omstendigheter slipper unna en motstander som er sterkere (reven). Den sterkeste

mister sin makt gjennom en uventet hendelse. Man kan aldri være sikker på å være overlegen en svakere part. Hvem som helst kan bli et offer for tilfeldigheter som gjør en svak og avhengig av hjelp (<https://www.seniorenportal.de/community/blog/analyse-zu-wolfdietrich-schnurres-fabel-politik/34610>; lesedato 21.09.20).

Den syrisk-tyske forfatteren Rafik Schami har skrevet eventyr og fabler, blant annet en fabel om hvorfor en løk får tårer til å renne. Noen av hans fabler har blitt kalt påminnelser om dystre samfunnsforhold (<https://www.dtv.de/buch/rafik-schami-das-schaf-im-wolfspelz-11026/>; lesedato 20.04.22). Samlingen *Sauen i ulvepels* (1982) inneholder ni fabler og eventyr, og også andre av hans utgivelser rommer fabler.

Tegneserien *Bosnian Fables* (1998) av den slovenske tegneren Tomaž Lavrič “is an award-winning graphic novel comprising several stories, intriguingly carrying the names of different animals (Pig, Dog, Mouse, Parrot). The stories are to an extent about the animals, but as in all classical fables, the narrative is actually about people: in this case during the tragic civil war in Bosnia at the end of the twentieth century.” (Gravett 2011 s. 700)

Ordet “bjørnetjeneste” betyr “en tjeneste som ikke er den andre personen til gagn. Men mange unge tror at det betyr en kjempestor tjeneste, forklarer språkforskeren [Helene Uri]. Dette tror hun kommer av ordet bjørneklem – som betyr en stor klem. Ordet bjørnetjeneste har sin opprinnelse fra en gammel fabel. Det var en bjørn som var veldig glad i eieren sin, og da eieren sovnet var det en flue som krøp over ansiktet hans. Bjørnen ønsket å fjerne fluen, og valget å slå til fluen. Men når bjørnen slår fluen, treffer den mannen i samme slengen og ender med å drepe han.” (<https://www.tv2.no/a/11230074/>; lesedato 21.08.20)

Edelsteinen

Fra midten av 1300-tallet er fabelsamlingen *Edelsteinen* av sveitseren Ulrich Boner (eller Bonerius) bevart. Han var antakelig dominikanermunk, og har sannsynligvis basert tekstene på verk fra middelalderen, nærmere bestemt *Anonymus Neveleti* og *Avian* og moraliserende, korte fortellinger. Boners verk var en av de første som ble trykket (i Bamberg i år 1461 og kanskje det første på tysk språk) og dette indikerer at det var en populær bok. Opprinnelig var verket trolig på 100 fabler på vers og med rim, fabler som var stilt sammen parvis ut fra tematiske kriterier (<http://wirote.informatik.uni-leipzig.de/mediavistik/werk/22>; lesedato 20.02.20).

Boners *Edelsteinen* er “a popular collection of 100 moralizing fables on religious and political themes.” (<https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095517813>; lesedato 15.01.24) “He compiled and translated his collection of fables for Johann von Ringgenberg, his Bernese patron. Known as *bîschafft* or *bîspel*

(“examples”), each of the tales emphasizes a moral. Written in Middle High German, the collection was probably completed in about 1350 and is titled *Der Edelstein* (“The Precious Stone”), because precious stones were said to cast a spell, and Boner hoped that his tales would do the same. Although he named only two of his sources – Aesop’s *Fables* and the fables of Flavius Avianus (a 4th-century Latin writer) – he may have drawn on other material.” (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ulrich-Boner>; lesedato 15.01.24)

