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# **Forum for World Literature Studies**

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**Topic on Hans Christian Andersen and the Fairy Tale**

Edited by

Jøgen Veisland

**Topic on Slovenian Literature and Culture**

Edited by

Tomo Virk

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# Contents

## Hans Christian Andersen and the Fairy Tale Studies

- 158 Introduction to Topic on Hans Christian Andersen and the Fairy Tale  
Jørgen Veisland
- 159 – 165 Lydia Cabrera’s African Fables from Cuba as a Text Theatre  
Barbara Stawicka-Pirecka
- 166 – 172 Treue in Three Tales by the Brothers Grimm  
Dolores Buttry
- 173 – 183 Nation Building and Folklore in Norway 1840 – 1905  
Gudleiv Bø
- 184 – 194 The Language of Andersen’s Early Fairy Tales  
Tom Lundskær-Nielsen
- 195 – 203 Dual or Single Address? Some Reflections on Hans Christian Andersen’s  
Fairy Tales in Polish Translations  
Hanna Dymel-Trzebiatowska
- 204 – 210 The Writer of Tales; Hans Christian Andersen as a Cultural Bridge –  
Builder  
Johannes Nørregaard Frandsen
- 211 – 219 “The Dryad” by Hans Christian Andersen; A Fairy Tale on Modern Times  
and The World Exhibition of 1867  
Anne-Marie Mai
- 220 – 231 The End of the Fairy Tale; Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Shadow”  
Jørgen Veisland

## Slovenian Literature and Culture Studies

- 232 – 233 Comparativism in Slovenia; Introduction  
Tomo Virk
- 234 – 247 Oedipus and Joseph K.  
Janez Vrečko
- 248 – 254 The Short Story as a Genre of Ontological Uncertainty  
Tomo Virk
- 255 – 266 The Historical Novel, Ideology and Re-organization of the Semiosphere;  
The Case of the Slovene Historical Novel  
Vanessa Matajc

## Book Reviews

- 267 – 271 The Voice We Need to Listen to: A Comment on Perloff's *Poetic License*  
Hu Quansheng
- 272 – 274 Striving for a New Critical Approach: Rereading *English Literature in the  
Perspective of Ethical Literary Criticism*  
Yang Jincai

# 目 录

## 安徒生及童话研究

- 158 安徒生及童话研究导言  
乔根·维斯兰德
- 159 - 165 莉迪雅·卡布瑞拉的案头剧:来自古巴的非洲寓言  
芭芭拉·斯坦维卡-皮瑞卡
- 166 - 172 解读三则格林童话中的忠诚  
德洛丽丝·巴特利
- 173 - 183 民族独立与 1840 至 1905 年间的挪威民间文学  
古雷夫·博
- 184 - 194 安徒生早期童话创作中的语言风格  
汤姆·兰德斯盖·尼尔森
- 195 - 203 单一还是双重的读者指向?  
——对波兰语版安徒生童话的思考  
汉娜·黛米尔·阙兹比亚陀斯嘎
- 204 - 210 文化桥梁缔造者——童话作家汉斯·克里斯汀·安徒生  
乔纳斯·诺里贾德·弗兰德森
- 211 - 219 安徒生的“树精”:一篇关于近代社会与 1867 年世博会的童话  
安-玛丽·麦
- 220 - 231 童话的终结:论安徒生的“影子”  
乔根·维斯兰德

## 斯洛文尼亚文学文化研究

- 232 - 233 斯洛妮亚文学文化研究导言  
托姆·弗尔克
- 234 - 247 俄狄浦斯与约瑟夫·K  
珍妮丝·弗瑞蔻
- 248 - 254 本体上具有不确定性的短篇小说  
托姆·弗尔克
- 255 - 266 历史小说、意识形态和符号圈的重组  
——斯洛文尼亚历史小说研究

瓦内莎·麦塔吉克

## 书评

- 267 - 271 我们需要倾听的声音  
——评帕洛夫《诗的破格》  
胡全生
- 272 - 274 评聂珍钊等著的《英国文学的伦理学批评》  
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# Introduction to Topic on Hans Christian Andersen and the Fairy Tale

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The thematic issue on the fairy tale consists of eight articles; one on the Cuban fairy tale, one on tales by the Brothers Grimm, one on the Norwegian fairy tale and five on Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales. The articles are testimony to the fact that the fairy tale is alive and well and that it is the subject of a rich variety of scholarly interpretations. The juxtaposition of articles on Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales and articles on other tales is deliberate; it serves to show how Andersen's special fairy tale, the so-called "artistic fairy tale," or "art fairy tale" (*Kunsteventyr*) differs from the fairy tale tradition. Andersen's break with tradition may indeed constitute the reason for his appeal to adult readers today.

Barbara Stawicka-Pirecka's article on the Cuban writer Lydia Cabrera shows how the African-Cuban tale has absorbed African beliefs, magic and the marvellous. Dolores Buttry's analysis of tales by the Brothers Grimm examines the motif of loyalty in the tale and refers to Freudian fairy tale interpretations. Gudleiv Bø's article shows how the tales collected by Asbjørnsen and Moe helped build Norwegian national identity. Tom Lundskaer Nielsen's examination of Andersen's language describes the reasons why the author uses informal language constructions and direct speech. Hanna Dymel Trzebiatowska's article on Polish translations of Andersen's fairy tales analyzes Andersen's use of the dual address. Johannes Nørregaard Frandsen examines Andersen's tales, the *Kunstmärchen*, from the perspective of cultural bridge-building in an age of globalization. Anne-Marie Mai's interpretation of "The Dryad" shows how Andersen's story refers to the Paris World Exhibition of 1867 where Andersen felt out of place and estranged. Finally, Jørgen Veisland's interpretation of "*the shadow*" relates the story to fiction by a. o. Bruno Schultz, Paul Auster and Haruki Murakami.

The editors hope that the rich variety of articles on the fairy tale will stimulate further scholarly and readerly interest in the tale in general and in Hans Christian Andersen in particular.

# Lydia Cabrera's African Fables from Cuba as a Text Theatre

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**Abstract** African-Cuban art manifests a specific African sense of the continuity of life and death; the two are magically connected and this unique perspective produces a rich creativity based on the notion that everything is related and exists in the single moment. Lydia Cabrera, who is responsible for having saved the African poetical, magic wisdom preserved in Afro-Cuban art, studied painting in Paris and gained a European perspective on the African literature. Afro-Cuban literature is imbued with a mythical shamanic diction that manifests itself in the fairy tale of that country. The African element, which is potently present in the tale, is derived from African slaves in Cuba, among whom the author Cabrera was raised, therefore acquiring an intimate knowledge of their beliefs and sensibilities. Cabrera also spent time in Spain, and in 1936 she published a French translation of *Negro Fairy Tales from Cuba*. She was not the only Cuban traveling to Europe, in the 1930s, the young painter Wilfredo Lam visited Paris and exhibited with Picasso. Lam's paintings fascinate the writer Carpentier who is inspired by them to write a preface to one of his works which becomes a manifesto on “the real-marvellous”, “lo real-maravilloso”. Afro-Cuban literature makes use of the metaphor of the mirror and water as an image of death. This literature may be interpreted as a kind of “text theatre”, a dramatic performance using the mask, the ritual and the doll — emblem of female magic and fertility — in a combination of picture and drama.

**Key words** Cabrera; Afro-Cuban art; a text theatre

For an African person moulded in his own tradition, the sense of a dual nature of reality is a natural state of experiencing and seeing the world. What is visible and invisible combines the integral picture of existence. It means that the scale of experiencing both life and death creates a cultural value that we could call “a magical continuity of being”. This ontological quality is without a doubt connected with a mythical model of the interpretation of culture. It is associated with religion, philosophy, art and literature. It defines not only the way of understanding time and space but it also includes a visual projection of elements and it is a condition of everlasting creativity in cultural space of archetype and symbol. “A magical continuity of being” is inseparably connected with a huge potential and a richness of creating the world at any mo-

ment and with the possibilities of the imagination of a child, a philosopher and a poet ...At the base of each of those projections there is the language — the instrument which gives a mental and powerful shape to every vision created.

Lydia Cabrera was born in Havana in 1900. She was a white Cuban woman . It is thanks to her—an excellent writer and at the same time a brilliant ethnologist—that European and American culture saved African literary aesthetics and some poetical-magical wisdom, which from the time the island was conquered up to now has been a perceptible pulse of a syncretic Cuban identity. She was a disciple of Fernando Ortiz, who was regarded as the most brilliant ethnographer and documentary writer of Cuban history and its multiple traditions (mainly Spanish, African and Chinese). Lydia Cabrera widened the area of the enormous knowledge and erudition of her master by a completely new quality of literature.<sup>1</sup> She saved the African oral transmission in Cuba and gave it a new form; the fairy-tale, the fable, the story and also the documentary record on the borderline of ethnology, cultural anthropology, sociology and esoteric secret knowledge.

In the history of the life of Lydia Cabrera it was essential that she went to Paris in the thirties to study painting and history of art. The closeness which connected and still connects a lot of writers and poets with painting—with artistic vision, a sense of line, colour and chiaroscuro is a characteristic feature in Cuba. Cuban literature—marked by a stamp of Spanish-American neo-baroque (the term is also owed to a Cuban writer and painter who emigrated to Paris in the early sixties till 1993—Severo Sarduy)—somehow in a natural way aims at a verbal intensification of a phrasal literary texture, at a counterpoint of a picture and a musical value of a word and at the fullness of sound, a rhythmic and visual literary sequence. This particular fullness marked by a specific sense of humour—African “picaresque”, African “mantras” — magic spells, neologisms full of magical power both pagan and sacred at the same time was discovered by Lydia Cabrera in an Afro-Cuban vision of the world and in an Afro-Cuban mythical-symbolic (the only one of its kind), poetical-shamanic diction to which the Spanish language is subjected. That diction is indeed the form of a folk African-Cuban fairy-tale, a fable or even a parable.

She was brought up amongst African slaves in Cuba—she derived motifs for her future books from them. African beliefs, their music, imagination and sensibility manifested in a deep feeling of unity with nature and the universe let her develop her own literary talent complemented by her broad range of studies, versatile knowledge and erudition. Those studies are the Paris period of Lydia Cabrera’s biography—a close contact via Europe with an archaic African art, with its aesthetics in which every line, form or a spot of colour are a sign, a magically hidden code, a symbolic language of a dream sleep, a remembrance of ancestors, an epiphany of death, a recalling of ghosts which live in all the elements.

In the thirties the writer lived in Spain—there she met, among others, Federico Garcia Lorca and Gabriela Mistral. 1936 was an important year for her—the Paris publishing house Gallimard published her French translation of *Cuentos negros de Cuba* (*Negro Fairy Tales from Cuba*). That book was the first literary written record of Afro-Cuban mythology in Cuba. In 1940 it was published in the Spanish language and

was preceded by a preface written by Fernando Ortiz. With an absolute certainty the stories included in that volume and also other literal fictions of the Cuban writer belong to the stream of “a marvellous reality” (“lo real-maravilloso”) in the literature of Spanish-America and the Caribbean. According to this idea—a human is part of the universe, is subjected to its laws. The universe and human individual are one. The reality of a human is not divided, neither in a physical plan nor in a mental one. A human thought includes—through numerous forms—a form of evolution, transformations and experiences which has changed the stream of energy into our present. All those changeable forms of existence comprise both the past and the future at the same time; they are both the reminiscences and potential realization of the future.

Lydia Cabrera and her Afro-Cuban world of literal creations is thus written into such a conceptual structure and at the same time into a creative constellation of three outstanding artists—a writer, a painter and a philosopher—whose fortunes are inseparably connected with both Cuba and with the European artistic avant-garde of the thirties and forties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We are talking here about a Cuban writer, the creator of a concept of “lo real-maravilloso”—Alejo Carpentier, a Cuban painter who left Cuba at the same time and blended into the European stream of adventure with surrealism in Paris—the author of one of the most famous paintings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—the famous *The Jungle* (*La Jungla*)—Wifredo Lam and an essay writer and a French philosopher—Pierre Mabille, the author of *Le miroir du merveilleux* (*Les Editions de Minuit*, Paris, 1962, with a preface by André Breton).

The years of Lydia Cabrera's European adventure include significant dates closely connected with discovering African morphology through the filter of the European avant-garde:

In 1928, thanks to the help from French poet Robert Desnos, Alejo Carpentier left Cuba, arrived in Paris and was introduced to Parisian Bohemia of the 1920s.

In 1938, Wilfredo Lam arrived in Paris—a young Cuban painter completely unknown in Europe, two years older than Carpentier, a son of a Chinese man and a Mulatto. Thanks to Manolo Hugue's letter of recommendation, he came into contact with Picasso. In his Paris studio at the old Grands—Augustins street near the Seine he met his future friends: Victor Brauner, Hans Bellmer, Max Ernst, Marcel Duchamp. A year after his arrival in Paris, Lam exhibited his works together with Picasso in Pearls Gallery in New York. One of the most significant African metaphors expressed in painting and seen with the eyes of a Cuban is focused in the famous Lam's painting, “La Jungla”.

In 1948, Carpentier was fascinated with Wifredo Lam's painting and inspired by it to write the “Preface” to his own novel *El reino de este mundo*. The Preface is regarded as the first literary manifesto of “lo real-maravilloso”—the tendency and poetics so close to the syncretic identity of Spanish-American, African and Caribbean culture.

The work of Lydia Cabrera is also included in that artistic outlook. A question arises—what would Cuba and Africa have meant for her if she had not seen them from the perspective of that “European shore”? How much did her writing influence Cuba, which, thanks to her became a form of a mythical projection, a Cuban “Mirror of

Marvel” (“Le Miroir du merveilleux”) in the words of Pierre Mabille (Mabille 191)—a French researcher of that concept from the European perspective could call it (he was also a searcher of myths and cultural traditions, an essay writer and comparatist).

Lydia Cabrera tried to grasp and understand Cuba in her writing with all the process of integration of so many traditions and so many voices of African cultures present on the Island.

The mirror mentioned here can function in two ways: it can be comprehended in a philosophical way—as an instrument of a “baroque” conceptual game with the visible world and as a looking-glass which is used by Wilfredo Lam, Carpentier and Mabille in their worlds of painting and writing. This is the symbol of the American continent with its syncretism of Nature, Culture and History. It is on the other side of the jungle—the mirror where shamanic drums are heard calling gods from the pantheon of Cuban “santería” through primeval rhythms. Similarly to *Alice on the other side* of the mirror, on the other side of the jungle-mirror people and gods unite thanks to the symbiosis of the catholic religion and African beliefs. This is where Papa Legba—the god of all the journeys opens all the roads for us and Ochún Fai—the ruler of the hurricane makes slaves win their uprisings.

However, in Lydia Cabrera’s literary fiction—in her projections of African fairytales and legends—the mirror has a very specific role—it is inseparably connected with the symbols of water, that is with the symbols of life, death and time.

In 1938 the writer returned to Cuba and devoted herself entirely to the study of Afro-Cuban culture and religion. In 1954 her most important work was published—*El monte* (*The Mount*). It is a long essay about Afro-Cuban religions, magic, esoteric knowledge and the mythology of Black Cubans. In the fifties she also wrote the essay “La sociedad secreta Abacúa” (“The Secret Society of Abakua”). It is a description of a ritual of black “masonry” coming from Africa. In 1960 Lydia Cabrera chose emigration. She never came back to Cuba. She died in Miami in 1992.

According to a structuralist canon (Propp 87), “*Los cuentos negros de Cuba*” can be defined as a “marvellous stories” (“cuentos maravillosos”). They are “*fábulas míticas*” (mythical fables), the source of which comes from the African oral tradition. In accordance with that magical-poetic vision of the world, people, animals, gods and the whole Nature coexist in one space without any distinct borderline between the world of the living and the world of dead. Their existences are one with each other. People depend on gods and gods are the integral part of one big Human Family. This is in accordance with a shamanistic rule—“everything which exists is alive”. That animistic concept is the source of African mysticism, spirituality and belief. For an African person it means his/her natural form of existence. That concept defines individual actions and also collective awareness, as well as social and civilisational processes. That concept also gives rise to a symbolic form of imagination and the mythological aesthetics of a literary vision. The language which is spoken by Lydia Cabrera’s heroes in her “*fábulas*” is in the form of phraseological sequences with a poetical character and at the same time it has a poetical strength of expression. This strength is clearly present in various versions of invocations and it is expressed by

magical mantras, prayers, songs of praise, shamanistic formulae, "primitive" African rhythms of musical instruments.

All those voices, sounds, whispers, black prayers and shamanistic spells are moved by the writer to a level of literary plot.

African fables from Cuba are characterised by a clear dramatisation of the text. The literary structure of those texts proposed by Cabrera is nearly a ready corpus of a drama performance. They can also be interpreted as an African projection of the Greek ancient theatre. For the same reason Lydia Cabrera's "fábulas" is perfect material for research on the anthropology of culture and the anthropology of drama performance. Throughout the tome of *Los cuentos negros de Cuba* there are basic elements which distinguish the drama performance in the archaic and primal concept. They appear not only on the level of the text (a specific literary diction) but also on the level of visual, symbolic and anthropological connotations of those "marvellous stories". They are both a literary sequence and a record of a potential theatrical structure. It seems that their interpretation only in the category of literary "folklore" is rather elementary and it limits their cultural projection and their anthropological originality.

It seems to me that "a new life" of the Cuban writer's stories depends on different possibilities of some new proposals for their interpretation. Perhaps, one of them could be an attempt to read those fables as "a text theatre", which would mean the Cuban writer played a deliberate game with a specific literary convention. For Lydia Cabrera—an ethnologist—Afro-Cuban beliefs were a documentary fact and provided some material for scientific research. On the other hand, for Cabrera—the writer, they presented perfect material just as a mythological-poetical record of African oral tradition. In such a suggestion for the interpretation of *Los cuentos negros de Cuba*—as "a text theatre"—it seems to me that the following elements are very important:

**The presence of the mask:** It is connected with an idea of a double, with an idea of a twin spirit, with a perception of dual reality, with a mystery of identity and with a metamorphosis of the protagonist. The mask is also registered in the process of spiritual transformation both of the protagonists of the text and of "the drama" which is performed there. The presence of the mask—a mask of a man, an animal or a god—includes the potential possibility of the intensification of existence. The mask is thus a symbol of the acceptance of many forms of existence in the body of one man or in a community—a tribe, a family, a larger human society... The mask is also a magical shamanistic element of a therapeutic act. Thanks to it, everything which is attacked by an illness or an evil spirit can be changed by a shaman into something that is healthy and free of curse.

