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# THE ANIMATED FABLE FOR CHILDREN AND THE LITERARY TRADITION AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE 64 ZOO LANE

The fable is a story, allegorical,  
that is invented, but truthful  
G. Piramowicz<sup>1</sup>

## THE LITERARY TRADITION

The fable is one of the oldest literary genres, the beginnings of which emerged in various cultures: from Asia through Europe to America. For a long time it existed in the oral form; with time the most popular works or collections of works were written down and, at the same time, underwent various alterations. The existence of this form of story-telling long preceded the theoretical awareness of the genre. The fact that fables functioned for ages in various cultures testifies to the vitality of this “little tale”, deprecated for centuries, because it was regarded as part of “common” literature – popular and, therefore, inferior. But the usefulness of fables was noticed very quickly. They were used in rhetoric as examples that had a strong influence on the listeners<sup>2</sup>, which is confirmed by writings of Aristotle (*Rhetoric*), Quintilian (*Institutio oratoria*) and Cicero (*De inventione*)<sup>3</sup> – the most important ancient the-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted after: Z. Goliński, “Bajka”, [in:] *Słownik literatury polskiego oświecenia*, ed. T. Kostkiewiczowa, Wrocław-Warsaw-Kraków 1991, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> W. Woźnowski, “Bajka”, [in:] *Literatura polska. Przewodnik encyklopedyczny*, ed. J. Krzyżanowski et al., Warsaw 1984, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Z. Goliński, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

oreticians of elocution. In our culture the figure credited with the creation of fables is Aesop (6th century BC), a freed slave living in Asia Minor, who gave them the form of prose parables dealing with animals which represented human types and attitudes. Aesop drew on the existing canon of a folk tradition the evidence of which has not survived. Aesop's fables were adapted by Phaedrus, who lived in the 1st century AD and who created verse narratives based on them; he is regarded as the creator of the classic literary fable. He wrote over one-hundred works in total, both original stories and adaptations of Aesop's, most of which were satirical. His Greek follower was Babrios, who lived in the 2nd century AD<sup>4</sup>. Literary works written by the end of the 18th century and drawing on this tradition were called Aesopian fables. In Poland this trend in fable writing began with Biernat of Lublin and his collection entitled *Aesop* (1521)<sup>5</sup>. In Europe the genre was revived in the 17th century. This was when its most famous classic, Jean de La Fontaine, wrote his narrative fables in verse. The 17th century saw the creation of Polish collections by Marcin Błażowski, *Setnik przypowieści uciesznych* (1608), and Krzysztof Niemirycz, *Bajki Aezopowe* (1699), which, unlike the works of the French author were quickly forgotten, as were fables by Biernat<sup>6</sup>. La Fontaine's oeuvre contributed substantially to the popularisation of the fable as a literary genre and – thanks to the author's mastery – to its elevation. Fable writing experienced its “golden age” in Europe during the Enlightenment era; it was practised by most writers, thanks to which the genre flourished as never before or since, with the period also becoming a time of intensified theoretical reflection on it. Eminent authors of the era wrote fables, if only occasionally, many published entire collections. In Poland they included Franciszek Dionizy Kniaźnin (*Bajki*, 1776), Ignacy Krasicki (*Bajki i przypowieści*, 1779; *Bajki nowe*, 1803), Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz (*Bajki i przypowieści*), as well as Stanisław Trembecki, Franciszek Karpiński, Adam Naruszewicz, Franciszek Zabłocki and many others. This was also when the generic conventions emerged as did the awareness of the genre among the readers.

## GENERIC FEATURES OF THE FABLE

In the Enlightenment era the fable was seen as a short story or – as it was referred to at the time – a “little tale” in verse or prose, the protagonists of which could be humans, animals, plants or objects. Its theme should concern “characters and atti-

<sup>4</sup> J. Sławiński, “Bajka”, [in:] M. Głowiński *et al.*, *Słownik terminów literackich*, Wrocław 1976, p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> J. Krzyżanowski, “Bajki wam niosę, posłuchajcie, dzieci...”, [in:] *Baśni i dziecko*, introduction, selection and edition by H. Skrobiszewska, Warszawa 1978, p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Z. Goliński, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

tudes” or “universal moral-psychological situations”<sup>7</sup>. What became a constitutive feature of the fable was moral instruction, stated directly or clearly suggested, which is why the story presented in a fable was always just an illustration of some general truth concerning human experiences – repeated and common. The plot or the contrasting juxtaposition of protagonists and their qualities were usually satirical in their tone. This suggests that the aesthetic form of the fable was subordinated to its didactic objective, for the function of fables was always utilitarian given their usefulness in moral education, especially in shaping the right attitudes among young people.