“Bonerius, called Boner in the German context, was a fourteenth-century Dominican priest living and working in Bern, Switzerland, and hence was an experienced confessor who obviously knew enough about people’s ordinary lives and their common shortcomings to employ in a very pragmatic sense the genre of the fable for his didactic purposes and literary reflections on everyday problems and conflicts. [...] familiar with the common issues in human life, either through his personal observations or through listening to countless confessions given to him in the privacy of the church (Boner, ed. and trans. Stange, 2016; Boner, *The Fables of Ulrich Bonerius*, trans. Classen, 2020).” (Classen 2021) Bonerius’ fabler skal fremme livsvisdom, “virtues, ethical thinking, morality, but also political values, that is, a broad discourse regarding the fundamental values serving as the glue holding human society together [...] As Bonerius emphasizes in his prologue, “This little book is properly entitled / as *The Gemstone* because it contains / fables with a variety of wise statements about life, / and it produces also good spirits, / such as the thorn does to the rose” (64-68). Examining the fables proper, we can easily recognize a whole slew of fundamental issues which often are closely associated with the Seven Deadly Sins, but then also with many other basic human foibles and weaknesses: sloth (no. 2), slander (no. 3), unjust violence (no. 5), lack of loyalty and deception (no. 6), false witnesses (no. 7), evil company (no. 8), excessive greed (no. 9), thanklessness (no. 11), mockery (no. 14), and so forth. [...] The genre lends itself exceedingly well for the treatment of the failures, problems, conflicts, and strife in human life.” (Classen 2021)

Det er “strong emphasis on ethics in conjunction with reason also in virtually all of Bonerius’s fables and similar narratives where rather simplistic narrative plots easily open up to profound messages about fundamental issues of life. The large number of manuscript copies (thirty-six) and the existence of two incunabula containing Bonerius’s collection confirm that he had obviously managed to hit the nerve of his readers/listeners who must have regarded these fables as wake-up calls to change their lives and to pursue higher ideals in their ordinary existence. [...] By way of drawing from images, sceneries, animals, plants and trees, reptiles, and birds, the narrator succeeds in addressing issues that are, unfortunately, virtually innate in human existence, whether we call them vices, virtues, habits, attitudes, or behavior patterns. In “Of a Tree on a Mountain” (no. 4), for instance, we are informed of a fundamental

pattern for all of human life which we have to embrace if we want to achieve our goals and gain the desired rewards.” (Classen 2021)

“The metaphor of the tree as a mirror of human life obviously intrigued Bonerius considerably since he resorted to it several times. In “Of a Fir Tree and a Thorn Bush” (no. 86), for instance, we hear of an exchange between both the tree and the bush, with the former displaying considerable arrogance over the humble neighbor below it. The tree prides itself with its outstanding beauty, as people have given much praise to it, whereas the bush is generally disregarded or even detested because of its thorns. Hardly has their conversation ended, however, when a man arrives with an ax and cuts down the tree, which invites the bush to question all of the tree’s previous claims, emphasizing: “Your beauty has hurt you, / Your fame has put you into a checkmate” (pp. 29-30). This then allows the narrator to address the universal problem of self-conceit and pride, which eventually led the fir tree to its demise – a direct analogy to the same issues in human life. Bonerius addresses this poignantly, and voices thereby a timeless message: “No one should overly praise / one’s own body: it is filled with weaknesses / and makes the person remain in misery” (pp. 35-37), certainly a direct allusion to the most authoritative and popular text ever produced in the high Middle Ages, the *De miseria condicione humane* by Lotario dei Segni, the later Pope Innocent III, from ca. 1200” (Classen 2021).

I Bonerius’ “narrative “of an Oak Tree and a Reed” (no. 83), we encounter another attempt to reflect upon the essentials of human life by way of resorting to images drawn from nature. In this case, we hear about a mighty oak tree standing on the top of a mountain impressing everyone with its enormous strength. Yet, one day, a strong storm overcomes the oak, uproots it, and makes it tumble down the hill, ending up in a swamp where many reeds are growing. Once again, the poet projects a very ordinary situation in nature most of the people in his audience would have been able to grasp immediately. The mighty one is suddenly facing his downfall; all of his strength did not help the oak tree to resist an even stronger force, which proves to be a mundane but intriguing message reflecting a certain political position which Bonerius certainly espoused. In a good number of his fables he expressed, actually quite similarly as Marie de France, explicit criticism of tyrannical rulers and thereby warned contemporary rulers about the instability of their position [...] The oak tree has been defeated, after a stronger force had robbed it of all of its strength. In its conversation with the reed, the oak expresses its confusion as to how this might have been possible, wondering out aloud about the reed’s survival in face of that blistering storm, here called Aquilo, that is, Boreas (p. 14). The narrative gains its relevance precisely at this point because the reed provides the crucial teaching. It explains that it knew its own limits and understood that it would not have been able to resist that storm (pp. 30-31). In other words, for the reed, there exists a hierarchy in strength, and the reed has to