**The ceremonial and ritual activities:** in Cuban fairy-tale like folklore—in Lydia Cabrera's Afro-Cuban fables—a ceremony and a ritual mean participating in a common collective experience. Its basis is a common "cosmovision" of the world which derives from a spiritual and religious experience, from the syncretism of the catholic religion and African beliefs of black people—"lucumi" and "yoruba". A common experience and ritual replace History here. The essence of a collective existence in Lydia Cabrera's stories is manifested through a ritual experience. The experi-

ence of a ritual is a literary projection of “sacrum”. In a mythological fable it means a literary “theatralisation” of the world. Then in Lydia Cabrera’s stories the social situation changes into a literary situation with strong Features of a collective experience.

**The presence of a doll:** according to African myths, dolls come from the underground world where the dead ancestors stay: one man managed to reach the land of the dead where he saw dead ancestors using dolls. When he returned to the surface he taught people how to use dolls but the spirits of the dead sent him death. African legends and myths always talk about dolls with a sacred and magical meaning. The presence of a doll is connected with fertility, sexual mystery, with the symbols of water, with the earth and with the moon (anyway, it is very similar to numerous esoteric traditions of other cultures). For example, in the Nigerian tradition—dolls come from a special village of female wizards. So they were made by women who possessed magical qualities. However, men also had the privilege of making dolls. Some attributes of a wizard were mainly ascribed to a blacksmith and in most African countries, a smith created such dolls. A magical synthesis of a doll is fetish and along with it a rich space of mythical and cultural projections. I have mentioned here just a few basic elements of the “theatralisation” of the literary convention in Lydia Cabrera’s stories. Of course there are many more, and if we assumed the suggested perspective of the research, we would need a separate and broadened scientific study. Within the suggested line of interpretation we should certainly also consider the mythological and anthropological meaning of the victim, of the ritual of clearing, of the carnivalisation of literary statement, of the symbolic projection of gesture, dance, colour and of a motif of metamorphosis.

The above remarks concern directly the possibility of interpreting the literary text. I think that Lydia Cabrera’s literary works can be analysed from different perspectives. Two of them, suggested above, seemed to me especially interesting from the point of view of their creative inspiring energy:

1. a text as a picture ( a mimetic perspective) and
2. a text as a potential dramatical structure (a kinetic perspective)

Referring to the first one—a short observation concerning the paintings of Wilfredo Lam. His famous painting “La Jungla” is a synthesis of the Afro-Cuban way of visualizing the world. It fascinated people so much that excellent representatives of French avant-garde of the twentieth century devoted much of their time to it: Breton, Benjamin Péret, Michel Leiris, Philippe Soupault. The colours consist of dominating browns, ochres, luminous whites. The canvas is filled with sensual violence which refers to myths and African magical rites; sharp lines of bamboo trunks change into bars. Behind it—there are human figures—in a symbolic synthesis— changed into gods, fetish, a mask. “La Jungla” was an event which could be compared to Paolo Uccello’s discoveries in the area of perspectives. They influenced all subsequent painting as a whole as well as the sensitivity of the western world. The European perspective is expressed in the depiction of the whole composition around the defined central point. Most of the artists situated various elements of the canvas around that centre. That concept goes beyond the framework of painting—on the philosophical level it explains the general idea of picturing the world against the figure of God who

is somehow the main axis of symmetry of “the universe”.

Lam's painting denies that traditional perspective. He suggests a new perspective. It is a perspective of a different axis of symmetry within one painting.

Lydia Cabrera's work is similar as it negates the Euro-central literary perspective. The writer does not intend to be scientifically precise nor record only Afro-Cuban oral literature. However, she wants to create something she calls herself “antropoetry” —a feature connecting attributes of poetry and an essay.

The creative activity of Cuban artists—Wilfredo Lam and Lydia Cabrera—is connected by “a spirit” of the marvellous and the baroque. Both Lam and Cabrera try to capture the painting as a piece of a certain vision of the world. That world remains in a constant act of creation. Lam in his pictures, drawings and lithographies, and Cabrera in her Afro-Cuban stories and fairy-tales create art as if there is only one picture which is in constant motion. This is a formidable and uneasy picture, eternal and forever young— a bridge made of lianas connecting The Old Continent with The New World.

## Note

1. The information concerning Lydia Cabrera's biography and writings is cited respectively from the following works by herself: *Cuentos negros de Cuba* (La Habana: La Verónica, 1940); *La Regla Kimbisa de Santo Cristo del Buen Viaje* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1986); *Otán Iyebiyé Las Piedras preciosas* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1986); *Reglas de Congo Palo Monte Mayombe* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1986); and *Supersticiones y buenos consejos* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1987). The author has also borrowed some ideas from Peter Brook, *The Shifting Point. Forty Years of Theatrical Exploration, 1947 – 1987* (London: Methuen Drama by arrangement with Harper & Row Inc., 1988).

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# Treue in Three Tales by the Brothers Grimm

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**Abstract** The article focuses on the cardinal virtues of faithfulness and loyalty as they manifest themselves in “The Frog Prince”, “Faithful John” and “The Three Snake Leaves”. Extreme loyalty is shown in the first tale as the servant mourns the loss and metamorphosis of his prince; referring to Freud’s “reality principle” and “pleasure principle” the author demonstrates how the servant in “Faithful John” follows the former while his master is in the grips of the latter. The author also makes use of Bruno Bettelheim’s Freudian analysis and indicates how the significance of the number three in the fairy tale may be connected with the oedipal triangle. The tale “The Three Snake Leaves” once again rewards an uncompromisingly faithful servant, here a soldier in the service of his king. The soldier is also involved in a particularly interesting, complex erotic relationship with the princess.

**Key words** Loyalty; metamorphosis; the oedipal triangle

The German fairy tales gathered by the Brothers Grimm are often criticized for their violence and bloody punishments. As Maria Tatar notes, the German tales “came to be viewed as nourishers and reflectors of a cruel, perverse national mentality. The only question that remained open was whether to see them as causal contributors to the horrors of the Hitler regime or simply as early signs of what was to come” (185). A cursory glance at fairy tales from other countries shows that the Germans have no monopoly on violence in their fairy tales. However, every fairy tale, “no matter what its origin, tends to absorb something of the place where it is narrated—a landscape, a custom, a moral outlook.”<sup>1</sup> The fairy tale has no set form: “. . . it endlessly adjusts and adapts itself to every new culture as it takes root” (Tatar 191). A universal story will take on features of the culture that does the telling.

“Treue” (faithfulness, loyalty) was a cardinal virtue of the Germans from ancient times. This quality has always been important in tribal societies, and it is no wonder that fairy tales in every country show an appreciation of it, and punish its absence. Three fairy tales gathered by the Brothers Grimm in Germany illustrate the quality of loyalty/fidelity in its many manifestations. While all three contain a faithful servant, one gives us many other examples of fidelity. “Der Froschkönig oder der eiserne Heinrich” (usually translated as “The Frog Prince”) and “Der treue Johannes” (usually translated as “Faithful John”) show extreme loyalty to one’s superiors. “Die drei Schlangenblätter” (“The Three Snake Leaves”) is a kaleidoscopic tale of various kinds of loyalty and the punishment of infidelity.

The story of the faithful servant is one of the most ancient, and one of the most universal tales. It is found in ancient India and throughout Europe. The first fairy tale in the Grimm brothers' collection is "The Frog Prince." (The German title, translated literally is "The Frog King or Iron Henry.")<sup>2</sup> The outlines of this tale are well-known; a princess loses an object (in the Grimm tale it is a golden ball) in a well, and a frog volunteers to retrieve it if he can come home with the princess and share her bed and table. The annoyed princess after a time throws the frog against the wall, whereupon he turns into a handsome prince, whom she then marries. Although this story is very well-known, the final scene of the German version is not. In that version, the morning after the wedding a coach pulled up drawn by eight white horses in golden chains with white feathers decorating their manes. Behind them stood the servant of the young king, "der treue Heinrich" ("loyal Henry").<sup>3</sup> Heinrich helps his prince and the bride into the coach, and they set off. Hearing a loud crashing noise, the prince leans out the window and asks Heinrich if something is wrong with the coach, whereupon Heinrich explains that his sorrow was so great when his master was turned into a frog by a witch that he had three iron bands bound over his heart so it would not break from sadness. Two more times the crashing noise is heard; the iron bands have broken and fallen off, and Heinrich is happy again, "because his lord was redeemed and happy."<sup>4</sup> The entire story of "Iron Henry" is told in one paragraph. The story of the frog prince is generally known without its addition.

Although the story of the devoted servant Heinrich seemed almost an afterthought, the fairy tale of "Der treue Johannes" ("Faithful John")<sup>5</sup> shows us a focus on loyalty and its costs. This tale also treats of the confrontation with death. The story begins with the common fairy tale element of the "forbidden door," which most famously occurs in the French "Bluebeard" tale, as well as in several tales in the Grimm collection. Johannes's master, the old king, instructs the servant not to allow the young prince into one locked room in the palace, in which hangs the portrait of a beautiful princess. Johannes promises: "And when faithful Johannes had once again given the king his hand on it, the latter became still, laid his head on the pillow, and died" (66). After the funeral, Johannes tells the prince candidly what he promised his father and stressed his wish to be loyal to his new master: "I want to keep my promise and be faithful to you as I was to him, *even if it should cost me my life*" (66).<sup>6</sup> After the mourning period Johannes showed the prince his inheritance. But the prince noticed that Johannes always passed by one room in the castle, and he insisted on seeing what was in the room – despite the fact that Johannes said there was something in the room that the prince should not see. Trying to break open the door violently, the prince refused to budge from the spot until Johannes unlocked the door.<sup>7</sup> The faithful servant tried to warn the impetuous prince: "I promised your father before his death that you should not see what is in the room; it could cause great misfortune to you and to me" (67). The prince remains intransigent and seeing that opposition was useless, Johannes "with a heavy heart and much sighing" (67) opens the door. He thought if he could go in first he could cover the portrait—but the prince stood on tiptoe and looked over his shoulder. After seeing the princess bedecked with gold and precious stones, the prince fell unconscious to the floor. The princess was in

a far kingdom and known to be inaccessible. Knowing that she loved objects of gold, Johannes develops a plan: he has the goldsmiths of the prince's kingdom make all kinds of golden tools and ornaments, and then he and the prince sail to the faraway kingdom; Johannes takes many golden objects to the castle, where the princess sees them and wishes to see more. Loyal Johannes lies to the princess, telling her he is a merchant and his master has many finer objects on his ship, and she must come and see them. Once on the ship, the princess does not even notice that the boat is sailing away. Johannes has helped the prince abduct the princess.

Steven Swann Jones gives a Freudian interpretation of the tale; he notes that while the real father of the prince gave rigid rules, Johannes was willing to give way: "The servant represents a more flexible and sympathetic father figure who gives the young man some credit and undertakes to support and assist him in his decisions" (56). The contrast between the rational servant and the irrational young man in love is one established by Freud:

Faithful John follows Freud's reality principle: he is concerned with cause and effect and the consequences of his actions, and thus he is pragmatic in his orientation. Appropriately, the faithful servant does indeed know how to woo the princess. In contrast, the young man follows the pleasure principle; he wishes only to satisfy his burning desire to possess the beautiful maiden but does not know how to accomplish this goal. (56)

According to Swann Jones, faithful Johannes represents duty, or conscience.

Already on the ship returning to the prince's kingdom, Johannes saw three ravens and heard them speaking.<sup>8</sup> The fairy tale simply tells us that he understood the language of birds; no explanation for this feat is given. There follows a lengthy conversation among the ravens about what is going to happen to the prince, how to prevent it, and what the consequences will be for Johannes if he ever reveals any of it. A magic horse will try to carry off the prince, and must be killed – but if the killer reveals why he did it, one third of his body will turn to stone. The prince will put on a night shirt that looks beautiful but is really made of pitch and will burn him. Someone must put on gloves and throw the shirt into the fire – but if that person reveals the reason for his actions, another third of his body will turn to stone. The princess will dance at her wedding and fall down dead, if someone can not draw three drops of blood from her right breast and spit it out. If the protector tells why he is doing this, the last third of his body will turn to stone, and he will be dead.

There are three trials, and each time a third of Johannes' body will turn to stone. The number three is ubiquitous in fairy tales, and there are differing interpretations of why this is so. According to Bruno Bettelheim, the number refers to "the three aspects of the mind: id, ego, and superego" (102). Elsewhere he tells us the number three is understood by the child as his two parents and himself (106). Bettelheim also provides a more Freudian understanding of the number three:

Three is a mystical and often a holy number, and was so long before the Chris-

tian doctrine of the Holy Trinity. It is the threesome of snake, Eve, and Adam which, according to the Bible, makes for carnal knowledge. In the unconscious, the number three stands for sex, because each sex has three visible sex characteristics; penis and two testes in the male; vagina and the two breasts in the female. The number three stands in the unconscious for sex also in a quite different way, as it symbolizes the oedipal situation with its deep involvement of three persons with one another . . . (219)

Whatever the origin, the number three is an omnipresent feature in the content and structure of fairy tales. The German proverb “Aller guten Dinge sind drei” (“All good things come in threes”) itself comes from the Grimm fairy tale “Tischchen deck dich, Goldesel und Knüppel aus dem Sack”—“Table, set yourself, Golden Donkey and Club in the Sack” (224).<sup>9</sup>

Johannes manages to save the prince the first two times, and manages to avoid any explanations. But the third time, when he bends down over the prostrate princess to draw blood from her breast, the prince is enraged at this inappropriate touching, and Johannes, the faithful servant, is sentenced to death. Just before his execution he explains his actions, and is then turned to stone. The prince has the stone statue installed in his bedroom; Steven Swann Jones interprets this as a sign of the prince’s willingness to follow social codes; faithful Johannes, the symbol of the conscience, is put in that place where the prince had previously shown little self-control (61).

Although drawing blood from the princess was the final trial in the Grimm version, other versions have as the last test the killing of a large serpent that has entered the bridal chamber. The combination of serpents and birds as animals of wisdom is frequent in the Grimm fairy tales, and is related to ancient Germanic mythic material. One thinks of Thora in *Ragnar Lodbrok’s Saga* who nourishes a pet snake that turns into a monster and is killed by Ragnar—who himself will die in a snake pit. One thinks of Sigurd in *Volsungasaga* and Siegfried in *Das Nibelungenlied*; both heroes killed a dragon (serpent), inadvertently tasted the juice emanating from the roasting heart, and then understood the language of the birds. The birds warned them of danger and saved their lives. As Marie-Louise von Franz, a Jungian critic of fairy tales, notes: “There is a germ of truth in the contention that the telling of fairy tales belongs to the paganism of the past, as the Grimm Brothers said” (112). The ravens Johannes hears warn of the actions to be taken and their consequences. And, of course, the serpent in Christian story is associated with the Tree of Knowledge.

The prince and his bride mourn Johannes and two sons are born to them, who will provide a means to bring the servant back to life. When the prince, alone with his little sons, again looked at the statue and wished that he could revive Johannes, the statue spoke and said, “If you behead your two children with your own hand and smear their blood on me, I will be alive again” (72). Incredibly, the prince does this, and Johannes comes to life again. Faithful Johannes says to his master: “Your faithfulness (*Treue*) will not go unrewarded,” (72) and sets the heads back on the children’s bodies, smears them with blood, and they spring to life. The princess has been at church, and before she returns, the prince hides the two sons and Johannes

in a closet. When the queen returned, he asked her if she would be willing to sacrifice their sons to revive Johannes. Amazingly, she says yes, whereupon the children and Johannes emerge from the closet and all live happily ever after. The words “*treu*” (“faithful”) and “*Treue*” (“loyalty, fidelity”) occur frequently in this fairy tale. Never mind that Johannes broke his promise to the old king; he was willing to die to show his prince that he had remained faithful to him. The prince was willing to kill his own sons to be faithful to his trusty servant, to whom he owed his happy family life. That the princess also was willing to do this remains incomprehensible to the modern mind.

“The Three Snake Leaves”<sup>10</sup> tells the story of a young man who was born poor; his father could not support him, so he left to make his own living. And since the king of a powerful realm was at war, the young man (who remains nameless throughout the story, as in so many fairy tales) becomes a soldier. In battle the general is slain and many of the soldier’s comrades fell, and the others wanted to flee. But the young man said “We can not let our Fatherland be defeated” (126) and fought so bravely that the battle was won. The king, in gratitude, made the faithful soldier one of the most important people in the land. The king had a beautiful daughter that the soldier wanted to marry. But this unusual maiden required that any suitor swear an oath that, if she died first, he would go with her into the grave. She promised to do the same, should her husband die first. The soldier was so smitten that he wanted to marry the princess despite the oath. So they married and lived happily for a time, until the princess fell ill and died. The soldier had shown himself faithful to his nation, and to the king. He showed himself faithful to the princess when he took the oath. And although he had no intention of breaking his oath, “he felt terror at being buried alive” (127) but there was no way out; the king had put watchmen at all the gates to prevent him from leaving, even if he tried.

The corpse of the princess and the prince were locked in the vault with a table, four loaves of bread, four bottles of wine, and four candles. After he had consumed these, the prince would have to die of hunger and thirst. The prince saw death approaching ever nearer. While he was staring into space, a snake crawled out from a corner and approached the corpse. Thinking the snake wanted to eat his wife’s body, the prince drew his sword and hacked it into three pieces. After a while another snake crawled from the corner, saw its mate in three pieces, and withdrew. But it came back with three leaves in its mouth. It placed a leaf on each piece of the dead snake, and suddenly everything grew back together and the two snakes slithered away, leaving the leaves.<sup>11</sup> The prince, having seen this, wondered if the leaves could work their magic on human beings, and he placed one leaf on the mouth of his dead wife, and the other two leaves on her eyes. Suddenly, she came back to life, and the two of them pounded on the door and made noise until the king was summoned. They were let out and there was much rejoicing. The young king had been careful to take the three leaves with him, giving them to a faithful servant and enjoining him to always carry them on his person.

The fairy tale tells us that a change came over the young wife after her resuscitation, and she no longer loved her husband. The young couple seem to have gone to

live in a distant place, although this is not stated in the tale. We read that the young wife wanted to visit her old father “across the sea” (128) and the couple boards a boat. The wife falls in love with the skipper, and when the young king was sleeping, the faithless wife grabs her husband’s head and the skipper grabs the feet, and they pitch him overboard into the sea. Now another “faithful servant” will save his master. The king’s faithful servant, who had seen everything, quietly lowers a rowboat and rows with all his might to the spot where the body disappeared under the waves. He manages to find the corpse and get it into the boat. He then pulled out the three snake leaves, put one on the prince’s mouth, the other two on his eyes, and brings him back to life. They rowed with all their might and came to the old king’s castle before the wife and skipper in the bigger boat. After hearing what happened, the old king puts them in a “hidden chamber” (128). When the princess arrived alone with the skipper, the old king asks where her husband is. She said he became ill and died on the way, and feigned sadness. The king said “I want to make the dead man alive again” (129) and opened the chamber, bidding his daughter and the skipper to enter. The princess, upon seeing her husband, was “as struck by lightning” (129). But her own father said “there is no mercy” (129), reminding his daughter of how her husband was willing to die with her, and even brought her back to life. He tells his daughter she should receive the reward she deserves. She and the skipper were put in a boat bored full of holes and set adrift on the sea, where they “soon sank down into the waves” (129).