Thus from the very beginning the nature of the fable was analogous, like that of the parable or symbol, which meant that the narrative structure was a vehicle for some more profound wisdom. In any case, aesthetically its structure was very often that of a parable. The construction of the meanings of fables by analogy was manifested particularly clearly in the allegorical nature of animal fables, in which animals were masks of specific human types and their mutual relations reflected the relations between people<sup>8</sup>. The names of animals were a conventional sign in lieu of a detailed characterisation of the protagonists – their psychological profiles and the sphere of moral attitudes. In fables the lion represented strength, the ant – diligence, the ram – stupidity, the lamb – simplicity and naivety, the fox – cunning and slyness etc.

## THE FUNCTIONS AND CLASSIFICATION OF FABLES IN THE LITERARY TRADITION

In his *Rhetoric* Aristotle wrote that Aesopian fables were used in the art of oratory for “better understanding of the message presented and entertainment of the listener”<sup>9</sup>. In his *Poetics*, Jules-César Scaliger (15th/16th century), on the other hand, described fables as “works with invented content pointing to the truth”<sup>10</sup>, usually part of some other works. Yet for a long time the cognitive function of the fable was not emphasised.

Fables were treated as plebeian, popular works created to entertain and belonging to low culture. The growth and elevation of the fable as a didactic and parenetic literary genre occurred in the Enlightenment, with the explosion of fable writing. What emerged alongside the literary practice was the convention of the genre, rules of classification and functions of the fable. This convention had its indicators in features abstracted a posteriori from literary works. As Zbigniew Goliński, expert on the Enlightenment fable, writes<sup>11</sup>, towards the end of the Enlightenment there

<sup>7</sup> J. Sławiński, *op. cit.*, p. 42, see J. Krzyżanowski, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> J. Krzyżanowski, *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Z. Goliński, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem.*

emerged three basic ways of classifying fables. The first was a three-part division; in accordance with the spirit of the Enlightenment, this classification was based on the rationality or irrationality of the protagonists of a given work. And so the following types were distinguished: *fabula moralis*, *fabula rationalis* and *fabula mixta*. The term *fabula moralis* was applied to fables dealing with actions of non-rational beings, for example animals, plants or objects; their objective was to present moral truths. The *fabula rationalis* group included works showing probable but not true events, with people as their protagonists. The *fabula mixta* was a combination of the two previous types, for its protagonists could be both humans and non-rational beings<sup>12</sup>. The second division was into two parts and to some extent overlapped with the first, for in it fables were in the form of either apologues (defined similarly to *fabula moralis* as a fable about animals told for the purpose of moral instruction) or parables (resembling *fabula rationalis*, for they talked about everyday human experiences and situations treated as a starting point for a moral generalisation). The third division was structural, because it did not refer to the content, construction of the protagonists or the message, but to the structure of the work. According to it, there were epigrammatic and narrative fables. The first group comprised works of two to four verses and depicted a single situation. They were composed usually according to the principle of parallelism or contrast, with two positions, attitudes or modes of operation being compared or juxtaposed in them. Such a composition was to emphasise the moral or cognitive aspect, with the compact structure encouraging reflection and the fable becoming intellectual<sup>13</sup>. Narrative fables, known as La Fontaine fables, were narratives depicting complex relations between the protagonists whose characters were described in detail. The plot referred to human emotions and imagination. The most important element in its structure was the ending in the form of a moral. Sometimes this structure was reversed, with the moral appearing at the beginning and the following content of the fable constituting its justification<sup>14</sup>. The La Fontaine fable is a type used most often in children's literature.