submit to all those forces greater than itself. Humbleness, critical self-assessment, submission under a power far mightier than itself, and its ability to bend down almost to the ground made it possible for the reed to survive the attack. Insofar as the oak tree had aggressively fought against the wind, disregarding its superiority, it had denied physical reality and was hence uprooted and thrown down the hill to its own death. The reed can precisely analyze the cause for the oak tree's downfall, which hence becomes applicable to life at large both in the world of war and in the world of urban existence: "Your strength and your pride were too great, / and, therefore, you have lost the fight. / If you had been able to bend down, / you would have remained standing as I do" (pp. 41-44). Only if the individual recognizes the greater structure of all life, would s/he be able to come to terms with it in practical terms. No one is safe from external forces, and those who assume that they cannot be attacked by any enemy would be the first to face defeat, from outside or from inside. Bonerius then concludes, which proves to be a universal lesson certainly valid until today: "He who cannot give in sometimes, / does not seem to me to be a wise person" (pp. 49-50). In order to underscore the meaning of this message, the narrator resorts to two proverbs which bring the realization by the oak tree to a point, such as: "the more strength you have, the worse the fall" (p. 54). Of course, Bonerius then abstains from explaining the lesson any further; he does not offer an interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the oak tree and the reed, but the narrative illustrates the essential point clearly enough. The mighty and rich in this world are not exempt from external dangers, and the more they puff themselves up with pride about their independence, extreme influence, and power, the more likely it would be for them to suffer a bad downfall, suddenly beaten by an unexpected force." (Classen 2021)

"[W]e can also turn to the fable "Of a fox and an eagle" (no. 16) where a tree matters once again, though not as centrally as in the previous cases. The subtitle of the fable clearly conveys the message of this tale: "On deception and smartness," which indicates, once again, the overarching interest pursued by the poet. For him it was of extreme importance to operate rationally and smartly in this world [...] What we can observe here is not the destruction of the arrogant tree, but the function of a tree for the powerful one, here the eagle with its young ones, as a kind of fortress, which it has to abandon at the end because of the fox's intelligent handling of the problem. The eagle had snatched all the young foxes as feed for its own young ones placed in a nest high up a tree. The female fox expresses greatest worry, reflecting basic maternal instincts and love for her children, which in itself serves here well as further evidence that the modern notion of childhood being regarded as an irrelevant age for medieval people until the children had grown up would have to be dismissed as one further mythical notion (Classen, ed. *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, 2005). The fox does everything in her power to rescue her little ones and demonstrates extraordinary skill and intelligence to achieve its goal. Since the eagle at first does not

care about any pleadings, the fox finally assembles straw around the tree and sets fire to the trunk. The smoke eventually forces the eagle to abandon its prey, though it remains unclear how this is happening. But it is a fable, so we do not need to concern ourselves with such details. More importantly, as the narrator emphasizes, “Only the courageous one survives!” (p. 28), who then adds the significant lesson: “Intelligence is better than brute force” (p. 37)” (Classen 2021).