In this fairy tale, we again have a loyal servant; he brings his dead master to life, just as the prince brought his faithful servant to life in “Faithful John.” We have a faithful subject of the king, and a faithful husband willing to die for his wife. We see the mate of the dead snake resuscitate it. We see the husband bringing the dead wife back to life. We have many different kinds of “Treue” — patriotism, loyalty to authority, marital fidelity, and we have the glaring example of the princess’s infidelity, which is unfortunately not explained. Although she underwent an emotional change after being resuscitated, this did not seem to happen to her husband, who was also resuscitated — although being murdered by one’s wife would presumably cause the love to disappear without any magic.

Loyalty is a virtue much admired in German culture, and we see this fact illustrated in “The Frog Prince,” “Faithful John,” and “The Three Snake Leaves.” Faithful Johannes was willing to accept death as the cost of faithfulness to his prince, and he was resuscitated by the blood of the children, who were then resuscitated by blood as well. The husband in “The Three Snake Leaves” was willing to accept death as the price of loyalty to his deceased wife, and he was resuscitated by the magic leaves. For the unfaithful wife, there would be no resuscitation (a second time). Death was the “reward” for her infidelity. Faithful Johannes told his prince that the loyalty he showed him “would not go unrewarded” (“unbelohnt”). And the king in “The Three Snake Leaves” told his daughter that death at sea was her “reward” (“Lohn”).

Although respect for authority and the importance of oaths were nearly universal at the time when these tales originated, that respect seems to have maintained its vi-

tality to a greater degree in German-speaking lands than elsewhere.

## Notes

1. Italo Calvino, as quoted in Maria Tatar's *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*.
2. This fairy tale is number 440 in Stith Thompson's index, *The Folktale* (New York: Dryden Press, 1951) 483.
3. Not surprisingly, Adolf Hitler's nickname for SS-chief Heinrich Himmler was "der treue Heinrich" ("loyal Henry"), however ironic that appellation became by the end of World War II.
4. Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen. Vollständige Ausgabe* (Munich: Winkler Verlag, 2005) 43. All three fairy tales discussed in this essay are taken from this edition. All translations are my own. Quotations will be identified by page number in parentheses following the quotation.
5. This fairy tale is no. 516 in the Thompson index.
6. My emphasis.
7. Maria Tatar notes that female characters who violate a prohibition suffer punishment, but the prince, who was ready to break down the forbidden door, is not punished — but instead acquires wealth and the desired bride. Faithful Johannes also violates the prohibition stipulated by his master, the old king, without penalty (167).
8. Quite a number of the Grimms' fairy tales feature birds revealing secrets to people, or warning them, or providing important knowledge. Bettelheim usually sees birds as symbols of the superego. From early medieval works birds have been representatives of the soul (as in *The Voyage of Saint Brendan*, in which there is an island populated by souls, appearing as birds.) According to Marie-Louise von Franz, "Birds in general represent psychic entities of an intuitive and thinking character" (67).
9. Of course all European languages have similar proverbs, and the number three was significant in medieval Germanic legal practices as well.
10. This fairy tale is no. 612 in the Thompson index, p. 484.
11. Snakes have been associated with healing since very ancient times. The rod of Asclepius showed a winding snake and the Hebrew Nehushtan which Moses formed to protect the Israelites from snake-bite in the desert, also shows a rod and a serpent.

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# Nation Building and Folklore in Norway 1840 – 1905

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**Abstract** The article describes how modern European ideas of nationalism and democracy in the early and mid-nineteenth century inspired Norwegians to search for a national identity by collecting folk art that indicated the cultural differences between “us” and “them” —“them” referring to Europeans in general and the Danes in particular. Politically speaking, the difference from the Danes was obvious; never did Norway have feudal aristocracy nor bonded peasantry. The theory of the influence of climate and physical environment on culture and character helped create a specific sense of Norwegianness; the folklore of Norway was oral and had to be collected and written down, which was done by Asbjørnsen and Moe in the 1840s, and their collections accentuate the fairy tale as distinctly Norwegian because of its black humor, the talent-hidden hero and the graceful yet independent women characters. The fairy tales have successful endings; by contrast, the legends are more realistic and psychologically diverse. The language of tales and legends is a compromise between written Danish and Norwegian dialects. Ballads are also collected by Landstad and Croeger at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which portray courtly love and help to show that the Norwegian farmer was a subject of the King, not a serf like his Danish counterpart. Norwegian folk music and folk art in general inspired musicians and writers, and folk art was also significantly present in modern Norwegian politics as the new ‘National Left’ found its cultural and social identity in folklore. The emphasis on her “folk” identity became significant when Norway broke out of the union with Sweden in 1905.

**Key words** National identity; folk art; Norwegianness

## Political Context

Norway differs from many other European nation states in that it has had no feudal aristocracy of its own since the Middle Ages. Our nobility died out and/or was absorbed into the anonymous masses of ordinary people through the devastating plague called “the Black Death”, that struck Norway in the year 1349. It has been claimed that somewhere between one third and two thirds of our population died from this disease. Another consequence of the plague was that the royal family died out, and the country drifted into a union with Denmark, which lasted from the fifteenth century until 1814.

But during the Napoleonic wars the “Twin Monarchy” of Denmark and Norway

sided with Napoleon — and lost. Therefore, the allied powers forced Denmark to cede Norway to Sweden, which had supported the victors and demanded Norway as a reward for their support. Significantly, these events took place when the modern ideas of nationalism and democracy had started to catch on in Europe. Traditionally, borders between states were decided according to the power of the old royal families — disregarding the various ethnic groups and their traditional territories. According to the emerging nationalist ideas, borders between states should coincide with those between the various “nations” or groups of individuals who shared some kind of collective identity. All those individuals who felt that they shared a territory as well as a common cultural heritage were to have their own “nation state”.

The heritage in question might be religion, language, history and/ or ethnicity — as in the nationalist ideas of *German Romanticism*. Such attitudes triggered the romantic endeavor to collect and analyse folk art with the intent of identifying the cultural differences between “us” and “them”. “Our” fairy tales and legends were assumed to be different from “theirs”, “our” folk music from “theirs”, etc. Therefore, “we” need our own state since “we” are essentially different from “them”. This type of national identity pictures the nation as a clan or an extended family: You are not free to choose your nationality because you are born into it; you can not leave it and enter other nations at random. Another ideological complex regarding nationality pictures the nation as a club or some kind of organization. The individuals belong to the nation because they share loyalty to its rules and regulations; accordingly, they are free to join or leave the nation according to their political convictions. This understanding of the nation state was an important element in the democratic ideas of the *French Enlightenment*. Both these types of nationalism mixed and intertwined throughout Europe during the nation building processes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and both of them became important in Norway during the nineteenth century.

### **The Urge Towards a National Identity**

The political events subsequent to the Napoleonic Wars primarily inspired a boost of “French” political and democratic nationalism in Norway. This was because Norwegian leaders in 1814 had established a democratic constitution — with jurisdiction for Norway only, and this constitution was accepted by the Swedes. Hence, Norway now had its own legislation and its own democratic institutions. It was mainly in questions of foreign policy that Sweden insisted on having supremacy. This gave Norway a degree of independence that it had never had under Denmark. A Norwegian Parliament passed the laws, imposed the taxes, and decided how the money was to be spent. Nationalist ideas of the French Enlightenment type thus became part of the elite’s understanding of its national identity.

But gradually French Enlightenment nationalism was felt to be insufficient for the young Norwegian nation state. The problem was that during the 400 years of union with Denmark the political, intellectual and economic elites in both countries had become so closely knit together that they essentially shared the same culture. However, the modern nationalist sentiments presupposed distinct cultures in every nation. As

Norway now understood itself as an independent nation, it developed an urge for determining the essence of Norwegian-ness as something different from Danish-ness. Surprisingly, it was less important to be different from Sweden — our new union partner — than to differ from the Danish. Consequently, an important goal for Norwegian elites during the nineteenth century was to detect and define a genuinely Norwegian culture.

This is where it becomes relevant that Norway had no feudal aristocracy. The “twin monarchy” of Denmark-Norway had been a centralized one with political institutions mostly located in Denmark. Partly because of this, only Denmark had a social class of noble aristocracy. In Norway there were, of course, representatives of the Crown in the form of the clergy of the state church — and representatives of the judiciary. There was also a social segment of more or less well to do merchants and land owners. But these families did not belong to the nobility, and they were so few and so sparsely scattered over the relatively large Norwegian territory that they did not develop a distinct culture of their own. As elsewhere in early modern Europe they were split between the popular ways of their local regions and the more or less aristocratic ways of their equals in other countries — in our case particularly Denmark.

So, when Norwegian elites were to start their nation building process, and ultimately define “the essence of Norwegian-ness”, they lacked the precious symbols of national pride that the feudal powers of Central Europe could highlight during their nation building processes. The Russians had their Kremlin castle, their St. Basil’s Cathedral, their Winter Palace etc; the French had Versailles and the Louvre, the Germans the Cathedral of Cologne etc. , etc. Almost all other nations had a marvelous heritage inherited from their aristocratic elites — palaces, statues, parks, theatres, opera houses — as well as an artistic and intellectual heritage of classical music, ballets, theatres, authors, scholars, all of which they could cherish as outstanding symbols of their national heritage. Norway had almost nothing of the kind.

What should Norway do when the urge for self definition was acute? Norwegian nation builders basically pursued two strategies. One of them was to strive towards elitist accomplishments in arts and sciences that were equal to those from the old and well established nation states, like France and England. The other strategy, which will be elaborated here, was to cherish its people as unique. In this they were partly inspired by the ancient European theory of climate which posited that the various peoples of the world were fundamentally influenced by their environment. This had supposedly made the peoples of the north more tough and sturdy than those of the south, and because of their physical strength they dared to be honest, etc. This comprised an entire cluster of excellent qualities. The theory had probably gained ground because the intellectuals who shaped it were from the south, and did not really know the northerners, whereas they knew their next door neighbours all too well.

This theory suited Norwegian nation builders well since Norway is situated north of Denmark. Besides, Norway is a rocky and rugged landscape whereas Denmark is lush and flat. According to the climate theory, then, Norwegians were clearly physically superior, since they managed to survive under such harsh natural conditions. Another point — having no connection with the theory of climate — was that since

Denmark had a feudal aristocracy and Norway did not, a considerable portion of the Danish population in the countryside had traditionally been feudal serfs up until the eighteenth century whereas in Norway a large portion of the farmers had owned the land they cultivated. This was considered an important asset during an era searching for democracy.

But the point that Norwegians were different had to be elaborated and documented; How were Norwegians special? Many answers were sought to explain this; here I will pursue the theory that the presumed essential difference between nations pervades their folk art. Thus, the folk art of every nation was viewed as essentially different from that of all other nations because it reflected the “national character” of the culture that had produced it. It became particularly important with the verbal folklore of Norway. This was partly due to the question of language. Our medieval written language had died out during the union with Denmark, so that Norwegians from that point on used Danish as their written language. All that was left of a truly Norwegian language was the oral dialects. Therefore, our verbal folklore was a truly Norwegian literature since it was conveyed orally. Thus, it was deeply fascinating to the romantic nation builders; not only could it reveal our national character, it was also our only verbal art in the Norwegian language. But, since literacy was still a privilege of the elites, popular folklore lacked social prestige. If it were to serve as a commonly accepted national symbol, it had to be presented to the elites and accepted by them as admirable in some way. In other words, it had to be written down and published, but the only written language available was that of the old oppressors; in addition, this language was felt to be quite remote from the folklore it was supposed to convey.

### **Fairy Tales**

The first important collection of fairy tales published in Norway was done by Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe. They published several small collections of fairy tales during the 1840s, and an enlarged second edition in 1852 with an introduction by Moe. The reason that Moe gives for collecting and publishing fairy tales has a clear nationalist aim: He is well aware that the fairy tale genre shares many of the same qualities in many nations. One might say that he anticipates some basic insights concerning the Indo-European fairy tale developed by the Russian “formalist” Vladimir Propp almost a century later in 1968: The typical tale about youngsters encountering supernatural obstacles to their becoming a married couple, has the same basic structure on most of the Eurasian continent as far as narration and personae are concerned. But even though Moe recognises this general similarity across national borders, he is convinced that a fairy tale version recorded in any one nation portrays the “national character” of that nation. In his view, if one at some time in the future managed to acquire an all encompassing collection of absolutely all Norwegian fairy tales, one would at the same time have recorded all facets of the Norwegian national character (Moe 63 – 64).

However, this remains a general hypothesis; he is not very specific. But he does mention a few qualities in Norwegian fairy tales that he considers typical of Norwegians. One of them is a tendency to hide one’s talents; Typically, the hero of the tale

is commonly thought of as a nobody in the village, but precisely he is the chosen one — he is the only one who has the qualities necessary for the magic challenge of the tale. Similarly, Moe seems to think, Norwegians are reluctant to “show off”; they pretend to be ordinary; some peculiar modesty keeps them from demonstrating their true capacity in public.

Moe also talks of the humor in the tales. His point is that it is rugged and harsh — with an almost absurd contempt for danger — even for the devil! In several tales the devil is exposed as the clown or fool of the story, who is ridiculed and tortured in various ways by the hero. — No doubt, Moe here makes a correct observation of a certain type of Norwegian fairy tales. But his observation is hardly relevant for the Indo-European fairy tale type about the young couple defying magic obstacles to get married. His example is from a type of tale that specialises in ridiculing generally accepted norms and is thus related to the European tradition of carnivalism. Regardless, Moe claims that this type of tale is more hilarious and more fearless of taboos in the Norwegian tradition than in other nations, and he tries to explain it by referring to the tough living conditions of Norwegians; nobody could survive such a nature without a solid dose of black humor.

Moe does not mention a quality of the fairy tale hero, which has been commonly celebrated by later generations. As individualism and liberalism gained ground in our economy from the latter half of the eighteenth century, the fairy tale hero was seen as a symbol of the “self made man”. He sees the opportunities that his more conventional competitors ignores, and achieves success against all odds. This quality was hardly understood as something solely Norwegian; still, associating the “self made” bourgeois with the fairy tale hero was quite popular in Norway for many generations.

Moe also praises Norwegian fairy tales for the way they portray women. In particular, he claims that the Cinderella type is more graceful in certain Norwegian fairy tales than the corresponding heroines of fairy tales from other nations. This point was probably intended as a courtesy to Norwegian women: As fairy tale personae portray national character, and as the Norwegian Cinderella is more graceful than the Cinderellas of other nations, it should indicate that Norwegian women, in real life, are more ... etc. !

This point no doubt reveals the good will of the scholar as well as the values of his time. But it might be added that recent research gives a different picture. Actually, the bride of the young couple with the magic adversaries is in Norwegian fairy tales not a submissive object of harassment like the Snow White or the Cinderella of the Grimm brothers — who appear to win the prince because they accept being abused. The Norwegian fairy tale bride is different. She takes control from the moment the hero shows up with the intention of rescuing her, but with no idea of how to go about it. Almost always the girl has to tell him what to do; she knows about the magic remedies he needs and she more or less takes command. Then the boy kills the ogre, to be sure, but he could not have done so without her help. In other words, here we do not meet an active hero and a passive heroine; we meet a couple who function reciprocally; they want each other, and they work together<sup>1</sup>. Does this feature reflect the national character of Norwegian women? It is undoubtedly valid for

some of them. But Snow Whites as well as female strategists are probably found in all nations. In the fairy tale universe all personae are highly stylised; they have no psychological depth and hardly any emotions.<sup>2</sup> In short, fairy tale personae are not realist portraits, but fantasies representing wishful dreams as well as fears and conflicts. Still, admittedly, it is noteworthy that the cunning heroine fantasy was popular among Norwegian tellers of tales during the first half of the nineteenth century, while the Snow White fantasy was popular among the sources of the Grimm brothers. But it is hard to infer any further conclusions about the cultural causes of this difference.

### Legends

The picture given by Norwegian fairy tales of the assumed national character was, obviously, quite flattering. This is because the fairy tale genre, as I mentioned, conveys wishful fantasies of success. The protagonist encounters almost insurmountable challenges throughout most of the story, but it is an obligatory prerequisite of the genre that he or she succeed in the end. This is very different in the legend genre. Legends can be accounts of any remarkable event, and there are various genres of legends. Those that have entered the Norwegian literary canon were collected by Jørgen Moes friend and coeditor of fairy tales, Peter Christen Asbjørnsen. Most of these legends tell us about fatal encounters between humans and supernatural beings that, according to popular animistic belief, “live” in nature uncontrolled by man or culture. Legends differ from fairy tales in that they are not obvious fantasies, but are typically understood as true stories about real events that took place in history with such and such a person, at such and such a place, and at such and such a time.

To the extent that these legends portray Norwegians, they give us an entirely different picture from that of the fairy tale. The protagonist of fairy tales is absurdly courageous and always an optimist, with every good reason given that a happy end is guaranteed. Unlike the hero or heroine of fairy tales the protagonist of a legend has a soul; we may well refuse to believe in his or her story, but we do believe in their psychological experience. Also, we may consider him or her ignorant, simple minded, superstitious and/or hysterical. But we accept that according to popular belief in the culture that produced the genre, magic encounters do occur, resources to withstand the supernatural are limited, and the outcome usually fatal. With those cultural assumptions given, we accept that the psychological realism of the tale is convincing; we recognise ourselves in the fear and despair of the people involved. And we accept that the protagonist of legends has every good reason not to be optimistic, courageous or resourceful.

What does this kind of folklore imply for the search for a national character? Obviously, the character types that the nation builders wished to discern in fairy tales were quite the opposite of those of the legends. And it is quite understandable that nationalist enthusiasts were reluctant to establish a too close connection between legends and a national character. A possible connection was more or less repressed until the “fin de siècle” generation of authors from the 1890s who searched for an understanding of the subconscious, and paved the way for Sigmund Freud and psychoanaly-

sis.<sup>3</sup>

However, the narrative technique pursued by Asbjørnsen modified the picture of Norwegians from the gloom and anxiety of the legends proper. He almost always renders the legends in a “frame” story about a collector of legends, who resembles himself — an intellectual who does not belong to the social groups that believe in them, but who has some kind of skeptical fascination for them. The narrator, therefore, approaches the tellers of legends with some ambiguity — he is always charmed by them, but also slightly ironic. Some romantic poets saw the people as mysteriously pervaded by the “spirit” of their natural environment — primitive man and nature were different manifestations of the same underlying spiritual reality. Asbjørnsen was hardly a romantic in this sense. He remained an Enlightenment rationalist. But he observed the close ties between those who shared their legends with him and the nature they lived in. To these people it made sense to fear nature; they knew that they did not control it — it controlled them — to the extent that they depended on it. No wonder the enigmas of nature could take the shape of hallucinations. In spite of his subtle irony the pictures he gives of these story telling milieus strike the reader as quite realistic.

