

The Genesis of Lapponoid Trickster Folklore

Conspicuous similarities in the genre morphology of national literatures cannot be explained by spiritual influences but have a deeper core in common Neolithic and Palaeolithic ancestors. The inner consistency and structural compatibility of their forms does not result only from the similar social milieu but also transmits ancient genetic traditions, whose present-day distribution reveals migrations of prehistoric tribes. This is why literary sociology does not bring fruitful results if it is entirely detached from literary ethnology and its tissue of genetic interrelations.

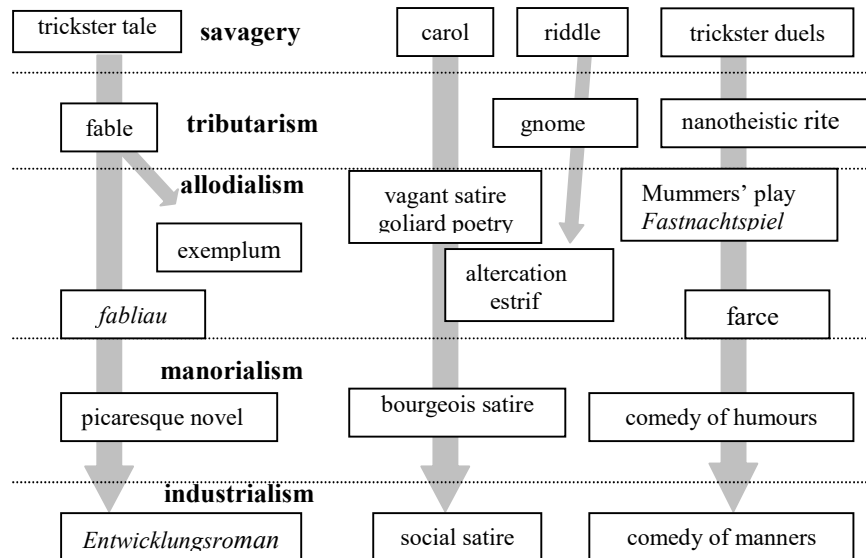


Table 1. *The genesis of genres in popular literature*

Table 1 attempts to depict an evolutionary pedigree of genres that guided the growth of popular literature in most world literatures. It tracks the common origin of Pygmoid and Lapponoid stocks all over the world and emphasises the striking resemblance of their thematic patterns. These ethnic groups do not exhibit clear ethnogenesis because they did not specialise in a definite type of lithic stone-working industry. Another reason was that their customs of cremation burials made their nomadic camps invisible for archaeological research. Their present-day distribution is probably due to the Gravettian migration (26 000 BC) and the westward wandering of Lapponoid peoples with cremation rites from India (Cemetery H culture, 1700 BC) through

Kazakhstan (Andronovo culture, 1500 BC) to Central Europe (Lausitz or Lusatian culture, 1300 BC). Their influx must have contributed a lot to the populations of medieval craftsmen and modern working classes in Europe. The hypothesis of an out-of-India migration is supported by studies on literary fables. The original source of European fables and satiric literature was sought in India by the French literary historians Joseph Bédier in the chapter *Fables* of his treatise *Les Fabliaux*.¹ His conclusions pointed out formal resemblances between the Buddhist fable *jataka* and the first ancient fabulists Aesop, Phaedrus and Babrius.

Modern popular satiric literature stems from medieval fables and prehistoric **trickster tales** circulating among many Lapponoid and Pygmoid tribes. Their central figure was a dwarfish trickster animal that can cheat and befool his strong giant neighbours by escapades of artful and sophisticated tricks. Among Indians of North America his unforgettable tricks were thought out by Manabozho and his brother Gluskap. In Malaysia he was represented by a dwarfish stag Kantjil, in Oceania his glorious deeds were attributed to the popular hero Maui. South African trickster tales told about fates of the weasel Hlakanyana and his father Huveyana. In Congo they mentioned the antelope *nseshi* and in West Africa they extolled a spider hero. The best-known representative was Uncle Remus's Brer Rabbit remembered from a large selection of African trickster hares. His alternative names were Swahili *sungura*, Shona *sulwe*, Nyandja *kaludu* and Basuto *mutlanyana*.²

Ancient trickster tales transformed into ancient and medieval **fables**, whose artful popular hero was Renart or Renevart in Gaul and Reineke Fuchs in Germany. Animal heroes in fables were soon humanised in French *fabliaux* and German *Schwänke*. Later they reappeared as smart servants of popular farces and picaresque novels. The typical ribald servant was embodied by Molière's Sganerelle, Goldoni's Truffaldino and Mozart's Figaro. The Spanish novel-writer Lazarillo des Tormes made them famous in his figure of Picaro and Grimmelhausen in his *Simplicissimus*.

Another cultural *chef-d'oeuvre* of Lapponoid nations can be observed in satiric poetry derived from prehistoric trickster songs. The earliest folklore of pygmies was full of begging for bread from farmers and foreign visitors. This heritage was taken over by medieval mendicant orders (Franciscans, Minorites, Dervishes), whose subsistence depended on charity and gifts. Begging songs later developed into **carols**. Guilds of ancient Greek artisans celebrated their festivals by processions singing carols devoted to their totem symbol swallow

¹ Joseph Bédier: *Les fabliaux; études de littérature populaire et d'histoire littéraire du moyen âge*. Paris, É. Bouillon, 1893.