“Bonarius does not argue as a pacifist, does not appeal to his audience to abstain from defending themselves with all their available strength if necessary. He only points out that “He who combines force with wisdom will succeed” (p. 41), which is then combined with the additional observation: “He who is happy to do something good will find a good solution” (p. 42). [...] yet another apothegm of universal value: “Force without intelligence does not last long, / just like snow exposed to the heat of the sun” (pp. 43-45). [...] As he concludes, there have been often some cases in which a “low-class person hurts the high-ranking one” (p. 45), and if a peasant knows how to employ intelligence, he might be able to put even a king into checkmate (p. 46). Injustice, however, imposed on individuals by means of force would never achieve its goal (p. 47).” (Classen 2021)

Bonarius skrev fabler “as a literary medium to illuminate situations, attitudes, ideas, forms of behavior, and social, political, spiritual, and economic conditions in everyday life [...] As he formulates it in his epilogue: “A thin peel covers it [the treasure of deep wisdom, 14], / and the kernel consists of great sweetness. / A small garden often yields / the fruit from which you will gain solace” (pp. 16-18). [...] As in the case of many other collections of fables, the *Gemstone* contains a plethora of valuable gems about virtues and vices, about foolishness and smartness, and the poet never seems to hesitate to address the issues head-on irrespective of whom he might target on whatever social level. People should act with foresight (no. 23), they should look for their own inner freedom and guard themselves from political and economic subjugation (no. 25). Excessive fear (no. 29) and evil advice (no. 30) should be avoided, whereas reasonable confidence would be important to achieve one’s goals (no. 32). Interestingly, Bonarius also shares with his audience advice about legal issues, such as forced oaths which would have no standing in a court (no. 35), and he peaks out against the use of cuss-words [= banning/skjellsord] (no. 41). The well-known and timeless fable of the ant and the locus (no. 42) reminds the audience about the need to pursue rationality and foresight to be ready for problems in life, while “Of a Mouse and Its Children” (no. 43) warns about the danger resulting from hypocrites. And the equally popular “Of a Man and His Son and a Donkey” (no. 52) concludes with the universally valid admonishment: “However much a person does good deeds, / the world will not regard it more than half good. / With open eyes many people are

blind / whose hearts are filled with so much poison / that, whatever they hear or see, / they say the worst about it” (pp. 95-100).” (Classen 2021)

Onkel Remus’ fabler

Den amerikanske journalisten og forfatteren Joel Chandler Harris publiserte i 1881 boka *Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings: The Folk-Lore of the Old Plantation*. En norsk oversettelse kom på norsk i 1952 med tittelen *Fortellinger av onkel Remus*.

Harris skrev i 1879 “a little tale which was to become the first in a unique series. The simple story evoked such enthusiasm that, between 1880 and 1906, the series grew into six books, all centered about the mythopoeic character of a wise, lovable old Negro named Uncle Remus, who was a synthesis of four Negroes whom Harris had known [...] in the plantation cabins of the slaves.” (Dauner 1948)

“A fable is a short and at first glance funny animal story which is used to teach something. Joel Chandler Harris, a southern journalist, presented in 1880 animal stories or legends told by a former slave, Uncle Remus [...] In the fictional framework of the stories, a plantation owner’s little son listened and questioned the old man about the animals, just as Harris, as a Middle Georgia youth, had also listened to the slaves telling stories. All the tales have *linguistic, literary* and *historical* importance from the moral and social points of view. Harris with *The Uncle Remus Tales* brings us back to the time of Aesop and La Fontaine. Like these authors, Harris, through the power of words, used the metaphorical world of the fable to instruct and seduce the reader. [...] the wonderful adventures of Brother Rabbit, Brother Fox, and the other brethren who flourished in that strange past over which this modern Aesop had thrown the veil of fable.” (Fraile 2007) Hovedpersonen kalles “Brer Rabbit”, der “brer” kommer fra “bre’r”, en kortform for “brother”.