But above all, his narrative technique expands the focus of the text concerning the quest for a national character. In his reflections on fairy tales Moe takes for granted that they reflect the characteristics of the illiterate masses — implying that the essence of Norwegian-ness dwells in the lower social classes. But Asbjørnsen’s legends remind the reader that the Norwegian population is split; it does not only consist of illiterates; it also includes the social elites — those who collect tales and read them; and the nation must come to grips with the challenges and potentials of its own diversity.

As mentioned above the written language in Norway was Danish. However, to Asbjørnsen and Moe, in the 1840s and 1850s it appeared as though the Norwegian essence of their folklore evaporated if they rendered it in Danish. They wanted to convey in writing some of the atmosphere of the Norwegian culture that had inspired their material. Therefore, they compromised between written Danish and spoken Norwegian. Because both Danish and Norwegian have developed from Old Norse, the two languages share most of their vocabulary. And all those words that are quite similar in both languages Asbjørnsen and Moe spelled according to Danish orthography — in order not to make their texts too strange to their readers. But at the same time they inserted innumerable terms and phrases and even syntactical patterns from Norwegian dialects into their Danish writing. This provoked many readers; it was felt to be vulgar and rude. But it encouraged young authors like Henrik Ibsen and many others to introduce Norwegian elements into their Danish. All in all, Asbjørnsen and Moe started a development in the history of our language away from the Danish towards the so-called “bokmål” — the Norwegian written language that is most widespread today.

### **Ballads**

During the nineteenth century our nation builders were proud of our relatively egalitarian democracy, and quite content that we had had no Norwegian nobility since the

middle ages. But in 1853, the year after the second edition of Asbjørnsen and Moe's fairy tales was published, a volume appeared, which to some extent may have shed an air of noblesse on the Norwegians after all. It was a collection of popular ballads, collected by Magnus Brostrup Landstad and Olea Croeger. They were epic ballads; it is commonly believed that they were meant for singing and dancing in a chain or circle; this tradition has lasted until today in the Faroe Islands, but in no other Scandinavian milieu was the dance tradition in use when the ballads were written down. In Norway this tradition was revived towards the end of the nineteenth century. Most of the ballads relate love stories from a highly stylised milieu of aristocratic courts: A conflict may arise between two knights who love the same noble bride or between a noble wooer and the king, who is the father of the bride, etc. The ballads also introduce motifs from animistic legends into this aristocratic milieu, letting the magic encounters of the legend involve young aristocrats who as a rule suffer the tragic outcome of the legend. For example, a young knight travels through the forest to invite guests for his wedding with a young woman of his own standing; then all of a sudden he is approached by the queen of the elves, who tries to seduce him; he resists her, but she strikes him with some mortal illness; his death makes both his fiancée and his mother die from grief!

Most nineteenth century scholars believed that this genre originated in the Middle Ages, and that the preserved texts were transmitted orally for the generations it took before they were written down. A particularly great number were written down in Denmark during the sixteenth century. At the time it was fashionable among young Danish aristocrats to keep hand written poetry books, and in these books a great number of ballads were written down. Because of their sixteenth century poetry books Denmark has preserved a larger number of ballads than any other Scandinavian country, and it was commonly believed that the genre was originally Danish, and to a lesser extent was spread from Denmark to the other Scandinavian countries. Some scholars have also questioned the theory of a medieval origin for these ballads.<sup>4</sup>

Nearly all Norwegian ballads were written down during the nineteenth century and almost all of them derive from singers of the farming class in the county of Telemark. The Swedish scholar Bengt R. Jonsson has argued that the Nordic ballad genre did not originate in Denmark, but in Norwegian courtly circles during the 1280s, where it was inspired by romances from Norman England. It soon spread from Norway to the other Scandinavian countries, and remained fashionable in the aristocracy for a relatively short period of time. But it then sifted down into the farming class, which preserved it orally for centuries.<sup>5</sup>

Even though nineteenth century scholars generally assumed that the Nordic ballad was predominantly Danish, I believe that the publication of a large volume of Norwegian ballads in Norwegian dialects acquired just as great an importance in the nineteenth century nation building process of Norway as the much larger collection of ballads had in Denmark. That is because Denmark already had a vast heritage from its noble aristocracy that included castles, cathedrals, theatres, scholars, authors and other artists. Thus, the Danish ballads of courtly love were only one other treasure from its glorious past. In Norway the culture of courts and kings belonged to a very

remote past. But now the Norwegian ballad genre could awaken fantasies of such a glory in our society, too. I believe that several lines of thinking worked together in this connection: Firstly, the discovery that there were Norwegian ballads, too, not only Danish, strengthened the feeling of having a cultural heritage of a comparable cultural level as that of the envied counterpart. Secondly, the assumption that the ballad genre was medieval strengthened the idea that Norway was an old nation — with a cultural continuity since the Middle Ages. Thirdly, one might enjoy some blissful associations with the setting of the ballad genre, which indicates wealth, noble characters and gallantry; since this was thought of as a national heritage, the nation as such may have been attributed some of that courtly glory. And, finally, the fact that the singers of these ballads up through the centuries had come from the farming class, associated the ballad universe with the Norwegian farmer. Enlightenment writers had been very aware that because the typical Norwegian farmer owned the land he cultivated, he was a direct subject of the King — like the continental nobility — and unlike the serfs of feudal Europe, who primarily were the subjects of their land owners. Now a romantic generation ascribed a mix of noble pride and poetic genius to the Norwegian farmer, suggesting that he has an intuitive feeling for the spiritual essence of all things. We have some convincing examples in a few poems by J. S. Welhaven (“Eivind Bolt”, “Harald fra Reine”, both from the 1850s). Similar examples are found in some of Henrik Ibsen’s early plays (particularly *Sancthansnatten*, 1852, and *Olaf Liljekrans*, 1857).<sup>6</sup>

### Folklore and Nation Building

The more subtle effects of Norwegian folk art on the history of the nation are too complex to clarify in detail here. Still, I want to mention two aspects where folklore played a significant role; one is its influence on the cultural endeavors of the educated elites of various arts and the other one is its influence on our political history.

It is hardly surprising that folk art stimulated the fine arts of the last two centuries in a variety of directions. Folk music inspired composers from Ole Bull and Edvard Grieg of the nineteenth century to Fartein Valen, Eivind Groven and Geirr Tveitt of the twentieth century. Folk traditions in coloring and ornamentation in textiles, painting, wood carving and architecture may still be recognized in modern Norwegian arts and handicrafts. And motifs from our epic folklore genres were popular in pictorial arts towards the end of the nineteenth century. Gerard Munthe, Theodor Kittelsen, Erik Werenskiöld are only three of the numerous outstanding artists who used folklore motives in their pictures.

Among our authors it is particularly the tragic conflicts of the legends that had a lasting appeal. As mentioned above legend motives were used by the romantics Welhaven and Ibsen in the 1850s to illustrate the subconscious, supposedly influenced by the intimate relation between nature, mind, and neo-Platonic “spirit”. Ibsen also pursued some of the same ideas in his symbolist dramas of the 1880s and 1890s, such as *Rosmersholm*, *The Lady from the Sea*, and *Little Eyolf*.<sup>7</sup> In the 1890s legend motifs were taken up by a new generation of writers, but now the conflicts were not simply between man and nature but within man, and between individuals who live in very

narrow social contexts and who are at the same time exposed to extremely tough living conditions. A few examples are Jonas Lie, particularly his two short story collections *Ogres (Troll)*, Arne Garborg with his epic cycle of poems called *The Fairy (Haugtussa)*, and Hans E. Kinck with several of his short story collections, among which *Bat Wings (Flaggermusvinger)* is the best known.

Thus, Norwegian educated artists from Romanticism and onwards pursue a goal of transforming the folk art heritage, which they feel is genuinely national, into the various genres of contemporary western elite arts. It is as though there has been an urge among artists to interpret the heritage of their illiterate ancestors through the techniques of their own specific art forms. In a world of progressing individualism this means that much of Norwegian art during the last 200 years has combined an obvious desire for expressing the individuality of the artist with an equally strong desire to belong to an ancient collective tradition.

But Norwegian folk art has not only influenced artists and other culture workers. It is very likely that it also during a few important decades influenced Norwegian political history. For a long time the yearning for a national identity primarily appealed to the educated professionals and the higher bourgeoisie. But from around 1860 these ideas caught on in new segments of society. The main reason for this was probably that the population became more mobile, both geographically and socially. People moved from the countryside to towns and cities. In addition, education improved, so that more people with a common background got an education that moved them into higher social positions. An example is the teaching profession, which experienced considerable growth during the latter half of the nineteenth century. This resulted in a new “intelligentsia”, with its background in the common people; they knew the culture of the people from the inside at the same time as they acquired knowledge about the assumptions and values of the old upper class. Therefore, this social segment could take a mediating role between the classes; they could explain upper class norms to the people and claim social or cultural improvements for the poor.

However, during the last decades of the nineteenth century and up until 1905 Norway was split and divided in several conflicts. Two of them were closely connected. One was whether or not Norway should secede from the union with Sweden, and the other one was the attempts from a leftist opposition to curbe the political power of the educated professionals, who worked for the government and tended to favour the existing union. In 1905 the opposition won, and Parliament decided that Norway should leave the union with Sweden.

To a large extent this was a class conflict within Norway, where “the rising class” and their spokesmen attacked the old upper class. What is interesting in our context is that nationalist arguments were employed in this predominantly social conflict. The professionals were accused of lacking patriotism — not only were they loyal to the Swedish king, but they also sympathized with the Danish cultural heritage. Their counterparts were called the “National Left”, and defined themselves as good Norwegians. It was a living sentiment in the period that the Norwegian population was comparable to “two nations” — which, according to nationalist theory, must have different cultures. Those who were loyal to the Swedes and cherished the Danish her-

itage were one nation. “The National Left” was the other. Now the time had come for the true Norwegians to take over and push the old ruling class aside! But the main point here is that “the National Left” to a considerable extent identified with the Norwegian folk art tradition. Ironically, most of them had probably inherited their veneration for it from the old upper class intellectuals who collected folk traditions a generation earlier. But, since then, the knowledge about folk arts, and the official admiration for it, had become widespread; some folklore had been included in a reader for public schools from the early 1860s, — a fact which provoked considerable resentment, by the way. Still, in the heat of the political conflicts around the turn of the century there is hardly any doubt that folk art by the ideologists of “the National Left” was understood as their culture in some very essential sense. The genres of the elite arts were international, and were shared by too many. Their “national” art gave them a class identity which no elite art could give them. Therefore, I believe one may assume that Norwegian folk art — folklore being a vital part of it — gave “the National Left” movement added self confidence in the political feuds that lead up to the secession of Norway from the union with Sweden in 1905. As a matter of fact, it is probably true that folk arts enjoy more veneration in Norway even today — relatively speaking — than it does in many other European nations.

## Notes

1. For detailed, see Johan Einar Bjerkem, *Kjønnsrollene i trønderske undereventyr* (Oslo: Novus, 1996).
2. These observations are made by Max Lüthi in his book *Das europäische Volksmärchen. Form und Wesen* (Bern, München: Francke Verlag, 1947).
3. Confer below the discussions concerning Ibsen, Lie, Garborg, and Kinck.
4. Refer to Michael Barnes, *Draumkvæde. An edition and study* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1974).
5. The general idea is from Bengt R. Jonsson, *Om Draumkvædet och dess datering* (Stockholm: Svenskt visarkiv, 1996).
6. Confer below the discussion concerning Ibsen.
7. See Nina Schartum Alnæs, *Varulv om natten. Folketro og folkediktning hos Ibsen* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 2003).

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# The Language of Andersen's Early Fairy Tales<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract** The article examines the language in Andersen's earliest fairy tales, concentrating on the radical changes from the very first tale "Dödningen" (1830) to "The Tinderbox" in the first separate volume from 1835 and other early tales. It is shown how Andersen soon discarded the heavy Germanic constructions that were the norm in the works of many of his contemporaries in favour of a simple style that was suited for children, though he always had his "double audience" in mind. As a consequence, the language in the tales from 1835 onwards often imitates the spoken language by means of such features as direct speech, onomatopoeic expressions, exclamations and repetitions, as well as a strong dose of humour. Andersen's frequent use of modal adverbs (or discourse particles) adds subtle nuances to his language which are virtually impossible to convey in translations of the works into English. Further, Andersen's paratactic syntax (i. e. writing in long sentences consisting almost exclusively of main clauses with very few subordinate clauses in between) results in a lively, rhythmic style and a quick tempo, which are both generally lost in English translations. The paper provides examples of some of these difficulties that face all translators.

**Key words** informal style; direct speech; paratactic syntax; onomatopoeic expressions; use of modal adverbs

The world fame of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales — or at least the best known of them — is even greater now, more than two centuries after his birth, than it was in his own lifetime. However, in an international context this fame is chiefly based on the content of the tales rather than on the form and language in which they are couched.

There are good reasons for that. The most obvious one is that the readers, apart from those who understand Danish, are dependent on translations of the tales.<sup>2</sup> It is a truism that all literature suffers in translation, and the more distinctive, individualistic and downright idiosyncratic the language is, the harder it is for any translator to be faithful to the original and get both the tone and all the nuances right.<sup>3</sup> This may also be said, of course, of other literary works from the past that constantly appear in new translations, such as Shakespeare's and Racine's plays, Goethe's poetry, etc. However, Andersen presents, if not a unique, then certainly a very demanding challenge to any translator, because his language in the fairy tales departs markedly from both that

of his contemporaries and from the fairy-tale tradition in general. Concentrating on this aspect of the tales, the article confines itself to his earliest fairy tales, particularly to “Fyrtøiet” (The Tinderbox), which appeared in the first volume of fairy tales in 1835.<sup>4</sup>

In a sense it is not quite accurate to claim that the 1835 volume marks the beginning of Andersen's fascination with the fairy-tale genre. In 1830 his *Digte* (Poems) had at the end of the book a text, described there as “et fyensk Folke-Eventyr” (a folk tale from Funen [the island of Andersen's birth]), entitled “Dødningen” (The Dead Person).<sup>5</sup> It came with the following short explanation by the author:

Som barn var det min største Glæde at høre Eventyr, en stor Deel staae endnu ret levende i min Erindring, og nogle af disse ere kun lidet eller intet bekendte; jeg har her gjenfortalt et, og dersom jeg seer det optaget med Bifald, vil jeg saaledes behandle flere, og engang levere en Cyclus af danske Folke-Eventyr. (Andersen 2003: I:52)

(As a child it was my greatest joy to listen to fairy tales, many of them are still quite fresh in my memory, and some of these are little or not at all known; I have here retold one, and in case it is received with approbation, I will deal with others, and at some point deliver a cycle of Danish folk fairy tales.)

However, this attempt to “dip his toes in the water”, as it were, and hope for a positive reaction fell on deaf ears. Andersen received nothing but harsh criticism for his efforts, and five years passed before he tried his hand at this genre again. But when he did, he seemed to have learnt his lesson, for the difference in language, style and idiom is remarkable.

“Dødningen” opens with a detailed description of the setting (on Funen) and a rather high-flown depiction of “en smuk August-Aften” (a beautiful August evening), complete with dancing elf girls and the elf king himself as well as other supernatural beings, such as an exorcised spirit that still haunts the locality. This is all depicted in a somewhat bombastic style and, at times, in a vocabulary that is far from elementary, e. g. “thi den Nedmanede fløi hver Midnat, i store Kredse, som en kul-sort Ravn og skræmmede Egnens beboere ved sit hæse Skrig” (for den exorcised spirit flew around every midnight, in wide circles, in the guise of a pitch-black raven and frightened the local inhabitants with its hoarse croaking).

No doubt this owes a lot to the interest in the night side of life and to aspects of the supernatural found in some of the German Romantic works, e. g. *Novalis's Hymnen an die Nacht* (*Hymns to the Night*) and some of E. T. A. Hoffmann's demonic night settings, and it looks as if by using a mature and formal style Andersen was trying to prove himself to the dominant aesthetic circles in Copenhagen, centred around the writer and critic Johan Ludvig Heiberg. However the “new” language in the fairy tales that he created from 1835 onwards is totally independent of that of the writers that he admired, such as Tieck and Hoffmann in Germany and Adam Oehlenschläger in Denmark.

One particular construction in the opening sentence of “Dødningen” stands out

as symptomatic of Andersen's language before he found his "true voice" in the later fairy tales. (I have translated the sentence as literally as possible — rather than elegantly — and have italicised the construction in question, while dispensing with the italics of the Danish place-names.)

Omtrent en Miil fra Bogense finder man paa Marken i Nærheden af Elvedgaard, *en ved sin størrelse mærkværdig Hvidtjørn*, der kan sees fra selve den jydsk Kyst. Andersen 2003: I:52

(About five miles from Bogense one will find in a field in the vicinity of Elvedgaard *a due to its size peculiar hawthorn*, which may be seen even from the coast of Jutland.)<sup>6</sup>

The noun phrase in question, incorporating a prepositional phrase between the indefinite article and the descriptive adjective, is typical of the Germanic academic style that Danish intellectuals eagerly adopted at the time, not least Andersen's contemporary, the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. But one would be hard pressed to find this kind of construction in Andersen's later writings, particularly in the fairy tales. In fact, Andersen rewrote "Dödningen" as "Reisekammeraten" (The Travelling Companion), published in the second instalment of fairy tales in 1835, together with "Tommelise" (Thumbelina) and "Den uartige Dreng" (The Naughty Boy). Just to give a flavour of the radical change in Andersen's language from five years previously, let me quote the opening paragraph of "Reisekammeraten":

Den stakkels Johannes var saa bedrøvet, for hans Fader var meget syg og kunne ikke leve. Der var slet ingen uden de to inde i den lille Stue; Lampen paa Bordet var ved at brænde ud, og det var ganske sildigt paa Aftenen. (Andersen 2003: 123)

(In Tiina Nunnally's translation; Poor Johannes was so sad because his father was very ill and about to die. There was no one else but the two of them in the little room. The lamp on the table was about to go out, and it was quite late in the evening.) (47)

Instead of the initial, extensive description of the locality in "Dödningen", the beginning of "Reisekammeraten" has been cut to the bone. Immediately we see the main character, Johannes, and share his sadness. The paragraph reproduced here is followed by direct speech, namely the last words that the father utters to his son, after which he dies. In other words, unlike "Dödningen" the tale begins *in medias res* without any introduction and thus catches the attention of the reader (or child listener) from the start.