In modern Polish literature studies the most commonly recognised classifications include that of Julian Krzyżanowski, who distinguished animal or Aesopian fables, fantastic fables (which he called folk fables given the fact that they were initially transmitted orally<sup>15</sup>) as well as comic stories ("jokes, anecdotes, facetiae, in other words humorous tales"<sup>16</sup>) as well as aitiological fables, i.e. legends dealing with religion or beliefs (in addition to apocryphal stories, Krzyżanowski's examples include tales of the origins of the Universe, origins of animals or plants, parodies of biblical motifs<sup>17</sup>). In his

<sup>12</sup> See *ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 27.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *ibidem*.

<sup>15</sup> J. Krzyżanowski, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 26.

earlier work devoted to classification, *Polska bajka ludowa w układzie systematycznym*, he divides fables understood in this way into animal fables and magical tales<sup>18</sup>.

## STYLISTIC FEATURES OF THE FABLE

An analysis of Enlightenment fables, treated as a literary canon, is the basis for a description of the basic stylistic features of the genre. They include brevity, conciseness (the fable depicts only the basic events), clarity and simplicity on the level of the plot (removal of secondary threads and supporting characters) as well as language (colloquial language, adapted to the content).

Allegory is an important feature, serving several functions associated with the didactic impact of the fable. The analogous nature of generic structures, manifested either in the allegorical animal mask or in the narrative form of the tale, is a way to soften the message, which, if given straight as an order or prohibition, could easily be rejected because of its pushy or irritating nature. Moral teachings are easier to accept, when their relevance and effectiveness are presented in individual examples and not as general truths.

This obliqueness was used to win the readers' friendliness and acceptance, for as they searched for the meaning of a fable, they could themselves discover moral truths, which was associated with a kind of cognitive pleasure. The readers did not have the impression that they were being told what to do, but, by observing and analysing the protagonists of fables as well as the laws of the world presented in them, they discovered themselves what was right and proper, what constituted a virtue and what a misdeed. The didactic impact of the fable was strengthened by the narrative nature of the fable in two ways. The narrative in the fable was to emphasise the universality and exception-less nature of its moral teaching, since its vehicles were everyday, natural situations and events as well as protagonists with typical character traits. At the same time the fable was effective in its didactic functions thanks to people's fondness for listening to stories, satisfaction derived from getting to know fictitious series of events, focused on a limited number of characters. This human fondness for narratives was and still is the source of the seductive power of the fable as well as its persuasive power.

## THE FABLE AND THE FAIRY TALE

The fairy tale differs from the fable primarily in the preponderance of fantasy elements: miraculous events, supernatural phenomena, characters with supernatural

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<sup>18</sup> J. Krzyżanowski, *Polska bajka ludowa w układzie systematycznym*, vol. 1. *Bajka zwierzęca*, vol. 2. *Baśń magiczna*, Warsaw 1947.

features, magical objects as well as unspecified time and place of action. What the two have in common, on the other hand, is a deeper meaning of the stories, a meaning the nature of which, also in fairy tales, was that of general truth or folk wisdom. Owing to the presence of the fantastic, the miraculous<sup>19</sup>, the magical, fairy tales are sometimes described as enchanted<sup>20</sup> or “magical fable”. Stefania Wortman, one of the most distinguished post-war scholars studying the genre, points to a close link between the fairy tale and reality<sup>21</sup>, especially the realistic nature of the world presented, with approximately half of the characters being realistic and half fantastic<sup>22</sup> and the fact that even these “fantastic protagonists were endowed with real, human feelings”<sup>23</sup>. Thus the scholar considerably limits the juxtaposition of rationalist fables and fantastic fairy tales, which she notices even in the English and French terms (fairy tales – fables, contes de fées — *fables*). Yet the predominance of the fantastic element in the poetics of the fairy tale remains obvious<sup>24</sup>. What is particularly important, however, is the borderline element combining the realistic background with the dominant fantastic element, a kind of “mysterious passage”<sup>25</sup>, which stresses the coexistence of both spheres, resembling a characteristic feature of the parable, i.e. combination of a realistic background with a symbolic meaning. Dorota Simonides, when describing the genre with regard to its influence on minors, points to the functions of fairy tale fantasy which are important from the point of view of a child’s development. They are linked to the protagonists’ activity and the sphere of values, of which the child becomes aware in the course of a fairy tale, at the same time getting to know how they can be implemented. Adventures experienced by the protagonists and also by the readers-listeners identifying with them serve to “test the protagonists’ worth, to show, through the history of an individual, the humanist concept of life”<sup>26</sup>, while the goals the protagonists strive for “are usually very valuable, for instance achieving goodness, beauty, happiness, with the road to these values being shown all the way”<sup>27</sup>. Typical qualities of fairy tale protagonists,