² Vladimír Klíma, Karel F. Růžička, Petr Zima: *Literatura černé Afriky*. Praha: Orbis, 1972, p. 81.

and other birds. The third circle of satiric folklore concerns **riddles**. The Negrito folklore in Asia indulged in riddles that gave rise to gnomic dialogues and satiric altercations. These poetic duels were conducted between choruses of boys and girls or between different estates and crafts.

Lapponoid key motifs: short-sized stature with a brachycephalous skull and a beard, nomadic strandloping, lean-to shelters, subterranean semidugouts, saunas and sweatshouses, red hood with jingle-bells, cremation, trickster wisdom, cults of the winds and birds embodying the spirits of the dead, hanging sacks and urns with ashes on urns, beggar's bags.

Savage fable – a trickster hero is described as an elfish animal gatherer, who competes for food with other itinerant nomadic beasts in the rainforest:

- **Negrito fable** – dwarfish animal deer trickster (Kantchil) fights for survival against silly stronger beasts (southeast Asia),
- **Pygmy fable** – dwarfish animal trickster struggles for food against giant animals in the neighbourhood (Africa).

Barbarian fable – a trickster hero features as a forestal dwarfish animal settler begging for eatables and exchanging goods in a village of silly animal giants. Short-sized Lapponoid tribes settled down in the vicinity of Neolithic peasants:

- **Athapascan fable** – an animal trickster fights against supernatural giant spirits of Salish fishermen tribes (North America),
- **Buddhistic fable *jātaka*:** brotherly weak animals conspire bravely against brutal attacks of tall human hunters (India).

Civilised fable – conflicts in an animal monarchy ruled by a king of beasts:

- **parliamentary fable** – a trickster hero features as a smarty ambassador of the parliament of beasts (council of elders) in an animal monarchy under the reign of the lion respected as the king of all beasts (northern Africa).

Anthropomorphic fable – a dwarfish baby appears in a tall human family:

- **tales about foundlings** – a small dwarfish boy (English Tom Thumb, Czech Paleček) is adopted as a son, orphan, castaway or foundling by a childless marital couple; he is said to have grown from a wooden stub,
- **tales about *homunculi*** – an anthropomorphic *homunculus* fights for survival amongst evil tall giant people (Europe),
- **Lappish stories about Snow White** – a shot tiny daughter banished by an evil step-mother, or a wife expelled by her husband returns back from a giant family to her own native clan of elfin fellow-tribesmen.

Nanotheistic tales (from Greek *nanus* 'elf') – folk-tales narrating about little domestic deities (*Penates*, *Lares*, Russian *Domovoj*), who were supposed to serve as protectors and guardians of the household:

- **tales about little helpers** – stories about supernatural dwarfish helpers, who invite numerous kinfolk and would grind all corn in a mill or build a

<p>castle during one night (Irish <i>leprechauns</i>, Hawaiian <i>menehune</i>),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • miners' tales – stories about short-sized knockers in mines (<i>Bergmann</i>), • craftmen's tales – stories about saboteur imps, trolls and gremlins, • tales about hoggoblins – stories about forestal goblins and kobolds.
<p>Timocratic novels in verse from the social milieu of general estates monarchies (timocracies) in the 14th century:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • French <i>fabliaux</i> – humoristic lascivious anecdotes in verse, mostly in rhymed octosyllabic couplets; short stories about jokes and adventures of plebeian rogues, who cheat elderly husbands and wives, • German <i>novella</i> (German <i>Schwank</i>) – prosaic or dramatic cycle of anecdotes about popular roguish pranksters and short narratives concerning smart jesters such as Till Eulenspiegel, • Persian <i>maqama</i> – a rhymed prosaic genre of <i>maqama</i>, <i>maqamat</i> (al-Hamadhání in the 10th century, al-Hariri of Basra in the 13th century); Arabian anecdotes about tricksters Djuha (10th c.) and Nasreddin (13th c.), • Gothamiads – humoristic narratives about foolish magistrate councillors at Gotham (<i>Schildbürger</i>, <i>Lalenbürger</i>, Abderites in ancient Greek Abdera, Gotham in England, Brétizy in France or Kocourkov in Bohemia).
<p>Renaissance picaresque prose – novels about smarty picaresque servants cheating their naïve master nobleman, narratives on butlers of the patriciate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spanish picaresque novel – roguish adventures of a <i>pícaro</i> in picaresque novels <i>Lazarillo de Tormes</i> (1554) or <i>Guzmán de Alfarache</i> (1599), • German <i>Schelmenroman</i> – German picaresque rogue novel, e.g. Grimmelhausen's <i>Der Abentheurliche Simplicissimus Teutsch</i> (1668).
<p>European realistic novel – novels about plebeian or proletarian heroes, who make their difficult way in the modern bourgeois society:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plebeian realistic novel about a poor young man's social rise and fall, • German <i>Entwicklungsroman</i> – a realistic novel of a young hero's social development, e.g. W. D. Howells: <i>The Rise of Silas Lapham</i> (1885), • German <i>Bildungsroman</i> – a realistic novel of a young hero's hard years of education or apprenticeship, e.g. Goethe's <i>Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre</i>, • German <i>Künstlerroman</i> – a realistic narrative of the intellectual growth of an artists, e.g. Joyce's <i>Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man</i>, • Czech military <i>svejkiad</i> – Czech humorous novels about military service such as Jaroslav Hašek's <i>Good Soldier Svejk</i>.

Table 2. *The historical genesis of plebeian trickster folklore*

Extract from Pavel Bělíček: *Systematic Poetics II. Literary Ethnology and Sociology*. Prague 2017, pp. 195-197