A more dramatic change from the earlier version is difficult to imagine, and if we look closely at the language, a few things spring to mind. The vocabulary is very simple. There are no formal words here; even "sildigt" (late), which has been phased out in modern Danish, was quite a common word then. The formal, somewhat biblical conjunction "thi" (for), which appeared in "Dödningen", is nowhere to be

seen, and it could be argued that “because” in the translation sounds heavier and more clumsy than the short Danish “for”. We also note that although “og kunne ikke leve” (and could not live) may be semantically close to “and about to die”, the tone of the latter is colder and more matter-of-fact than the Danish expression, especially to a young reader/listener. Further, “slet ingen” (no one at all) is given as “no one else”, which covers it fairly accurately but lacks the more insistent emphasis of the childlike, colloquial effect of the Danish phrase. Finally, the English translation has a full stop after “room” — a less precise locality than the Danish *Stue*, a living-room — whereas Andersen's text has a semi-colon. This is a perennial headache for translators of the fairy tales (see below).

However, we have barely scratched the surface concerning Andersen's language in the fairy tales, and in truth it changed further in important respects as he gained confidence and mastery of his craft, especially in the 1850s when he substituted the title word “eventyr” (fairy tales) for “historier” (stories). But that is not our immediate concern.

In the run-up to the appearance of the 1835 volume, Andersen expressed his thoughts about this new departure in his writing career (or the revisiting of a previous endeavour) in letters to friends. Thus a few months before the publication in May 1835, he says in a letter to his older friend, the poet and novelist B. S. Ingemann, who himself dabbled in this genre, that he has started writing some tales and that he has high hopes for them. As he puts it,

Dernæst har jeg begyndt paa nogle: “Eventyr *fortalte* for Børn”, og jeg troer de lykkes for mig. Jeg har givet et Par af de Eventyr jeg selv som Lille var lykkelig ved, og som jeg ikke troer ere kjendte . . .<sup>7</sup> (His emphasis)  
(Furthermore, I have begun some “Fairy Tales, *Told* for Children”, and I think I will succeed with them. I have rendered a few of the fairy tales that made me happy to listen to as a child and which I think are not known . . .)

Significantly, he then adds the following information, “jeg har ganske skrevet dem saaledes som jeg selv vilde fortælle et Barn dem” (I have written them exactly as I myself would tell them to a *child*). This is precisely what was missing in his comments about “Dödningen”, where he only said that he had retold one, but not in what way. As we saw, it was not in this way.

Even closer to the publication, Andersen had this to say to the German writer Adelbert von Chamisso: “Jeg troer i disse ret eiendommeligt at have udtalt det Barnlige” (in these [i. e. the first four tales] I think I have expressed the childish in a rather singular way).<sup>8</sup>

What Andersen brings to the fairy tales this time round is therefore first and foremost two new things: the child's perspective and a new kind of language.

As far as the perspective is concerned, he gradually realised that his tales were being misinterpreted and thought of as *only* stories for children — something which is still a widespread view in many countries, including in the Anglo-Saxon world. At different stages in his life, Andersen commented on this failure to grasp the meaning

of his tales fully, e. g. in the introduction to his third volume in 1837 — this is the one that contains “Den lille Havfrue” (*The Little Mermaid*) and “Keiserens nye Klæder” (*The Emperor’s New Clothes*) — where he admits that in contrast to “The Little Mermaid”, the deeper meaning of which only the older reader will understand, the previous tales are perhaps more suited to the child. Andersen himself was partly to blame for this “misconception” by issuing each volume up to 1842 with the subtitle “Eventyr, fortalte for Børn” (*Fairy Tales, Told for Children*). Only then did he quietly drop that epithet, but it is clear that he always had a “double audience” of children and adults in mind; in other words, that his tales could be understood at different levels.

This is apparent not only from the tales themselves but also from the guidance that he issues much later on how to read them, albeit with a good dose of hindsight. In the volume of “Eventyr og Historier” (*Fairy Tales and Stories*) from 1863 he elaborates as follows: “Man skulle i Stilen høre Fortælleren, Sproget maatte derfor nærme sig det mundtlige Foredrag; der fortæltes for Børn, men ogsaa den Ældre skulle høre derpaa” (One should in the style hear the narrator, the language therefore had to approach an oral account; the narration was for children, but the older person should also listen to it).<sup>9</sup> Here Andersen also admits that it was his ambition in “Dødningen” to imitate the tone found in the folk fairy tales published by Musäus in Germany in 1782 – 86 (the first Danish translation appeared in 1841, after Andersen’s first five volumes and certainly long after “Dødningen”).

Lastly, exactly two months before his death in 1875, Andersen goes even further and confides this to his diary (4 June 1875):

... mine Eventyr vare ligesaa meget for de Ældre som for Børnene, disse forstode kun Stafagen og som modne Folk saae og fornåm først det Hele. At det Naive var kun een Deel af mine Eventyr, at Humoren egentlig var Saltet i dem.<sup>10</sup> (... my fairy tales were just as much for the older people as for the children, the latter only understood the trappings and did not see or grasp the whole of it until they were mature, or understand that the naïve elements were merely one aspect of my fairy tales and that the humour was actually the salt in them.)

The early shift in perspective towards a more “child-friendly” style, compared with previous folk fairy tales and the *Kunstmärchen* of the Romantic era, had a profound impact on Andersen’s language. Gone were the elaborate constructions and contorted sentences of “Dødningen” as well as the formal vocabulary. The sudden change in tone and technique as well as language may be illustrated in the very first tale of Andersen’s first volume of fairy tales from 1835, viz. “Fyrtøiet” (*The Tinderbox*), and since many of the basic features in it soon established themselves as a kind of “ground rules” for the following tales, we will take a closer look at some of them, including the frequent use of direct speech and the simplicity of language.

Much of the first part of the “The Tinderbox” — the sequence concerning the soldier and the witch — is rendered by means of direct speech, including the latter’s long instruction to the soldier of how he can get copper, silver and gold coins down in

the hollow tree. This in itself is a departure from the classic folk fairy tale, which tends to use reported speech for such exchanges. Direct speech serves several functions; for example, it helps to characterise the speaker; it brings a greater liveliness to the story; and not least, it catches the attention of children better than long descriptive passages.

It is notable that the soldier and the witch are immediately on very informal terms with each other. She addresses him as “soldat” (soldier) and with the informal pronoun *du* rather than with the formal *De* (you; compare German *du* vs. *Sie*, and French *tu* vs. *vous*), which at the time was not something you did to strangers, but fairy tales often dispense with formalities. Indeed, for her his sword and rucksack alone define him as “en rigtig soldat” (a real soldier), while he in turn calls her “din gamle heks” (you old witch), but not before she has been described as such by the narrator, purely because of her repulsive looks “hun var saa ækel, hendes Underlæbe hang hende lige ned paa Brystet” (she was so hideous, her lower lip hung all way down to her breast) (79; Nunnally, 5). As such, these two characters are treated as types: a soldier is brave and dashing, a witch is old and ugly. No attempt at nuances or political correctness here! This is more in line with folk fairy tales, as is the fact that no character in this tale is known by name, only by profession (the soldier, the King, the Queen, the princess, the shoemaker's apprentice, etc.) or by appearance (the witch).

Further linguistic features come into play if we consider the very first sentence: Der kom en Soldat marcherende henad Landeveien: een, to! een, to! han havde sit Tornister paa Ryggen og en Sabel ved Siden, for han havde været i Krigen, og nu skulle han hjem. (79)

(In Nunnally's translation (5): A soldier came marching along the road: left, right! left, right! He had his knapsack on his back and a sword at his side, because he had been to war, and now he was on his way home.)

From a purely semantic point of view, there is no need to add anything to the opening clause. We all know what marching sounds like; that is, we adults do. To children, however, the rhythm and sound of marching are brought home to them by the onomatopoeic “een! to!” (literally: one, two! one, two!). This is how the military command is said (or shouted) in Danish, but in English it is traditionally “left, right! left, right!”. It is therefore perfectly “correct” and in accordance with idiomatic English usage that Nunnally translates it in this way. And yet, we do not get quite the same connotations we do as from Andersen's text. For a young child “one, two!” is a more basic and immediately understandable concept, and it helps to define the soldier, since even though he is alone, he still behaves as if under orders. In short, the child (like the witch) finds it easier to see him as a soldier.

There are several other onomatopoeic expressions in the text, all with a view to make the story lively and to appeal to children. For instance, when the soldier opens the first door down in the tree, he utters an involuntary “Uh!” (Ooh) (80 / Nunnally 6) when he spots the dog in the room. Or does he? There are no inverted commas

around this exclamation, and it is more logical to see it as an example of free indirect speech in that we hear the soldier's reaction via the narrator's voice. This is a device that Andersen perfected in his fairy-tale language. When the soldier opens the second door, an "Eia!" (Eeek!) is expressed, but by whom? And the sight of the third dog (the one with eyes as big as "runde Taarn")<sup>11</sup> generates a whole sentence (at least in the Danish text), "Nei det var ækelt!" (literally: No, that was hideous!; Nunnally: Oh, how hideous! 6), but again without being part of direct speech.

Similar exclamations (introduced by interjections) to impart the thoughts or feelings of the soldier are: "Jo der var rigtignok Penge!" (Yes, there was certainly plenty of money!) (80 / Nunnally 7), "Uh, hvor der var mørkt og kedeligt" (Oh, how dark and dreary it was)<sup>12</sup> (84 / Nunnally 10) and "og - ja nu skal vi faae at høre!" (and ... well, let's hear what happened) (ibid.). The last of these, in different linguistic variations, became a favourite "trick" of the narrator in the tales, and the emphasis is always on the verb "høre" (hear), which draws attention to the listening rather than the reading process.<sup>13</sup>

How simple the vocabulary is in Andersen's new-found voice may be exemplified by the frequent repetitions of very common words. A few examples will suffice. There are several Danish verbs that can express the sense of sight, but it is notable that in "The Tinderbox" only the most common one "se" (see; in Andersen's time spelt "see") is used, except towards the end when the soldier is imprisoned and "*kigede ud mellem Jernstængerne*" (84) (peered out through the iron bars; my emphasis) and perhaps the very last words where the dogs (with a pun that even children may catch) "gjorde store øjne" (85) (made big eyes). Some of these numerous examples of "se" cannot be translated into English by a form of "see", as "see" and "look" are used differently, and in other cases the translator will often want to vary the vocabulary by using other expressions (as Nunnally does on a few occasions). Nevertheless, it is part and parcel of Andersen's appeal to children that he insists on these repetitions.

And if that was not enough, there are plenty of instances of the adverb/conjunction "så" (then/so, with various meanings), forming a whole web of variations; "så" being a homograph of the past tense of "se".

This, almost imperceptibly, leads us on to Andersen's extensive use of "discourse particles" (also known as "modal adverbs"), such as "da, dog, jo, nok, nu, vel", which are all represented in this tale but are notoriously difficult, and often impossible, to translate into English, certainly without making the style clumsy and cumbersome.<sup>14</sup> And to complicate matters, some of them like "da" and "nu" also have other uses, viz. as conjunction and/or adverb (when/then and now, respectively). Space does not allow more than a flavour of the complexities of these discourse particles, so here are four examples (with the discourse particle italicised). Note that only in the last example has the particle been translated (as "I imagine");

"det er *dog* noget løierligt noget, at man ikke maa faae den Prindsesse at see!" (82)

(Literally: it is really a strange thing that one is not allowed to get to see that

princess)

(Nunnally: How odd that no one is allowed to see that princess; 8)

“det var *jo* den sidste Pibe han fik i denne Verden” (84)

(Literally: it was after all the last pipe he got in this world)

(Nunnally: it would be the last pipe he had in this world; 11)

“Men Dronningen var *nu* en meget klog Kone” (83)

(Literally: But the Queen was after all a very clever woman)

(Nunnally: But the queen was a very clever woman; 10)

“For noget vil Du *vel* have med, kan jeg tænke!” (80)

(Literally: For something you want to have me bring along, I suppose.)

(Nunnally: Because I imagine there must be something you want; 6)

Finally, let me mention a very characteristic aspect of the style that Andersen gradually adopted in the fairy tales, namely the heavily paratactic style with long sentences — the term “sentence” here refers to what is written between two full stops — but with few subordinate clauses in them. Instead of a linking subordinate conjunction, we often find main clause heaped upon main clause, separated from the previous one merely by a comma or a semicolon, or by a coordinating conjunction such as “og” (and), “men” (but) or “for” (for, because). A famous example of this is the end of the fairy tale “Klokken” (The Bell) from 1845, depicting the high-Romantic, pantheistic view of nature where everything melts together in one great harmony. It feels almost prosaic to point out that there are only four subordinators in this long sequence/sentence, namely “der” (which); “hvor” (where); “hvori” (in which); and “idet” (just as), and none in the second half of it:

Havet, det store herlige Hav der væltede sine lange Bølger mod Kysten, strakte sig ud foran ham, og Solen stod som et stort skinnende Alter derude, hvor Hav og Himmel mødtes, alt smeltede sammen i glødende Farver, Skoven sang og Havet sang og hans Hjerte sang med; den hele Natur var en stor hellig Kirke, hvori Træer og svævende Skyer vare Pillerne, Blomster og Græs det vævede Fløiels Klæde og Himlen selv den store Kuppel; deroppe slukkedes de røde Farver, idet Solen forsvandt, men Millioner Stjerner tændtes, Millioner Diamant-Lamper skinnede da og Kongesønnen bredte sine Arme ud mod Himlen, mod Havet og Skoven, og i det samme, fra den høire Sidegang, kom med de korte Ærmer og med Træskoe den fattige Confirmand; han var kommen der ligesaa tidligt, kommen der ad sin Vei, og de løbe hinanden imøde og holdt hinanden i Hænderne i Naturens og Poesiens store Kirke og over dem klang den usynlige hellige Klokke, salige Aander svævede i Dans om den til et jublende Halleluja! (Andersen 2003 : I:372 – 73)

(In Nunnally's translation (with American spelling), 271: The sea, the great glorious sea, tumbled its long waves against the shore and stretched out before

him, with the sun floating like a great gleaming altar out where the sea and sky met. Everything merged into blazing colors. The forest sang and the sea sang and his heart sang too. All of nature was one great holy cathedral in which the trees and drifting clouds were the pillars, the flowers and grass the woven velvet cloth, and the sky itself the enormous dome. Up there the red colors were extinguished as the sun vanished, but millions of stars were lit, millions of diamond lamps glittered. And the king's son spread out his arms toward the sky, toward the sea and the forest. At that moment, from the aisle on the right, appeared the poor boy with the short sleeves and the wooden clogs. He had arrived at the same time, taking his own path. The two boys ran to each other and held hands in the great cathedral of nature and poetry. Above them rang the invisible sacred bell, and blessed spirits hovered and danced around them to a jubilant "Hallelujah!")

There is among translators a clear reluctance to emulate Andersen's paratactic style. It is (often rightly, no doubt) felt that this would sound unidiomatic in English, and translators therefore normally break up these long sentences into several shorter ones by inserting full stops, and even (as above) a new paragraph. However, this interrupts the natural flow of Andersen's language, with its expressive rhythmic cadences that are part and parcel of the colloquial effect. In fact, there are no fewer than ten sentences in Nunnally's translation compared with Andersen's one, as well as the extra paragraph. It is up to each translator how far s/he is prepared to sacrifice the almost breathless delivery of the original on the altar of "normality" of language, but it is beyond dispute that the effect on the reader/listener is very different from the one produced by Andersen's own text.

Although there has only been space to deal with certain aspects of Andersen's language in the fairy tales, we have seen some instances of how problematic it is to translate them, in this case into English, and how many pitfalls they present. As Andersen might have said, "Now we shall hear", but my contention is that in translations in general we tend to hear different things from what he wrote. Some of this is unavoidable because of the differences in vocabularies, structures, semantic fields, idioms, etc., between languages, but many of the problems can be resolved in ways that either enhance or detract from Andersen's extraordinary awareness of, and sensitivity to, the use of language. Translators do have a choice in some of these matters; the interesting (and important) thing is how they exercise it.

## Notes

1. Surprisingly little has been written about Andersen's language in the fairy tales, using the original Danish texts of course. The most comprehensive study, i. e. Jensen (1929), is now more than 80 years old. Naturally, there have been other examinations of it since then, e. g. Brostrøm and Lund (1991), aspects of Møllehave (1985) and a number of shorter ones, but in view of the radical departure from the tradition that Andersen's language in the early fairy tales represents, this lack of interest is difficult to explain. Very little exists in English on this topic, but some of the characteristic

linguistic features are addressed in my own article (Lundskær-Nielsen 2007).

2. An extensive study of English translations of Andersen's fairy tales and stories is found in Pedersen (2004).
3. There is a general debate within translation studies about the interrelationship between "original" and translation, even to the extent that the notion of an "original text" is disputed, but for the sake of argument I shall here assume that translators of Andersen strive towards rendering his fairy tales as closely as possible to the texts that he wrote.
4. All Danish references to the fairy tales are to the recent edition of the Collected Works, *H. C. Andersens Samlede Værker, Eventyr og Historier I-III*, Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab, Gyldendal, 2003, and all are to the first volume. Numerous English translations since the middle of the 19th century are available (see Pedersen 2004), but for most people (myself included) none of them is wholly satisfactory in all respects. As a good modern translation I shall in general refer to Tiina Nunnally's translation of 30 of the 156 fairy tales and stories, published in *Hans Christian Andersen — Fairy Tales*, ed. J. Wullschlager (2004), though I shall query some of her solutions and at times provide my own translations.
5. Note the spelling with an "ø"; in modern Danish this letter symbol would be "ø".
6. Note that a Danish "mil" is 7.5 kilometres, while an English mile is approximately 1.6 kilometres.
7. *Breve fra Hans Christian Andersen*, ed. C. S. A. Bille and Nikolai Bøgh, Vol. I., Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1878, (dated 10 February 1835) 292.
8. Poul Højbye, "Chamisso, H. C. Andersen og andre danskere", *Anderseniana*, 1969: 400. Chamisso is best known for his story *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte* (The Wondrous Story of Peter Schlemihl) (1814), which inspired, and is even referred to in, Andersen's "The Shadow", though Andersen makes clear there that the similarity is only superficial.
9. Andersen (2003; III:368).
10. *H. C. Andersens Dagbøger 1825 – 1875*, XII; 4. juni (June) 1875.
11. This is a good illustration of the problems that face a translator, and this is not even a specifically linguistic conundrum. The term "runde Taarn" (in modern Danish, "Rundetårn") refers to a concrete tower in Copenhagen, completed in 1642 during the reign of King Christian IV (1588 – 1648). The reference thus makes good sense to readers familiar with this Copenhagen landmark (though, arguably, having eyes the size of c. 35 metres stretches at least adult readers' credulity), but not to others. Nunnally (6) makes the eyes "as big as round towers", which is much vaguer. However, at the end Nunnally does in fact use the phrase "the one with eyes as big as the Round Tower" (11), so why not the first time, and do the readers really understand it?
12. Note that the English "Oh" does not unambiguously convey the purely negative connotations of the Danish "Uh".
13. Andersen himself was famous for reading performances of his fairy tales, especially during his countless stays at stately homes in Denmark and princely courts in Germany. For an analysis of Andersen's use of "høre" see e.g. Møllehave (1985:16 – 31).
14. Translations of these words vary greatly, and they are often simply left out in English translations. However, they express very important nuances in the Danish text and are thus significant for the interpretation of the tales. For a textbook presentation of these and other Danish 'discourse particles' see Lundskær-Nielsen and Holmes (2010:413 – 16).