“In Harris’s book, Uncle Remus is a former slave who does odd jobs around the plantation after his emancipation. Night after night he tells his animal stories to a little boy, the son of the plantation owners. Apparently, Uncle Remus was a loyal and submissive slave but in fact he is ironic and sarcastic when he tells the stories to the little boy who is in this way influenced by the Negro. Harris, like all fabulists, denounced through the animal tales and through the relationship between Uncle Remus and the little boy the social system in the old South, especially slavery. Joel Chandler Harris, as his different biographers state, was a shy man but at the time of writing his animal fables he was given a special gift, the same that was given to Aesop: “the gift of gab.” [gode talegaver] In fact, language is the instrument that Uncle Remus uses to attract the boy to fulfil his purpose. Uncle Remus is always trying to attract the child. That is why he sometimes leaves the end of a story for the

following night, arousing the boy's curiosity and the desire to meet the old Negro again. The admiration, respect and devotion that Uncle Remus feels for Brer Rabbit, the hero of his tales, who represents the slaves, is obvious and the old negro makes the little boy feel the same. He makes the stories desirable for the boy to such an extent that the worst punishment for him is to be deprived of them. He piques the boy's curiosity, withholds additional information and the conclusions of the stories, and reproduces the sounds and actions of the animal characters like a skilled story-teller." (Fraile 2007)

Historiene foregår i "the animal world; but it is by implication also the human world. [...] There is a primitive, natural "cuteness" about the personalities of the animals, which may lie for us in the attractiveness of any miniature being or world. [...] It is easily apparent why the Negro selected for his hero Brer Rabbit, the most harmless of animals, who is to be repeatedly victorious over the fangs and the superior strength of the bear, fox, wolf, lion, and even over the machinations of Mr. Man. [...] This essential comic contrast is further embodied in the constant spectacle of strength outwitted by weakness, of brute force outdone by mischievous ingenuity. [...] Here as elsewhere, then, the comic or humorous is only the reverse side of the tragic, the conscious or subconscious rationalization of the irrational." (Dauner 1948)

Blant fablene i den norske oversettelsen er:

"Bror Kanin og bror Rev ber hverandre til middag"

"Hvorfor herr Pungrotte er så fredelig av seg"

"Bror Kanin lurer bror Rev på det groveste"

"Bror Rev blir lurt av herr Hawk"

"Herr Ulv får lang nese"

"Stakkars Per Spurv"

"Da bror Kanin reddet kjøttmaten sin"

"Bror Kanin og bror Bamse"

"Bror Bamse fanger gamle bror Frosk"

"Joel Chandler Harris rose to fame with the figure of Uncle Remus and his Brer Rabbit stories. The negro character of Uncle Remus originated in Harris's mind as a consequence of his stay in a plantation as a child; it was there that he got to know about the black dialect and folklore that he would reproduce in his work. Florence Baer in *Sources and Analogues of the Uncle Remus Tales* claims the following: "His [Harris's] is the first serious attempt to record the folktales, songs and sayings of the Southern Negroes in the exact language and style in which they existed" (1980:24). Her study points out the accuracy of Harris' tales in both content and oral styles as recognized by modern collectors of African materials. Harris used the language and dialect of the negro slave in the "Old South" in his writings of Uncle Remus. How did

this make his stories believable and yet entertaining? And what is more, knowing the fact that Harris was a journalist, were the stories written for entertainment alone, or were they lessons in humanity? Just as the popularity of Jean de la Fontaine's fables, which aimed at criticizing the king's political regime, was not accidental, it was not a mere coincidence either that Harris wrote his Uncle Remus stories at the time of the Reconstruction Period, when there was somehow a certain nostalgic sentiment for ancient times. The Southerner of that period had suffered the destruction of the Plantation System and all the consequences which derived from it. An overt attack by Harris against the Old South and the Slavery system could have damaged the "Southern Pride" and people's feelings. Because of this, Harris made use of allegorical tales for his social and political protest." (Fraile 2007)

"In these stories animals steal food from one another, lie, cheat, trick etc.; however, they observe the social rules: they speak to each other as neighbours whenever they meet, they take meals together, they start communal projects and go together to court "Miss Meadows and de gals" (who supposedly represent prostitutes). Power, food, and sex are the main topics of the book. The major characters are Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox, Brer Bear, Brer Wolf and Old Man Tarrypin. But there are also other animals such as the frog or the sparrow. However, there is a hierarchy in this animal plantation. The strongest animals, i.e., the fox, the wolf, the bear, the cow and the lion represent the aristocratic and white High Southern Society. But in fact they do not enjoy this status since the weakest animals (the rabbit, the turtle, the frog, the owl, the polecat, the sparrow and the goose) manage to trick them and the system by using their intelligence. Therefore, physical force is not the way to get to the top of this society" (Fraile 2007).