<sup>19</sup> For Roger Caillois, miraculous elements were constitutive elements of not only the fairy tale but also fantasy stories and science-fiction, *idem*, “*Od baśni do science fiction*”, [in:] *Odpowiedzialność i styl*, Warszawa 1967, pp. 31–65; see K. Kuliczowska, “*Fantastyka i metafora*”, [in:] *Baśń i dziecko...*, pp. 50–51; Kuliczowska, on the other hand, reminds us that S. Lem includes here fantasy, a genre referred to also as “literary fable”, *ibidem*, s. 52; S. Lem, *Fantastyka i futurologia*, vol. 1, Warsaw 1970, p. 67.

<sup>20</sup> S. Wortman, *Baśń w literaturze i w życiu dziecka. Co i jak opowiadać*, Warsaw 1958, p. 32.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 26–32.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 33.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 32.

<sup>24</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 33.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>26</sup> D. Simonides, “*Fantastyka baśni i innych tekstów folklorystycznych w życiu dziecka*”, [in:] *Baśń i dziecko...*, p. 119.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

like managing to cope with every situation, considerable possibilities resulting from their ability to use others' help and advice create role models and "exemplary behaviour"<sup>28</sup>. Thanks to them children learn that in difficult situations they do not need to be passive, that they can always count on somebody's help, that they should use it and that "possibilities are hundred times more valuable than material objects"<sup>29</sup>. Symbolic cognition, which the readers-listeners experience, this "grain of truth" contained in the fairy tale is thus connected with

a picture of human existence, which is artistically transformed here, generalised [...]. [Children] become aware of the main situations which embody the value of human existence. We see in a fairy tale a princess in need of help and we know that it is not only about a specific situation of a specific princess, but about some types of existential situations, which are universal, which have a meaning that is specific as well as general and allegorical<sup>30</sup>.

A comparison of the functions of the generic features of fables and fairy tales reveals clear similarities, which make the sphere of influence of the child's psyche analogous: both create role models, refer to universal moral values and universal existential situations. However, the fable primarily serves didactic purposes, shaping attitudes and values important from the point of view of society, while the fairy tale helps in the development of a child's personality, has a positive impact on the psyche, providing role models showing how to deal with difficult situations. The same can be said about elements of evil, danger, about fears, which by virtue of their symbolic form in fairy tales<sup>31</sup> (wolf, dragon, evil wizard, step-mother, witch etc.), can be controlled and neutralised in a way that is safe to the child's psyche. The similarity in the influence exerted by fables and fairy tales may be the reason why sometimes the two terms are used interchangeably and why both genres are sometimes combined, a practice that has become popular especially on the silver screen.

## AUDIOVISUAL ANIMATED FABLE

The impact of the fable increased, when it acquired a new delivery form – moving sound picture. The film medium drew freely on the literary tradition, taking from it elements belonging to various genres. The film fable absorbed some features of the classic and literary fable as well as those of the fairy tale, which can be seen especially in film fables for children. According to a dictionary definition, a film fable is a "short film with a didactic message addressed to children and combining elements

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 120.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 119–120.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 123.

<sup>31</sup> A similar function is performed by fantasy stories, in which realism predominates with the fantastic usually being an alien element, threatening the real life – cf. K. Kuliczowska, *op. cit.*, p. 51; D. Simonides, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

of magic and fantasy with animal or, less often, floral symbols”<sup>32</sup>. Film fables are usually animated (featuring cartoons or puppets)<sup>33</sup>. On the other hand,

Film fairy tales are film works with a fantastic content addressed usually to children, showing the protagonists in a world governed by both realistic laws and supernatural forces. A characteristic feature of reality in fairy tales, in addition to the presence of magical elements and anthropomorphic vision of nature, is its attachment to time-honoured moral norms and ideals of good life, justice etc.<sup>34</sup>

In fairy tales virtue is rewarded while misdeeds are punished. Today we can observe a decline in the film fairy tale in its educational function, which remains within the domain of the film fable.