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# Dual or Single Address? Some Reflections on Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales in Polish Translations

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**Abstract** The fairy tale is in Poland thought to be exclusively a genre for children but the Danes were inclined to have a slightly different perspective. The tradition of the “Kunstmärchen” made the fairy tale an accepted adult art form in the nineteenth-century Germany and via close links with German Romanticism the genre was also accepted as an adult literature in Denmark. That approach provided a firm foundation for Andersen's acceptance as a serious writer. But at the same time Andersen himself equipped his first edition with the title *Fairy Tales Told for Children*, which put him in the category of children's literature. In other words, as one of the first authors he dared to make use of the dual addressee. In the tales he took up issues of adult life (sexual love, social differences) but still wrote genuine children's literature, using the mode of an enormous appeal to children (humor, straightforwardness). The dual address made the problem of translating Andersen into Polish really complex. Some translators used the German text, others tried their best with the original Danish, some attempted to convert Andersen's consciously negligent narrative style into something more formally correct but the fundamental problem was that the Polish translations up to the year 2005 were made mostly for children, omitting the other parallel addressee: the adult. This article investigates three Polish translations of Andersen's tales in the light of the writer's dual appeal: to children and adults.

**Key words** Andersen; fairy tales; Polish translations; dual address

For nearly 200 years H. C. Andersen has been the most famous Dane. “The Ugly Duckling”, “The Little Mermaid” and “The Snow White” are cultural universals recognizable all over the world — almost everybody knows them, though perhaps not everybody can name the author. Andersen wrote about two hundred<sup>1</sup> fairy tales which have been translated into nearly all languages, giving way practically only to the Bible's translations. He was a very ambitious writer who tried to break through as a poet, novelist and dramatist but he was rather unsuccessful in these attempts. His genius was proved a bit unexpectedly — in fairy tales which made him the most famous immortal fairy tale writer.

Andersen is perceived by biographers as a man whose life and works are marked

by dichotomies: He is called a product of two cities (Odense and Copenhagen), two worlds (the bottom and the top of society) and two ages (Romanticism and the dawn of Realism). But I think it is justified to add one more dichotomy — in my opinion, Andersen was a discoverer and a master of two addresses: to adults and children.

The first six booklets including Andersen's tales, published in Denmark 1835 – 1841, were entitled *Fairy Tales Told for Children* but in the following ones the reference was omitted — their titles were simply *New Fairy Tales* and *New Fairy Tales and Stories*. The redirecting of the texts to an adult audience was explained by Andersen himself: “One should hear the narrator in the style, the language should therefore be close to the oral presentation; it was told for children but also the older should be able to listen”<sup>2</sup> (Wulschläger 180). As we hear, the child was an explicit addressee but not the exclusive one, the adult reader was also taken into consideration. It is noteworthy that the first two booklets consisted almost entirely of retellings of folktales, taking up issues directed originally to adults. Although Andersen's stories often deal thematically with sexual matters or social clashes, they seem genuine children's literature. Because of their straightforwardness, humor, logic and language typical of children's games they represent the general mode of narration that still has an enormous appeal to children.

Andersen abandons the romantic idealistic understanding of the child as a pure and fragile being to be protected. His childhood conception is far more modern and closer to contemporary views while his children characters appear as resistant, able to handle stress and conflict, innocent but having large resources when it comes to facing life and death. Andersen doesn't talk down but leads a dialogue with a competent young being and his revolutionary approach will be continued by other great Scandinavian authors of children's fiction, i. e. Astrid Lindgren.

Andersen seems to put trust in what Torben Weinreich calls today encyclopedic and rhetorical competences (Weinreich 81 – 85). The first means that the implied reader must have knowledge of the world — from social norms to various types of active knowledge; the latter stands for a knowledge of literary devices and conventions. Andersen cares for neither reading nor convention competences, that is a degree of reading skills or a knowledge how to read and where to buy a book. He admitted that his tales were to be read to children, which he himself did quite often. But at the same time, his high expectations of the rhetorical and encyclopedic competences implicate an appeal to an adult loud reader: Read to children and explain to them all that is unclear. Andersen was a very ambitious author who wanted to achieve as broad audience as possible — directly proportional to his hunger of success. This is presumably why he adopted a child's viewpoint partly because he wished to publish stories both for children and adults. Andersen stated it openly (Wulschläger 17) and hereby realized — according to Barbara Wall's typology — dual address. Wall's analyses of the relation narrator-narratee in children's literature resulted in a model constituted by three modes: *single address* — exclusively to children, *double address* — when an adult narrative voice is replaced by a voice concerned with child readers and dual address when narrators use single address, double address or a fusion of the two speaking respectively to single, double or dual audiences (Wall 9).

As Andersen himself said his fairy tales contained something for “the older” — their name *Eventyr* seemed to function as a kind of cover: The straightforward text contained a subtext which commented on the adult world ironically, sarcastically and bitterly. The fashionable genre of fairy tale let the writer avoid censorship and express freely thoughts and experiences from his painful way to glory. But in Poland Andersen used to be categorized as a representative of children's literature. Here, like i. e. in Great Britain, fairy tales have been thought to be a genre for children. The tradition of *Kunstmärchen*, accepted as adult art in Germany and Denmark, was never a similar part of our literary scene — the Polish seemed to be blind to the clear dual address of the narrator's voice in Andersen's tales. That approach had a direct reflection in translation strategies applied for years. I'll demonstrate this thesis by considering a few chosen Polish translations: Witold Zechenter's (1948), Stefania Beylin's (1956) and the latest one by Bogusława Sochańska (2005)<sup>3</sup>. The first two collections are translated via French and German, which must have affected the final product. The last, by Sochańska, crowns the Polish celebrations of the bicentenary of Andersen's birth and is the first full Polish translation directly from Danish. This is a collection closest to the source language text, showing “the real Andersen”, different from the one we got used to.

To reflect fundamental changes in addresses of these translations I have chosen a few representative examples from different tales. Let's start with “The Tinderbox”, a story about a brave soldier, three wonderful magic dogs granting wishes and a folk-tale-like ending in form of a happy marriage. In the final scene the soldier asks the dogs to let him off the hook: “Hjelp mig nu, at jeg ikke bliver hængt! sagde Soldaten, og saa foer Hundene ind paa Dommerne og hele Raadet, tog en ved Benene og en ved Næsen og kastede dem mange Favne op i Veiret, saa de faldt ned og sloges reent i Stykker” (Help me now so that I won't be hanged! said the soldier, and so the four dogs jumped onto the judges and all the council, took one by the legs and the other by the nose and threw them up many times, until they came down and broke into pieces.)<sup>4</sup>. Sochańska keeps close to the original's structure and sense: “Pomóście, niech mnie nie wieszają! — zawołał żołnierz, a psy skoczyły na sędziów i na całą radę, złapały jednego za nogi, drugiego zaś za nos i rzuciły nimi wiele razy w górę, a spadli i roztrzaskali się na kawałki” (244). Beylin retains the meaning and the aspect of breaking the noble people while Zechenter alters it into: “— Hej, pieseczki! — zawołał żołnierz. — Nie pozwólcie na to, by mnie powieszono! Wtedy psy rzuciły się na sędziów i zaczęły ich podrzucać, jednego za głowę, drugiego za nogi, wysoko w górę i zrobiło się takie zamieszanie, jakiego dotąd nie było” (— Hello, little dogs! — cried the soldier. — Don't let them hang me! Then the dogs jumped onto the judges and started to throw them high up, one by his head, one by his legs, and it was such chaos as never before.) (100). At the beginning of that passage the translation adds the childish invocation to the dogs in a diminutive, at the end — it reduces the aspect of breaking into pieces.

This scene of punishment depicts the persons who break into bits like porcelain, which can be seen as make-believe from the perspective of the child and as a variant of romantic irony, seen from the adult perspective. Zechenter's version interprets

away a vital moment and evidently turns to the child. He seems to have judged the scene as too drastic and thus improper to be conveyed to an innocent child. The translator's implied reader is much less competent compared with the author's intentionality. I understand the term *translator's implied reader* in the light of Ritta Oittinen's dialogic translation theory. For Oittinen, when a translator translates for the child, she or he also reads, writes and discusses with her or his present and former self. She or he also discusses with her or his audience, the listening and reading child. Translators simply bring a concept of child and childhood into their work (Oittinen 30).

In "The Nightingale" we encounter another example where the majesty of royalty is protected by a translator. The Emperor, in the desire of possessing the marvellous bird, threatens his courtiers with corporal punishment as follows: "Jeg vil høre Nattegalen! den skal være her i Aften! den har min høieste Naade! og kommer den ikke, da skal hele Hoffet dunkes paa Maven, naar det har spiiist Aftensmad". (I want to hear this nightingale! he must be here this evening. He has my high imperial favor! And if he doesn't come, I will have the whole court patted in the stomach, when it has had supper.) In Sochańska's translation we can read: "Chcę posłuchać tego słowika i rozkazuję, by był tu dziś wieczorem! Okazuję mu jemu moją najjaśniejszą łaskę! A jeśli nie przyleci, to cały dwór każe wyębnąć po brzuchach, i to po kolacji". (I want to listen to that nightingale and I order him to be here tonight! He has my royal favor! And if he doesn't fly here, I will order to drum in the stomachs of the whole court, directly after supper!) (221). A reader with some sense of humor may easily imagine the scene of drumming in the stomachs of, supposedly quite obese courtiers, whose fat round stomachs resemble just drums. The threat in Zechenter's translation looks different: "Musi tu przyść, gdyż chcę go łaskawie obdarzyć! A jeżeli się nie zjawi, to ty i inni moi leniwi dworzanie dostaniecie zaraz po kolacji po sporej porcji różg" (73). The courtiers are to "get a portion of flogging" in case they don't return with the precious little singer. Beylin, in turn, proposes in this scene: "A jeżeli się nie zjawi, każe moim ludziom deptać po brzuchach wszystkich dworzan, i to zaraz po kolacji" (And if he doesn't appear, I will order my people to tread on the stomachs of all the courtiers, soon after the dinner.) (143)

As we can see, the character of the ruler in Zechenter's translation is distorted — he appears as cruel, not funny and in consequence his threat leaves the dimension of make-believe. The emperor's words undergo manipulation: the punishment suggested by him in the source text is supposedly thought — by the translators or editors — not to fit the royal majesty. The Danish verb *dunke* expresses the idea of *patting* or *tapping*, that combined with *stomachs directly after dinner* contributes to the humor Andersen was famous for. It is a loss that some translations deprived him of it.

Humor also colors Andersen's attitude to human faults and weaknesses that are ridiculed by him in a funny mild way. In "The Nightingale" vanity is illustrated as liking for long sophisticated titles that the Emperor distributes quite generously. One day an artificial substitute of the real bird advances to "Høikeiserlig Natbord-Sanger, i Rang Nummer eet" (the Emperor's Night-Table-Singer, in Rank *Number One*). Sochańska's title is an exact copy and goes "tytuł cesarskiego Spiewaka nocnego stolika, w randze numer 1" (227). Zechenter reduces the honor to "tytuł cesarskiegoś

piewaka pierwszego stopnia” (the title of the emperor's singer of the first degree) (80) while Beylin substitutes *night table* with a *bedroom* which results in “śpiewak cesarskiej sypialni” (the singer of the emperor's bedroom) (147).

But the translators' interferences concern not only an unrecognized humor or scenes of implicit death, as was the case in the final scene of “The Tinderbox”. They often alter in the sphere of good manners and decency. Apparently in their mind characters in children's fiction must serve as examples to follow, thus all references to their sexuality should be ignored. These interferences prove that Göte Klingberg's observation about purification of children's literature is correct. Purification is a popular issue that often accompanies translation of children's books: “Its aim is to get the target text in correspondence with the supposed set of values of its readers — or rather in correspondence with the supposed set of values of those who feel themselves responsible for the upbringing of the intended readers: parents, teachers, librarians, critics.” (Klingberg 58) The Swedish scholar distinguished a few thematic fields that are usually purified, i. e. touches of the erotic, bad manners in children, erring adults.

Some delicate “touches of the erotic” that were partly purified, occur in the above mentioned tale, “The Tinderbox”. The soldier wants one of the dogs to bring him the princess and his wish is immediately granted: “Hunden var strax ude af Døren, og før Soldaten tænkte paa det, saae han ham igjen med Prindsessen, hun sad og sov paa Hundens Ryg og var saa deilig, at enhver kunde see, det var en virkelig Prindsesse; Soldaten kunde slet ikke lade være, han maatte kysse hende, for det var en rigtig Soldat.” (The dog was soon out of the door, and before the soldier could think about it, he saw the dog again with the princess, she was asleep on his back and was so pretty that everyone could see she was a real princess; the soldier couldn't keep from kissing her, because it was a real soldier.) Bogusława Sochańska is once again the most faithful: “I pies był już za drzwiami, a nim żołnierz zdążył pomyśleć, znów go zobaczył — z królowną. Siedziała na grzbiecie psa i spała; była przesłiczna, każdy by się domyślił, że to prawdziwa królowna. Żołnierz nie mógł się powstrzymać, musiał ją pocałować, był przecież prawdziwym Żołnierzem” (240). At this point Zechenter introduces a little correction: “Spała ona mocno, a rzeczywiście cie była tak piękna, że żołnierz uklęknął przed nią i pocałował jej rączkę.” (She slept so deeply, and she was really so beautiful that the soldier knelt down and kissed her little hand.) (97). The original is enriched with a respectful act of kneeling down in front of the princess and her hand as the place kissed by the soldier. Nothing about “real soldiers who kiss beautiful women”. At this stage of the original fairy tale the soldier is rather a bit comical antihero, not a figure for identification, which is evidently repaired by the translator. This happens also at other places where the “offending” passages or motifs are removed or twisted until they become vehicles of a proper message, vehicles of adaptation into a pure children's fiction directed to an innocent implied addressee.

Another example when the Polish translation is made more clear-cut and decent comes from the beginning part of the shortest tale by Andersen — “The Princess on the Pea” where the first sentence goes: “Der var engang en Prinds; han vilde have

sig en Prindsesse, men det skulde være en rigtig Prindsesse.” (Once upon a time there was a prince; he wanted to have a princess, but it should be a true princess). The discussed translations render the beginning as follows: “Był sobie raz ksiąźę, który chciał pojąć za żonę księźniczkę, ale musiała to być prawdziwa księźniczka” (Once there was a prince, who wanted to marry a princess, but it had to be a true princess) (Sochańska 284), “Był sobie pewnego razu ksiąźę, który chciał ożenić się z księźniczką, ale musiała to być prawdziwa księźniczka” (Once upon a time there was a prince, who wanted to marry a princess, but it had to be a true princess) (Beylin 13) and “Pewien królewicz postanowił się ożenić, ale tylko z najprawdziwszą królową” (Some prince decided to marry, but only to the truest princess.) (Zechenter 38). All the versions introduce the word marry or add the concept of wife. Andersen didn't use the aspect of getting married at this point. Though paragraph 9 of the tale says openly that the prince took the princess as his wife, there is a certain ambiguity in the source text, appealing to an adult, that was interpreted away in the target text.

In the same spirit Zechenter tones down an expressive and a bit seductive dance in “The Steadfast Tin Soldier”. Andersen himself was keen on dancing and depicted this scene dynamically, with respect to detail: “Den lille Jomfru strakte begge sine Arme ud, for hun var en Dandserinde, og saa løftede hun sit ene Been saa høit i Veiret, at Tinsoldaten slet ikke kunde finde det og troede, at hun kun havde eet Been ligesom han.” (The little lady held out both her arms, as she was a ballet dancer, and one leg was lifted so high that the tin soldier couldn't see it at all, and he supposed she had only one leg, as he did.) Sochańska keeps close to his version: “Panienska rozkładała ramiona, bo była tancerką, a jedną nogę unosiła tak wysoko w górę, że cynowy żołnierz w ogóle jej nie dostrzegał i myślał, że panienska ma tak jak on, tylko jedna nogę” (133). The same little lady is distorted in the after-war, Zechenter's version into a motionless, static, colorless figure: “Stała na jednej nóżce z wysoko wyciągniętymi rączkami, bo przecież była tancerką” (She stood on one leg, with high stretched hands because she was a dancer.) (41).

Unexpectedly Zechenter doesn't find nudity as something children should be protected from. In “The Emperor's New Clothes” he underlines this aspect recurrently though it seems not to be in accordance with the author's intentionality. Let us have a look at the fragment when the translator emphasizes the emperor's awkward situation: “Saa gik Keiseren i Processionen under den deilige Thronhimmel og alle Mennesker paa Gaden og i Vinduerne sagde: Gud hvor Keiserens nye Klæder ere mageløse!” (So the Emperor went in procession under his splendid canopy and all people in the streets and in the windows said, “Oh, how fine are the Emperor's new clothes!”) Zechenter's rendering goes: “I oto kroczył cesarz przez ulice swej stolicy, a ludzie, stłoczeni na schodach i w oknach i na balkonach widzieli golasa pośrodku strojnego wspaniałego orszaku, ale wszyscy głośno chwalili szaty.” (Here was strutting the emperor along the streets of his capital city and crowded people on stairs and windows and balconies saw the naked person in the middle of a magnificent ornate procession and all of them admired his clothes loudly.) (36) I disregard some strange additions but want to focus on the word golasa (the naked person) that represents very informal

Polish style. The writer's intention appears clear: People looked at the emperor and admired his clothes. Andersen keeps suspension, suggests ambiguity in this scene when not saying explicitly that the people saw the naked ruler. The reader may guess here that hypocrisy might have blinded the crowded subjects so that they could see the emperor's fine new clothes. The truth is to be revealed a little later and the translator destroys the meticulously built narration. Talking to the child, the incompetent addressee who must be informed about everything in plain language, he neglects the original ambiguous implied meanings and consequently neglects the other reader: the adult.