"When a guiltless Possum dies in the ordeal by fire suggested by Brer Rabbit for the theft of the butter which Brer Rabbit himself had stolen, we echo the Boy's instinctive protest. It is exactly these instances, those which lie beyond (or below) the realm of mere mischief, which suggest to us a deeper import in the fables; for it is here that an elementary sense of moral conflict appears, with the emergence of an elementary sense of ethics. [...] Once Mr. Lion had driven him from the drinking stream. Until the day when Brer Rabbit ties Mr. Lion to a tree, pretending anxiety over the latter's safety in an impending (but wholly imaginary) hurricane, Brer Rabbit has been "huntin' a chance fer to ketch up wid 'im." And so it goes with all who have pursued him, frightened him, or caught him – Brer Fox, Brer Bear, Brer Wolf, Brer Hawk – even Mr. Man. They all come somehow to grief, and Brer Rabbit continues to maintain the uneasy respect of the community. [...] When Brer Rabbit is caught by Mr. Man and hung up in a bag upon a limb to await final disposition, Brer Possum, passing by, inquires what he is doing in the bag. Brer Rabbit replies that he is listening to the singing in the clouds, which is so beautiful, as he describes it, that Brer Possum

begs to be allowed to listen, too. He releases Brer Rabbit, gets into the bag himself, and later is severely beaten by Mr. Man.” (Dauner 1948)

“There is an undramatic realism in the fact that Brer Rabbit consistently triumphs over the other animals. He is simply “smarter” than his opponents, who are always strangely gullible, and who never learn from sad experience any more than human beings apparently learn. Such realism precludes any sentimentality. When catastrophes occur, they are outside the realm of the tragic; merely recognized as inevitable in a simplified existence where life is continual hazard, where bad luck hovers daily in the shadow of the hawk’s wing, where death follows the hawk’s swift plunge, and where both life and death must be fatalistically accepted. Occasionally the other animals band together in an effort to controvert Brer Rabbit’s unholy ingenuities. But they almost never succeed” (Dauner 1948).

“Brer Rabbit, out visiting the neighbors one day, enters Brer Wolf’s house. He finds only old Granny Wolf, crippled, blind, and half deaf, sitting by the fire. Brer Rabbit makes himself comfortable by the fire, over which hangs a pot of boiling water. By and by he tells her that he, too, is crippled and getting blind, and that she must boil him in the water. He then drops a chunk of wood into the pot, causing a perceptible splash, and a little later reports that he is feeling better. At this, Granny Wolf begs him to put her into the pot. He does so, and boils her to death. Then, not yet satisfied, he disposes of her bones, leaving her meat in the pot, and, disguised in her frock and cap, sits down to await the return of Brer Wolf and his family. When they arrive, Brer Rabbit invites them to dinner. After Brer Wolf has consumed a large portion of his mother, the children discover the terrible facts. In fury, Brer Wolf pursues Brer Rabbit until the latter, exhausted, takes refuge under a leaning tree, from which he escapes only through trickery. There is a macabre, ghoulish quality in this episode which shocks the Boy. “I didn’t think Brer Rabbit would burn anybody to death in a pot of boiling water,” he remonstrates. But Uncle Remus merely laughs and remarks metaphorically, “Dat was endurin’ er de dog days. Der er mighty wom times, dem ar dog days is.” We may interpret the “dog days” as an era when the crudities of existence are most apt to produce an expression of sheer savage, uninhibited nature. There is an earliest time-world suggested here. And so perhaps we may say that the levels of experience presented here suggest stages in man’s emergence from the period of savagery and of a brutal physical existence.” (Dauner 1948)