What does emerge instead is a combination of the fairy tale and the fable through greater emphasis on fantastic elements in the fable, as a result of which we usually deal with fables containing some fantasy elements (for example the *Fanny’s Feet* series, Canada 2004–2005): “What has emerged is a genre for children combining elements of fairy tales and animal fables, fantasy and magic with didactic and animal symbolism”<sup>35</sup>. Over the last few years particularly popular among the audiences has been the postmodern film fairy tale modelled on the magical fable, characterised by Vladimir Propp in his book<sup>36</sup>. What plays an important role in the postmodern fairy tale, in addition to magic, is repeatability, closely linked to the stability of the narrative structure comprising the imprisonment of a princess, rescue expedition by a young man, complications, difficult task, wedding (the princess as a prize)<sup>37</sup>. The compositional axis of the magical fable is provided by two kingdoms<sup>38</sup> (in the film fairy tale *Enchanted* these are: the fairy tale kingdom of the princess, shown as an animated cartoon, and the “reality” represented by today’s New York, in which the part of the film played by actors takes place). What is important is a fixed ending model (the hero is rewarded, the villain is punished). There are stock characters as well. The usual protagonists include, in addition to the main couple (princess and prince or another noble young man-adventurer), the donors, who provide some magical agent (the hero usually has to deserve it) as well as magical helpers (for instance, a talking bird or flying horse)<sup>39</sup>. Model examples of postmodern film fairy tales include *Shrek* and *Enchanted*, both of which have a clearly discernible, classic narrative structure. At the beginning, the princess gets into trouble because

<sup>32</sup> M. Hendrykowski, “*Bajka*”, [in:] *idem, Słownik terminów filmowych*, Poznań 1994, p. 29.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>34</sup> M. Hendrykowski, “*Baśń filmowa*”, [in:] *idem, Słownik terminów filmowych*, p. 31.

<sup>35</sup> S. Aleksandrak, *Kim jesteś Kopciuszku, czyli o problemach współczesnej literatury dla dzieci i młodzieży*, Warsaw 1968, p. 68.

<sup>36</sup> V. Propp, *Nie tylko bajka*, Warsaw 2000.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 90–91.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 89.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 102–111.

of some evil spell, and the prince tries to help her, assisted by his magical helpers. In the finale the princess serves as a prize: in *Shrek* we are dealing with a pastiche or reversal of classic narrative models, while in *Enchanted* – with a mixture of conventions of representation and genres: animated film and film featuring human actors. Animation embodies the adjective “fabulous” as “invented”, “untrue”, “fantastic”, while the part of the film with actors, with its realistic convention, constitutes a representation of “truth”, referring both to the “reality”, i.e. authenticity, of life and the “veracity” of the lesson of the film. The realistic (contemporary) part is governed by the same rules as the fairy tale (animated) part, with the fairy tale indicators being represented by the conventions of romantic comedy, melodrama as well as literary tale and film magical fable. Those who were destined for each other, despite the gap separating them (their ontic status, for she is a cartoon character, while he is a living, though no less fictitious, person), get together, overcoming all barriers; evil is punished, goodness is rewarded, so “everybody gets what they deserve”. In addition, apart from the two “romantic leads”, we have a couple of secondary characters with similar temperaments, “like two halves of an apple”, who also belong to two different worlds and two film genres. Thus the function of a universal moral lesson is performed by the universal law of melodrama; according to it, love is the highest value and the highest law to which all others are subordinated.

## 64 ZOO LANE AS AN EXAMPLE OF FILM FABLE

*64 Zoo Lane* – a TV series produced in the UK in 1999 – is a model example of an animated fable for children. A perfunctory analysis is enough to reveal the main generic features, also of the Enlightenment period fable: allegorical, narrative nature, didactic tone, analogous structure. The analysed film fable, just like the literary fable, is a short work (11-minute episodes). It is characterised by clarity and simplicity of style – both in its film narration and in the visual form of the series, modelled on children’s pictures. The cartoons are schematic; the texture of the background resembles shading created with crayons. The shapes (of animals as well as elements of landscape) are extremely simplified, even schematic. The main lines of an object are clear (which usually produces the effect of bulkiness), with secondary, more detailed features being disregarded. The only features left are those that make it possible to identify a given object (animal, plant or element of the landscape), with some distortions, typical of children’s drawings. This can be seen especially in the visual concept of the animals – Lucy’s friends. What we have here is something characteristic of works by small children – lack of proportions between various elements of a drawing (for instance, a gazelle is almost the size of an elephant, mountain peaks are cones with not enough room for four paws of an animal). The same aesthetic convention can be found in the flat picture, without the illusion of stereoscopy. This style determines a kind of self-referentiality, because