When finally the emperor's shameful condition is uncovered by the innocent child, we can read: "Men han har jo ikke noget paa, sagde et lille Barn." ("But he hasn't got anything on, a little child said".) "Przecież on nie ma na sobie ubrania, powiedziało małe dziecko" (251), Sochańska very faithfully translates; "Psecieś on jest golutki!" (He is naked, isn't he?) (36), Zechenter translates, imitating a little child's lisping voice, which was not included in the source-language text. This example is an illustration of a broadly applied usage of diminutives while turning to children. Andersen doesn't use diminutives and generally Danish is poor of them. However many translators can't resist the temptation and apply them abundantly and often redundantly in Polish, replacing originally neutral words with their sweeter and more infantile counterparts. Bogusława Sochańska breaks with this strategy. In the above cited fragment of "The Steadfast Tin Soldier" the little dancer has *ramiona* (*arms*) and *nogi* (*legs*), when Beylin's dancer has *ręce* (*arms*) and *nóżkę* (*a little leg*) and Zechenter's little heroine is equipped with both *rączki* (*little arms*) and *nóżki* (*little legs*). This is a general practice which is particularly striking in the sorrowful fairy tale "The Little Match Girl" where translators made use of two extremely different variants of the word *grandma*. Let's have a look at the fragment: "Nu døer der Een! sagde den Lille, for gamle Mormoer, som var den eneste, der havde været god mod hende, men nu var død, havde sagt: naar en Stjerne falder, gaaer der en Sjæl op til Gud." ("Now someone is dying," said the little girl, for her old grandma, who was the only person who was good to her, and who was now dead, had said: when a star falls down a soul goes up to God.) "— Ktoś umiera! — powiedziała dziewczynka, bo babka, która jedna była dla niej dobra, ale już umarła, mawiała, że kiedy spada gwiazda, to jakaś dusza idzie do nieba" (216) goes Sochańska's almost word-for-word rendition, while in Witold Zechenter's text we can hear an absolutely different tone: "— Babunia mówiła, że wtedy ktoś umiera, gdy gwiazdka spada — przypomniała sobie dziewczynka i usłyszała cichutki, stary głos ukochanej babuni" (Granny used to say that somebody dies when a little star falls down — the girl remembered it and she heard a very quiet, old voice of her beloved granny.) (27) The diminutive *babunia* (*granny*) and its opposite *babka* (*grandmother*) are good representatives of the broader assumptions of these two translations. It's evident that the citation filled with lexical choices like *babunia* (*granny*), *gwiazdka* (*a little star*), *cichutki* (*very quiet*), *ukochana* (*beloved*) — builds a warm family atmosphere compensating the girl's hopeless position, because the implied addressee — the child — must be protected. Sochańska as usual seems to have both addresses in mind.

Apart from diminutives Zechenter introduces another alternation on the level of language: He often doubles epithets and uses superlatives. In “The Princess on the Pea” Andersen uses the word *rigtig* (*true*) many times referring to the title character. This seems deliberate as redundancy and repetition are general features of oral narration that Andersen transferred into literature. For example, when the princess proved to be real we read that “Saa kunde de see, at det var en rigtig Prindsesse, da hun gjennem de tyve Matrasser og de tyve Ædderduuns Dynner havde mærket Ærten.” (In this way they could see that she was a true princess, now that she had felt one pea through twenty mattresses and twenty feather beds.) This short matter-of-fact description is rendered as considerably longer one by surprisingly talkative Zechenter: “Wtedy przekonali się wszyscy, że była prawdziwą, najprawdziwszą królową. Taką bowiem delikatną skórę mogła mieć tylko prawdziwa, najprawdziwsza królowa, skoro wyczuła przez dwadzieścia materaców i dwadzieścia pierzynek z puchu jedno, jedyne ziarnko grochu” (Then all of them realized that she was the true, the truest princess. Because only the true, the truest princess could have such a delicate skin when she felt one little pea through twenty mattresses and twenty little feather beds.) (38) The addition from the translator is significant and results among others from doubling the epithets — the positive plus its superlative — which mark the text with affection and the infantile tone.

To sum up, the older Polish translations of H. C. Andersen’s fairy tales had children as the prime target group, which resulted from a general approach to the genre as reserved exclusively for the younger audience. Witold Zechenter’s translation from 1948 underwent numerous simplifications and omissions of offending passages including motifs of death, cruelty or sexuality. The writer’s belief in children’s competences was neglected as well as his conscious dual address. Zechenter didn’t conceal that he marked Andersen works with his personal tone. The implied reader of his translation was highly marked by the child image from his own childhood. The translator writes about it explicitly in the preface to his translation: “I’d like to permeate my work with that warmth that suddenly returned to me with the world’s most beautiful tales, I’d like my little listeners and readers to feel what I used to feel while entering Andersen’s magic world [...] I retranslated the tales, here and there changing some fragments or accents to bind the tale more strictly with the emotional reality of contemporary children” (Zechenter 5). In Poland Andersen has been stereotyped as a children’s writer for long and the nearest years will show if Bogusława Sochańska’s new translation from Danish is able to change it.

## Notes

1. Andersen himself called his 156 texts “eventyr og historier”. Scholars add more tales to this collection which amounts to over 200 titles.
2. My translation into English.
3. Some of the tales translated by Beylin were already published in 1931. The Zechenter’s first edition appeared in 1946 but I use the same version from 1948. Sochańska’s translation came out first in 2005 (Brzozowska 1970).

4. This is my translation that tries to retain both the syntax and the vocabulary of the ST. It has no artistic ambitions and was made only for the sake of that analysis. The source texts in this article come from the website of Arkiv for Dansk Litteratur: <www.andersen.adl.dk >

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# The Writer of Tales: Hans Christian Andersen as a Cultural Bridge-Builder

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**Abstract** The article discusses the potential for intercultural exchange to be found in Andersen's fairy tales, particularly the so-called "art fairy tale", or, as it is most commonly called in English: *Kunstmärchen*. The typically Danish national characteristics described and often ironically exposed in tales like "The Ugly Duckling" and "The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep" are only one of Andersen's trademarks. These tales transcend national borders, containing more universal motifs, including the motif of love. But Andersen's tales have a wider appeal in the age of globalization, as the author points out. The Chinese have been deeply inspired by the tales, especially those that deal with philosophical, ethical and existential issues. Frandsen comments that ancient Chinese wisdom and culture is based on examples rather than on systematic metaphysics, and this may be one reason why most Chinese adults know tales like "The Little Mermaid", "The Story of a Mother" and "The Little Girl with the Match Sticks". A joint research project between the University of Southern Denmark and Fudan University, Shanghai, is ongoing and this will certainly be an occasion for furthering common Danish-Chinese research on Andersen.

**Key words** Cultural bridge building; globalization; China.

The Danish author Hans Christian Andersen, who lived from 1805 to 1875, is a literary world figure. Translations of works by him have been registered in around 150 languages, which place him in a league of his own among globally known writers. Hans Christian Andersen's collected works include most literary genres: novels, poetry, plays, biographies and travel accounts — and many of these works have been translated into a number of languages. There is, however, a particular genre he himself developed on the basis of the classical folk tale, namely the subclass of the "kunsteventyr", often referred to in English by the German term "*Kunstmärchen*" to distinguish this literary form from fairytales, which stem from an oral tradition. It is this genre in particular that has given him a unique position in world literature. Hans Christian Andersen published stories belonging to this genre for the first time in 1835 under the title *Eventyr, fortalte for børn* (*Tales, Told for Children*). This brief narrative form was to become his special, brilliant contribution to literature, and during his life he wrote a total of 168 tales and stories. We normally refer to them as "Andersen's fairy tales", but far from all of them have the form and construction of a classic

fairytale, and for that reason they could just as well be referred to as magical or life-philosophical stories.

The strange thing about writers who made such a considerable international impact is that they can often also be conceived as highly national in their mode of expression. This is the case with Hans Christian Andersen. In Denmark we perceive him as a writer who precisely captures a Danish tone and who depicts something that is highly Danish. In tales like “The Ugly Duckling” we can recognise types and agree that that’s the way we are in our small country. It is even an unfortunate distinctive national characteristic of ours, we feel, that we do not realise what an ugly little duckling can potentially become. In the tale “The Little Match-Girl” we tend to read social conditions into it which we know existed at Andersen’s time in the major cities. In “Little Claus and Big Claus” we recognise the Danish rural landscape with its small villages and irritating clergymen — indeed, we recognise traits that we in Denmark consider quintessentially Danish.

In the tale “The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep”, Hans Christian Andersen tells a good-humoured story of the two porcelain figures that stand on a table in the fine living room and that fall in love with each other. But they cannot have each other, for the old Chinaman wants to give her to General-Headquarters-Hindquarters-Gives-Orders-Front-and-Rear-Sergeant-Billygoat-Legs, who rules over the large, dark table-linen chest. He wants to have her and put her in the chest, for he already has a whole collection there. The old Chinaman, who is also made of porcelain, is able to nod, so he has the ability and the power to give her away. The couple in love fortunately manage to run away, down from the table, out of the narrow living room, up the chimney and out into the wide world. But up here, under the huge open sky where the universe is close, the small shepherdess is seized with fright and she bitterly regrets her flight. She dare not stay here. It is too silent, too vast and too empty:

Overhead was the starry sky, and spread before them were all the housetops in the town. They looked out on the big wide world. The poor shepherdess had never thought it would be like that. She flung her little head against the chimney-sweep, and sobbed so many tears that the gilt washed off her sash. “This is too much,” she said. “I can’t bear it. The wide world is too big. Oh! If I only were back on my table under the mirror. I’ll never be happy until I stand there again, just as before. I followed you faithfully out into the world, and if you love me the least bit you’ll take me right home.”<sup>1</sup>

With great difficulty, they crawl back to their place on the table under the mirror and notice that in the meantime the old Chinaman has got broken. For he became so het-up at their flight that he tried to do more than just nod, fell down and broke his porcelain neck, which means he is now unable to nod any longer. And the delightfully logical Andersen touch here is that now he cannot nod ‘yes’ any more. If he can’t nod, he can’t nod yes — as we do in Danish — and he is thus unable to give away the shepherdess. And so “the little porcelain people remained together. They thanked goodness for the rivet in grandfather’s neck, and they kept on loving each

other until the day they broke.”<sup>2</sup>

This short story contains a moral that is typical of many of Andersen’s stories, the good principle and mercy always win the day for the person who seeks with an honest heart and open mind, not as a ‘happy ending’ but as a greater power of mercy and will to do good. The two small porcelain figures who are in love have to go through many trials and tribulations, but they end up in their place in front of the mirror once more. There is an ironic finesse here, for it was precisely this place and the order it represents that they ran away from, but when they return home things have changed into a new order despite everything. Their flight out into the wide world brought about the change that the old Chinaman got broken, so he could no longer stand there nodding with his alleged right to decide the fate of the shepherdess. The narrative also assimilates, in ironic fashion, elements from the great classical love stories to be found in European literature, from *Tristan and Isolde* and Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* up to Andersen’s own age, when Romanticism swept like a wave through European literature. But Andersen’s fine little room with its chimneypiece also contains ironic side-glances and comments on the established bourgeoisie of his own age and on bourgeois habits in Copenhagen, where people possibly talked about living with the heart, about leaving the stiff life and distancing themselves from the rigid forms of upper middle-class existence, but who actually did not dare gaze into their inner longings or out into the universe when all was said and done. It is thus possible to read the tale as an ironic exposé of a rigid and therefore porcelain-heavy bourgeoisie that is governed by burdensome traditions.

It is possible to read Hans Christian Andersen’s tales in so many different ways. That is precisely the greatness of a writer of his calibre — that there are many layers and many possible interpretations. We are well aware of this, of course. Andersen’s art contains many facets, just as we know that new versions and translations of Andersen in other languages — other European languages, for example — must have linguistic depth and consistency, for otherwise some of the gold in the artistic treasure chest disappears.

Another highly interesting aspect of an authorship which has been disseminated worldwide and been translated into so many languages is this: What aspects of the works and the artist are actually profiled and emphasised in the various translations? Or, to put it another way: What kind of a Hans Christian Andersen has evolved in most parts of the world? Is he one and the same person for a Dane, a Chinese, an American and a Brazilian? The answer has to be paradoxical: he is naturally both the same and not the same, for the art of his narratives is a meeting place, but the cultural preconditions and experiences of readers to meet in Andersen’s artistic idiom differ.

We have touched on a rather large issue here. How is a work to be translated or composed afresh, so that it transforms the artistic content from one language to another one? One place where this question has been dealt with is in a discussion of translations in the work *Hans Christian Andersen: Between Children’s Literature and Adult Literature*.<sup>3</sup>

A further possible question is: How does Andersen’s artistic universe link to the cultures where his works have been able to land as beautiful swans? What strands of a

cultural and intercultural nature exist that are joined together when works of genius are read by enthusiastic readers in cultures which otherwise might seem to be extremely diverse? What inter-national and inter-human element is there in the work of this great writer?

This is an extremely relevant question in an age where the globalisation of the economy, production and media reality is bringing us much closer to each other on the world stage than ever before. Economic and cultural globalisation opens up an enormous potential for greater contact and interaction between peoples than ever before, but at the same time globalisation also runs the risk of our misunderstanding each other and each other's intentions. Economic development creates globalisation, but only as something external — economics can never bring out real understanding between peoples. Art, narratives and literature can do so, however. They have in fact done so for quite some time, for Hans Christian Andersen is read and read aloud all over the world. So it is particularly relevant to ask: What potential do these tales and stories have? And that is why we should also ask: What kind of a Hans Christian Andersen do a young Dane and a young Chinese respectively meet and come to love?

Researchers from the University of Southern Denmark (SDU) and from Fudan University in Shanghai, China, are right now preparing a major project in which differences and similarities will be examined and discussed in the ways Hans Christian Andersen is perceived and read in Denmark and in China. It was the world's largest stage, the fantastic, fairytale-like world exposition in Shanghai, EXPO 2010, that gave us the idea, for the Danish pavilion with the statue of The Little Mermaid proved a great attraction for millions of Chinese who were eager to greet the symbol of the writer many of them feel is a part of themselves.

When one travels or works in China as a Dane, by the way, one discovers that it is nice to be able to say that one comes from Andersen's home country, Denmark, and, what's more, from his native city, Odense. This immediately creates an interest and friendships. Young and old Chinese alike know of the writer and can immediately refer to a number of his tales. Hans Christian Andersen is even probably the best-known foreign author in China. He outdoes William Shakespeare, for example, although the latter is also well known, since classical European literature, art and culture are particularly well known and respected in China.

All children — in the central part of China at least — read tales and stories by Andersen, partly because a number of them feature as permanent and syllabus material in compulsory school textbooks. And partly because Chinese people often say that they love these stories because they can recognise something in them and find a mirror in them for emotions and experiences they are familiar with.<sup>4</sup> It is said that while an average Dane can immediately recall the title of 10 of Andersen's tales, a Chinese can probably recall at least 20.<sup>5</sup> Part of the explanation for Andersen's colossal importance for modern Chinese is probably because the founder of the Chinese People's Republic, Mao Zedong, was personally very fond of Andersen and Andersen's tales. It was during his rule that Andersen was presented on a wide front to the people as a source of learning and insight. Perhaps Mao recognised a corner of his own life story in Andersen's. He too was of humble origin, but later achieved fame and honour.

In a large number of national cultures where Hans Christian Andersen's tales and literature are known, he is exclusively known as a writer for children. This influences actual translations and the way Andersen is launched and treated. The large range of his artistic expression is reduced to child's eye level, which excises significant parts of his sharp irony and profound humour. In the United States, it is typical, for example, that Walt Disney has long since clad the tales in a gleaming media reality, in which the little mermaid has become a sweet sea princess who lives in a golden kingdom with playmates and friends deep down in a beautiful realm at the bottom of the ocean. In Scandinavia and, for example, Germany we see Hans Christian Andersen as being much more than just a writer for children. The special thing about his genre, the *Kunstmärchen*, is precisely its ability to encourage awarenesses that can be read as imaginative fancies by children, but which contain profound awareness of mental and existential issues for adult readers.<sup>6</sup>

In China, Hans Christian Andersen is read and perceived as a storyteller who definitely writes for children but who is also a great purveyor of wisdom, who is capable of depicting life stories and paths of destiny at many levels, and who thus writes for people of all ages. Here the perception is similar to the Danish one, but in many other ways the codes for the understanding of the great writer differ considerably.

So it is interesting that the Hans Christian Andersen they know and love in China is not necessarily the same as the writer we celebrate in processions and on festive occasions here in the duckyard of Denmark. It is hardly surprising that the illustrations in the Chinese editions of Andersen's works follow the Chinese tradition. At first glance, Danes may feel that they look like Disney figures, in far too bright and glaring colours, because we are used to a particular way of illustrating his tales that derives from the Romantic era. The Chinese way of depicting Andersen's tales expresses something else. Or are we mistaken? Perhaps it is quite simply the way imagined universes are portrayed in a Chinese tradition? In Denmark, we cultivate and know Hans Christian Andersen as a literary figure via the special profile of his face and tall, gangling figure — and his top hat. We tend to focus on the writer, the icon, the loner or eccentric. The Chinese cultivate the writer or the literary genius less, concentrating rather on the characters in the tales. Here they find examples of an animated nature, a personified and conscious animal world that has a sounding board in ancient Chinese folk culture — and they find a multitude of human life stories and destinies.

There would seem to be a tradition for a multi-philosophical approach to existence underlying the Chinese mentality and way of thinking, a tradition that differs without a doubt from a classical European concept of *Bildung*, which builds on the particular conception of the individual as a centre. It may be of significance for the widespread appeal Andersen has in China that in his writing — and thus in his view of life — he did not allow himself to be limited by unambiguous explanations. Many Chinese seem to base their existence as human beings on a wide spectrum of narratives and stories that can have a more or less religious or philosophical significance. Perhaps there is an element of Chinese consciousness and culture that has to do with the good example, or the power and precedence of the good story. Hans Christian Andersen supplies this in his stories with their stressed moral or ethical point. The

history of Chinese philosophy is perhaps based to a greater extent than the European on the idea of a multiplicity of examples rather than a systematised metaphysics. Wisdom, superstition, arithmology and traditions often seem to operate on an equal footing with logic and rational solutions in a Chinese cultural context, so it could be that Andersen's imagined universe can have significance here. These are questions that cannot be briefly formulated or answered. But Hans Christian Andersen's writing and his self-presentations are a fantastic "place" to meet for serious discussions of what is at stake in a cultural universe that cuts across so many other borders, since in a common understanding of the greatness of a story or a storyteller a bridge has already been built.

It is fantastic, for example, that most adult Chinese know "The Little Matchstick Girl", "The Story of a Mother", "The Little Mermaid" and many more stories by Andersen, which are highly popular. Indeed, Hans Christian Andersen's entrancing tales and stories actually build a bridge of possible conversation in that way between a people and a mentality in a small northern European country that looks like a mere drip from the Scandinavian nose and the population of the huge People's Republic of China. Tales, myths, stories, literature, art all contain a greater and much deeper potential for conversations and meetings between peoples than anything else. Economic, political and business agreements are carried out with the rational part of the brain — and there is a time and place for that too. But stories and literature call for the heart and the imagination, so here there is a basis for an understanding that is much more profound. Hans Christian Andersen thus constitutes a fantastic bridge between Danish culture and Chinese culture. It can perhaps be a bridge that enables conversations to take place about so many other topics of common humanistic interest.