“Repeatedly the Boy voices our own shock and protest against brutality and injustice. His questions and comments impose upon the basic amorality a naive moral judgment. Thus, symbolically and mythically considered, the Boy is the emerging awareness of right-of appropriateness, pity, justice, order. Obviously, the Boy is eternal Child, asking his terribly simple, his often unanswerable, questions, as he first observes a

fascinating natural world; and as, maturing, he encounters the implications of a moral universe in which evil, here present as trickery, injustice, revenge, and death, becomes manifest. Still a dweller in the world of light and imagination and innocence, he must protest against these painful aspects of experience. [...] It is partly through Uncle Remus that his maturing, or becoming “realistic,” occurs. Uncle Remus is the Wise Man of his tribe who, as the storyteller, articulates and hands down to the young the wisdoms of his varied worlds – varied, because Uncle Remus is the mediator between the world of man and the world of the animals. Thus he presents to the Boy a simplified realization of the complexity of experience; and thus he teaches the Boy some hard facts, voiced in the terms of the unsentimental life that he interprets. [...] In the Boy we have gentle instinct, highly developed sensibility, posing in essence the questions of the first philosophers. In Uncle Remus we have the symbol of the wisdom of Things-as-They-Are, a simple, realistic acceptance and humorous transmission of the strenuous conditions and paradoxes of life. In Brer Rabbit we have the inescapable irony of the Irrational, coupled with man’s own terribly humorous struggle for survival. [...] Brer Rabbit thus emerges as an innately paradoxical figure” (Dauner 1948).

“Within this code of behavior the crude antidote to such inequality (which exists in the nature of things) is eat, or be eaten. Thus one must employ all possible competences – ingenuity, trickery, knowledge of one’s own and one’s opponent’s powers and weaknesses. Thus Brer Rabbit, constitutionally weak and helpless against superior strength, becomes the epitome of the subtler capacities, and so survives in a hostile world as man himself survived in the world of the saber-toothed tiger. Time and again Brer Rabbit is caught; but each time he escapes against nearly impossible odds. And partly because he has the desperate courage of the weak, partly because of his humor – his brazen effrontery and ingenuity [...] For Brer Rabbit, that small figure posed against the terrific odds of a world of claw and fang and no pity, he who has only his quick brain and his swift legs, may also be, in effect, ridiculously weak man himself, in a time before mere life-preserving ingenuity has developed into moral intelligence.” (Dauner 1948)

“With regard to its uncomplicated “ethic” Harris once said, “It is not virtue that triumphs here, but helplessness; it is not malice, but mischievousness.” Assuredly, our sympathies are on the side of helplessness, in the figure of Brer Rabbit, who, lacking brawn, must use brains, and who exists in a ruthless, predatory world where brawn must continually be outwitted. And it is also true that mischievousness rather than malice does often motivate his indefatigable prank-playing, which is why we never really resent him. He is both cute and acute. He has a complete aplomb, a never failing ingenuity, even when he lies palpitating in the clutches of a momentarily imminent death. [...] Let us first consider Brer Rabbit, that perennial, ingenious mischief-maker.

In African folklore generally, the Rabbit is the cleverest, the mightiest, of all the animals. He is the Wonder-Worker, figuring particularly in the Bantu tales of the Hare and the Jackal. Since the bulk of the Negroes in the Southern American states are descended from Bantu speaking tribes, Brer Rabbit, as transmitted by Uncle Remus, retains his “supernatural” status. [...] But in the folklore of the Gold Coast the rabbit role is taken by the spider (*anansi*), and on the Slave Coast, by the tortoise (*awon*); and in West Africa the hare rather takes the place of the fox, usually being outwitted by both spider and tortoise” (Dauner 1948).

“As the combined Hero, Transformer, and Trickster, the Hare is a great personage in North American mythology. Some tribes, however, accord him in their myths predominantly a creative, heroic character; while others, in folk tales, record (as does Uncle Remus) his discreditable adventures.” (Dauner 1948)

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