thanks to it there is no escaping the form of the films, the style draws our attention to the material, reminds us that we are dealing with a cartoon story drawn by someone and that this cartoon is an illustration of the verbal message adapted to the perceptual capabilities of children. Thus the conventionality of the world presented is emphasised just like in the literary fable. The schematic nature of the images brings this animated film fable closer to a cartoon; in both cases this serves similar functions – it helps children to understand the story by emphasising more important, primary features and disregarding those less significant<sup>40</sup>. Yet the most important element is the narrative nature of *64 Zoo Lane*. Small children are keener than adults on stories with well-ordered chain of causes and effects, with an inner dramaturgy that leads to a punch line. In this film series we are dealing with a double narrative: at the beginning and at the end we have an objective narrator, with a subjective narrator appearing within the story itself – in each episode it is one of Lucy's animal friends from the zoo. Thus the film narrative combines a realistic protagonist with an anthropomorphised animal protagonist. The main protagonist is a girl, whose house is next door to a zoo, and a group of animals living in the zoo; the animals talk, with some of them having the qualities of children, while others – of adult carers or parents. The narrative pattern of the story told by the animals is constant, parallel to the Enlightenment fable model. The exposition is a preliminary description of the situation, which is followed by a concretisation of the problem and its resolution (usually after a few failed attempts). The punch line in the form of lessons learned from the story is given directly within the external narrative framework, usually by the elephant, the most respectable animal, which has some matriarchal features. It is an equivalent of a moral, which together with the whole story constitutes for Lucy, as the main protagonist of the external tale – and at the same time a representative of the audience in the film – an inspiration helping her cope with everyday problems, which she shares every evening with the animals. These are typical situations from a child's life, like mastering a new skill (for example, riding a bicycle), fear of public speaking, shyness, reluctance to clean up, inability to share (for example, toys) with others, expansiveness during games, disregarding others or imposing one's own will, fear of an unknown situation or new environment. There is a clear analogy between the girl's everyday experiences and the stories told by the animals. The animal story presents, in the form of a narrative, some problem from the child's life, which is solved or shown in a different light so that it could be accepted. Thus, analogy is the foundation of the film's didactic function, because thanks to a specific example from the life of her animal friends, the girl realises the inappropriateness of her behaviour or finds solutions to her problems, or learns to accept them. Yet in *64 Zoo Lane* analogy does not equal allegory, so characteristic of the literary fable, for the attribution of specific qualities to specific animals is not fixed and is not always in accordance with stereotypical ideas about the character of a given animal, though sometimes it is. For

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<sup>40</sup> J. Szyłak, *Komiks — świat przerysowany*, Gdańsk 1998, p. 7.

instance, the monkeys are impish and reckless, while the turtle is slow, but other animal protagonists may have any traits, depending on the girl's problem in the episode in question. The analogous nature of the animated fable is emphasised by the narrative structure (presence of a framework), which gives it the form of a parable – the story told by one of the animals constitutes a symbolic reference to the girl's life, with whom the child viewers identify; in accordance with the generic requirements of the form, the vehicle for the complex symbol of the parable acquires a concrete, individual example, easily understood by children. Thus, clarity of the message is achieved in the film fable thanks to the structure of the story and conciseness, achieved thanks to a reduction to the most basic events, which always concern a small number of protagonists, and thanks to the presentation of only the basic elements characterising a given situation. This means that nothing distracts the child viewers. They can focus on the basic message, which facilitates the understanding of the situation within the film and its reference to the reality outside the film, i.e. the didactic and psychological impact of the fable. The narrative framework, composition and selection of themes from the child's everyday experiences as well as the child protagonist make identification easier for the young viewers. An analysis of the *64 Zoo Lane* series shows that in contemporary animated fables for children the deeper meaning of a story told directly (its analogy) is associated with its didactic function. However, unlike in the literary fable of the Enlightenment era, the classic of the genre, didacticism is not necessarily accompanied by a moral lesson; it does serve other detailed functions. One of the more important among them is the pragmatic function, connected with the psychology of a child.

The film story suggests how to behave in a specific situation, helping with correct personality development. A well-structured fable may even serve a therapeutic function, for it teaches how to overcome fears and limitations, how to cope with difficult situations, which for children are a significant barrier in contacts with their peers and with adults, in the "myself-the world" relation. Finally, like in the case of all films for adults, it can serve a persuasive function, not related to the formation of ethical attitudes, but to the worldview of the sender of the audiovisual message (creator of the film). The TV series in question is devoid of this element. However, it does appear in, for example, the *Franny's Feet* series, shown by the same children's channel (Mini-mini). An example can be the episode about Ingrid the Iguana, Annie the Seal and Dolores the Tortoise, which teaches trust and acceptance of every otherness and every stranger. In today's world, full of danger, an absolute acceptance of otherness as a constant value is dangerous for a child, although the external educational objective of the authors must have been overcoming of barriers, fear of the unknown, of what is different and unfamiliar. *64 Zoo Lane* as an example of an animated film fable shows, on the one hand, a continuity of cultural tradition and on the other – the vitality of the genre, which in the 20th century, a time of rapid development of audiovisual media, was revived in a new form, more popular and better adapted to changes that occurred in people's tastes and communication habits. However, the film fable has not entirely

replaced the literary fable, though the latter's significance seems far smaller today. This is because of more difficult access to readers and weakening impact in comparison with audiovisual media. Didactic functions, which were the main objectives of the writing of literary fables, have been to a large extent taken over by the film fable and it is the film fable that today has a huge influence on children's attitudes. Yet the fable made of a new material (moving pictures instead of words) has retained most of the important generic and even stylistic features, undergoing only slight modifications. For my analysis I have chosen an example with a very high number of typical features in order to emphasise the continuity in the functioning of the genre. However, we should take into account completely different phenomena, like the emergence of new genres within the animated film genre, with some of them being transferred from other cultural areas (e.g. anime), in which they have existed in a different communication environment, serving different functions. There are also many hybrids, adaptations of various types and genres (comic strips, stories, fantasy prose) etc. The multiplicity of audiovisual messages and their variety, and even the predominance of works and forms which carry messages far removed from the positive message of the fable, do not change the fact that this didactic and, at the same time, seductive tale still has an important function in the bringing up of children. It shapes attitudes desired in society and supports children in their independent exploration of the world, enabling them to analyse specific model situations, thanks to which the reality surrounding children is seen by them as more understandable and less oppressive. According to psychologists

Fables [...] help with understanding our difficulties, fears, weaknesses and anxieties, and suggest ways of overcoming them. They enable us to look at our problems without fear and teach us how to help ourselves in stressful situations [...]. These works also make us resistant to stimuli attacking from the outside, they reduce their power, thus making it possible for us to face adversity<sup>41</sup>.

By transposing the basic generic and stylistic features of the classic fable of the Enlightenment era, as well as some elements of the fairy tale, the film fable continues and preserves their didactic, educational and psychological functions. The impact of the audiovisual medium probably strengthens its positive influence on children even further<sup>42</sup>. The never-ending popularity among child audiences of fables, simple in their visual and narrative concept, but at the same time suggestive, as well as the affection with which adults return to them testify not only to the functionality of the genre, but also to its aesthetic value and undiminished charm.

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<sup>41</sup> A. Jaszczyk, B. Kochaniak, *Introduction*, [in:] *eadem*, "Czarodziejski pyłek", czyli metafora i bajka we wspomaganiu rozwoju malego dziecka, Kraków 2006, pp. 15–16.

<sup>42</sup> It is, however, diminished owing to a lack of an important element, i.e. contact with an adult. The child's emotional bond with the person telling or reading a story increases the formative power of the work, because the story is delivered by someone who has authority and enjoys the child's trust. Perhaps watching film fables together may partially make up for this deficit.