In such comparisons of the ways in which we meet the works there lies a marvellous opportunity for culture discourse. It is such a discourse we wish to open up and it will, among other things, come about as the result of a research cooperation now being established between researchers at SDU and Chinese researchers at Fudan University in Shanghai. We will ask about each other's Andersen and points of intersection. Who is he for us? What aspects of the writer and his works do we wish to profile and emphasise?

The cooperation will be launched at a shared conference or workshop which is expected to be held at Fudan University in autumn 2011. A circle of invited Chinese professors and researchers will meet with a circle of colleagues from Denmark, with Andersen and Andersen's importance as its theme. There will be readings and discussions of selected tales and, in addition, discussions of the cultural icon and Hans Christian Andersen's importance in Denmark/Europe and China respectively. The gathered researchers will also try to prepare the design of a survey aimed at a slightly wider circle of readers of Hans Christian Andersen. What qualities does the Chinese reader find in Andersen? And what qualities does the Danish reader tend to emphasise?

This research work, apart from contributing to the knowledge of the fairytale figure of Andersen, will also be able to help build a platform for further cooperation between Danish and Chinese researchers. The wonderful works of Andersen are a fan-

tastic, positive place to arrange to meet for a dialogue about artistic values, literary quality and ultimately existential issues.

### Notes

1. Andersen, Hans Christian, “The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep”, trans. Jean Hersholt < [www.andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/hersholt/The Shepherdess and the Chimney-Sweep](http://www.andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/hersholt/The%20Shepherdess%20and%20the%20Chimney-Sweep) >. < [www.andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/hersholt/The Shepherdess and the Chimney-Sweep](http://www.andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/hersholt/The%20Shepherdess%20and%20the%20Chimney-Sweep) > .
3. Johan de Mylius, Aage Jørgensen, and Viggo Hjørnager Pedersen. eds. *Hans Christian Andersen: Between Children's Literature and Adult Literature* (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2007) 275 – 408..
4. During a short stay at Fudan University, Shanghai, in autumn 2010, I was asked — in a quite non-academic way — by at least twenty young people I met at the university on in the city's parks what they knew and liked about the writer Hans Christian Andersen.
5. Cf. Eric Messerschmidt, head of the Danish Cultural Institute, Beijing.
- 6 Johan de Mylius, *The Price of Transformation. Hans Christian Andersen and His Tales*. Høst & Søn (Copenhagen 2005). Jens Andersen, Andersen. *A Biography*, I-II, Gyldendal (Copenhagen, 2003).

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# “The Dryad” by Hans Christian Andersen: A Fairy Tale on Modern Times and The World Exhibition of 1867

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**Abstract** The article relates how 1867 was an eventful year for Andersen: he was made honorary citizen of his home town, Odense, Denmark, and endowed with the title of councillor of state, a title that pleased him especially because he viewed it as an opportunity to play the role of modern artist in the company of monarchs and wealthy patrons as well as the common people. Andersen enjoyed travelling as it further enhanced his exposure to the public eye, and he visited the World Exhibition of 1867 in Paris, where he felt out of place, finding everything strange and estranging, and he wrote a fairy tale about the Exhibition, “The Dryad”. Mai shows how Andersen’s papercuts also depict the negative side of modernity, and how the fairy tale is really an epistemological genre expressing dreams and longing, but in the reverse, since “The Dryad” and “The little Mermaid” are about spirits that long for the human world. Mai notes that Andersen was portrayed in a small porcelain figure manufactured in 1812; the figure expresses the writer’s dreams of freedom and writing as well as his bourgeois cultural refinement. Andy Warhol’s portrait of Andersen from 1987 shows how the dream of freedom of Romanticism permeates the artist’s work, and the Danish sculptor Bjarne Nørregaard’s statue from 2005, placed in Odense, expresses three conflicting aspects of Andersen’s personality: the writer, the traveller and the self-doubting modern artist. On the whole, Andersen’s life and work are strikingly modern.

**Key words** World Exhibition of 1867; alienation; modernity

The year 1867 was a very pleasant and eventful one in Hans Christian Andersen’s life. He visited the World Exposition in Paris; he went to Switzerland and he was made titular councillor of state by the king; in December he was also made an honorary citizen of Odense, where he had been born in 1805. He was especially happy about being made a councillor of state, because he felt this title increased his esteem among his wealthy patrons and the literary critics.

The poor boy from Odense who as a child had dreamed of fame and glory had finally been honoured and recognised as an artist and an international celebrity. His dream had come true. For Hans Christian Andersen, being a modern artist on the

market implied the ability to perform as an artist to a public of monarchs as well as of working citizens, to make friends with artists and poets of several nations, to be closely related to wealthy patrons, to stay in touch with journalists and literary critics and yet be an eccentric genius. Andersen mastered the role of a modern artist extremely well and he loved playing the part. He kept company with kings and princes, was invited to workers' associations and made appearances at collections and charity events.

As a modern artist and poet Andersen travelled all over Europe to stay in contact with colleagues, publishers and mentors and he loved to travel simply to experience culture, history and nature. In one of his autobiographies *The Fairy Tale of My Life* (1855/1975) he writes about how he felt unappreciated in Denmark, longed to see the world, and where the unfamiliar acquired a gleam of peace: "To travel is to live" (*Mit Livs Eventyr* 301).

His travels did not only gladden his heart and give him peace of mind, however. He was inspired by his travels to write novels, travel books, journals and fairytales and he also recorded his many impressions in small drawings. These drawings captured impressions and moods and, like his diaries, can be considered as travel notes. Andersen often travelled by coach and by train. He was fascinated by that modern mode of transportation, the train, referring to it as the fire dragon — although he also hopefully imagined a future with steam-propelled flying machines!<sup>1</sup>

When he went to Paris in 1867 to visit the World Exposition, he went by train. He also loved the train's immense speed — it travelled at 30 km an hour!

### **The World Exposition and "The Dryad"**

The 1867 World Exposition came about at the initiative of the French Emperor Napoleon III. The institution itself dates back to 1756, when the first international fair was held in London, and throughout the 19th century there were at certain intervals world expositions for trade, art, industry and science in Europe, New Zealand and Australia. At the French Exposition Universelle, it was decided to locate the exposition on the large military parade ground in Paris, the Champ de Mars, and around the area a huge pavilion was erected, surrounded by gardens and a number of smaller exhibition buildings. The exposition was the largest ever seen, comprising more than 50,000 exhibitors from all over the world, and it attracted over 9 million visitors. The exposition led to the art and culture of foreign countries coming within the compass of Europe, whose visual artists and writers were inspired by what the exposition could display from, in particular, China and Japan. The exposition provided completely new insight into oriental art. It was open from 1 April to 31 October.

Hans Christian Andersen visited the exhibition from April 15 to May 9 and enjoyed it very much. He was interested in modern technology, industry and lifestyle — but he was also critical and sceptical regarding modernity and urbanisation. In his letters, Hans Christian Andersen tells his friends of his thoughts and impressions, but he also wrote a fairytale about the exposition, "The Dryad" (1868). Andersen was actually spurred on to write the fairytale by a Danish journal that had stated that only the English novelist Charles Dickens would be able to express the spirit of the world

exposition artistically<sup>2</sup>. “The Dryad” opens like this:

We’re going to Paris to see the exposition!

Now we’re there! It was a speedy journey, done completely without witchcraft — we went by steam, in a ship and on a railroad. Our time is indeed a time of fairy tales.

Now we are in a large hotel in the middle of Paris. The staircase is decorated with flowers, and soft carpets are spread over the steps. Our room is pleasant; the balcony door is open, and we can look out onto a large square. Down there is spring, which has come to Paris, having arrived at the same time we did, in the form of a big, young chestnut tree with delicate leaves beginning to open. How much more richly that tree is dressed in the beauty of spring than the other trees on the square! One of them has stepped out of the row of living trees and lies on the ground with its roots torn up. Where that tree stood the young chestnut will be planted, and there it will grow. (“Dryad”)

“The Dryad” tells the story of this young chestnut tree. This tree is the home of a natural spirit, the dryad, and she and her tree live in a small peaceful French village where the priest is teaching a flock of children in the shade of a beautiful old oak tree. The priest tells the children about France’s glorious history and the country as the cradle of freedom. Stories of the great world exposition also reach the small village, and the dryad longs to see the great world the priest is talking but also warning about: the great world is full of dangers and young girls who venture out into it can easily meet with misfortune and moral depravity. The dryad dreams about visiting the great metropolis of Paris — and her wishes come true. Her tree is dug up and placed on a small square in Paris. At first the dryad is very happy with these new surroundings. There is plenty to see and keep tracks of. After a short while, however, she starts to feel bored. She longs to be able to leave her tree and experience the big city and the world exposition. This wish can be fulfilled, but at a deadly cost: the dryad will die after just one day in the city. But her wish is too strong. The dryad begs higher spiritual powers to be allowed to leave her tree:

Take from me all my years of life and grant me but half of a May fly’s life! Free me from my prison; give me human life and human happiness, though it be but for a fleeting moment, for only this one night, and then punish me, if you wish, for my longing for life! Free me, even if this dwelling of mine, this fresh young tree, wither, be cut down, turned to ashes, and blown away by the winds! (“Dryad”)

And suddenly the dryad is free of her tree and enters the world of the city as a lovely young woman that resembles a spring goddess. In her beautiful clothes she visits the boulevards, the shops, the churches, the restaurants, the ballrooms and even the sewers, which are said to be the real wonder of the modern world. In the Madeleine

Church she sees the elegantly dressed women kneeling at the altar or going to confession. The dryad notices that, as a natural spirit, she does not really belong there. And the service is like a piece of elegant theatre, where rich men and women display themselves for others instead of being taken up with their devotion. The dryad hurries away and descends into the most modern feature of the city — the sewers, where the rats live their life. But the rats are sceptical about modernity and progress. The garbage of old times was better — modernity is too clean for a rat and the citizens of the big city make too much noise. The dryad hurries off to a ballroom, where many lightly clad women are dancing. The ball is radiantly beautiful, but those dancing are taken up with themselves; they also seem to be almost hypnotised and poisoned by all the pleasures. Later that night, the dryad visits the world exposition, but her time is quickly drawing to an end. When daylight comes, she will die. And she can already notice the weariness that is creeping up on her:

She felt a yearning to rest on the soft Oriental cushions and carpets, or to duck into the clear water as did the branches of the weeping willow. But the May fly has no rest. In a few minutes the day would end. Her thoughts and her limbs trembled, and she sank in the grass beside the babbling stream. “You spring from the earth with eternal life,” she said. “Cool my tongue; give me a refreshing drink!” (“Dryad”)

But the fountain is artificial and mechanical and is incapable of giving the dryad thirst-quenching water. The grass too rejects her. If it is picked, it dies. And the light breeze only promises to lay dust over the dryad when she is dead and herself becomes dust:

The dryad felt a terror creep over her, like a woman who, bleeding to death in the bath from a severed artery, still wishes to live, while her strength gradually leaves her from loss of blood. She rose, staggered a few steps forward, and then sank again before a little church. The door was open; a light burned on the altar, and the organ sounded. What music! (“Dryad”)

The song from the small church is no consolation, however, for it tells the dryad that she has allowed herself to be plucked out of the context into which God had placed her and that she now must die. The wind also announces her demise, and she finally falls as a dew drop into the morning light. All that is left of the dryad is a small chestnut blossom that will soon be trampled into the dust by the many visitors to the world exposition. Andersen ends his tale with an ambiguous conclusion: “All this has happened and been experienced. We ourselves have seen it, at the Paris Exposition in 1867, in our time, the great and wonderful time of fairy tales” (“Dryad”).

The story of the dryad shows not only that the times are great and wonderful but also that modernity is a dangerous, deadly fairytale. The many pleasures lead to depravity. Nature is exploited by mankind, the roots of creation are pulled up, and the balance between mankind, nature, belief and spirit — which existed in the small vil-

lage where the dryad grew up — is destroyed. Modernity is a paradox of loss, depravity, unrest, amusement and cruelty. Here the beautiful art of storytelling, which the old priest masters, has slipped into the background as a form of culture and experience, while the modern gaze — ‘we saw it with our very eyes’ — with which people constantly seek surprises and pleasure in the colourful outside world dominates as a form of experience.

Hans Christian Andersen was not only a writer. He also worked with various genres of the visual arts, including papercutting. Here too he depicts modernity as a new human basis of existence. One of Hans Christian Andersen’s papercuts shows a white clown with a wide-open mouth that seems to have stiffened in fear and is almost reminiscent of the picture “The Scream” (1893) by the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch. The clown is carrying a tray with city buildings; at tower, a mill, a church and some houses and a swan. The papercut is an allegory of fragile modernity based on such unknown and somewhat frightening forces as the white clown/the plasterer — a figure that simultaneously represents modern entertainment culture and death itself. But the swan is still part of the picture as a reminder of art and the importance of the fairytale. Precisely the fairytale can perhaps maintain modernity’s paradox of cruelty and pleasure and cause the reader to think about modern life-forms and their consequences.

The fairytale is an epistemological genre — it places existence in relief and appeals to people’s own critical sense and capacity for experience. The tale of “The Dryad” is often compared with the tale “The Little Mermaid” (1837)<sup>3</sup>. Both describe a female natural spirit that longs to go beyond her own universe and perishes as a result of meeting the human world. But while “The Dryad” is primarily a tale that criticises civilisation and modernity, ‘The Little Mermaid’ is an existentialist tale about love. What the two tales perhaps share is a critical questioning of the great idea of longing and dream that characterises European Romanticism — and that Andersen himself helps to shape and develop. It is also thought-provoking that while Romantic writers often long to be part of the spiritual realm of nature and hope to glimpse beauty and truth here, in “The Dryad” and “The Little Mermaid” it is the spiritual world that longs for the human world and, with fatal consequences, struggles to gain access to it.

“The Dryad” was later the subject of a stimulating artistic adaptation in a one-man dramatic performance by the Canadian artist Robert Lepage called “The Andersen Project” (2005). Robert Lepage (b. 1957) shifts the action 100 years on to Paris in 1967, including the artistic problems of his own age, where art easily becomes the victim of market considerations and project-making activities.

At the Shanghai World Exposition in 2010, many of the visitors had an opportunity of seeing the statue of The Little Mermaid at the Danish stand and be reminded of Hans Christian Andersen and his fairytale. If Andersen, who hurried to the world exposition in Paris, had been alive today, he would without a doubt like to have joined in the many festivities in Shanghai. The actual exposition in 2010 opens under the motto “Better City/Better Life”, and if one allows oneself to read “The Dryad” and “The Little Mermaid” in the light of this motto, one can say that “The Dryad” indi-

rectly expresses the hope of a better city, while “The Little Mermaid” fantasises about the wish for a better life.

### **Hans Christian Andersen at the World Exposition**

As a European celebrity, it was natural for Hans Christian Andersen to visit and make an appearance at the World Exposition in Paris in 1867. In his diary and letters one can follow how he spends hours at the exposition, is worn out by the many impressions, but remarks at the same time that he does not feel himself completely overwhelmed. He writes that on the Champ de Mars it looks as if each of the many buildings has left its usual place. They have been pasted on one another and do not really make any impression on him. After a few days at the exposition, he finally finds a linguistic image that can express his experience. In a letter to Mathilde Ørsted dated 22 April 1867 he writes: “I seem to be walking like a pygmy on a large table with enormous knickknacks from every nation of the world.”<sup>4</sup> The image of the world as a tray that Andersen created in his papercut now emerges here in a slightly different version — he himself has been added in the form of a pygmy! He specially visits the Chinese house at the exposition, but it disappointed him: “Went into the Chinese house — it cost half a franc and there is nothing to see here. I did not even see a Chinaman [...]” (*Hans Christian Andersen's Diaries* 278), he notes in his diary on 2 May.<sup>5</sup>

However, Andersen does not simply concentrate on what to him are the most exotic features of the exhibition. He is also extremely preoccupied with how his own writings are being presented and celebrated at the exposition. He notices that his books at the British stand are beautifully bound and remarks that this is truly an excellent idea. Some of the known contemporary writers have had their bust put on display, but his bust is lacking, even though he seems to recall that the organisers had asked to have a marble bust of him. He is even more put out because the bust of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (1832 – 1910) has arrived and now seems to be the only one that represents Denmark.

Andersen carefully notes the readers and critics who praise him, and happily relates that an American lady knows his works, while another one asks for his autograph and a third recognises him from his portrait. During all the many diversions and amusements and quick glimpses at the Parisian underworld, he feels ill, agitated and dissatisfied with both the world and himself.

Andersen really gives the impression of being a modern, cosmopolitan writer and celebrity, familiar with both spleen and a fragmented personality — and someone who consciously works on his own image, making sure he is in the public eye, giving interviews and allowing himself to be suitably celebrated with champagne, pièces d'occasion and hurrahs.

One notices how meticulously Andersen watches over his public esteem. And this ambition he takes with him everywhere he goes, also where he is a guest at the Nordic Exposition in Copenhagen in 1872. On 17 June 1872, he notes in his diary: “One thing vexed me at the exposition. Here, as in Paris, my bust was absent, which those of all the other writers and especially, as in Paris, that of Bjørnson were

present. I existed in chocolate, so it was also possible to nibble away at me” (*Hans Christian Andersen’s Diaries* 299). Modern life as an artist and writer could quite literally be exposed to being nibbled and salivated over by the public!

Is Hans Christian Andersen a celebrity whose staging of his own life ends up being more exciting than his art, as has happened with some of the European and American writers of the 20th century? No one — either now or then — that in Andersen’s case there was always an artistic basis for his fame: the fairytales, which in 1867 Andersen was far from finished with. Andersen, though, knew how to get his two texts — the fairytales and the story of his life — to have a synergic effect on and to promote each other in a way that later theoretical discussions of the writer’s relation to his work are beginning to be aware of.<sup>6</sup>

Hans Christian Andersen’s tales have been refashioned as illustrated books, strip cartoons and films. Even though some of the interpretations and new versions can be extremely heavy-handed, Andersen’s texts and their reputation would seem to be capable of surviving most things. And they continue to be retranslated into many languages.

Andersen himself as a writer has also been depicted and interpreted in many ways, not only as a marble bust and as a piece of chocolate, as at the 1872 exposition. Andersen has been depicted, for example, as a fine small porcelain figure from The Royal Danish Porcelain Manufactory in 1912. Here he is shown as a spick-and-span, well-brought-up young man politely bowing to the onlooker. He is holding a top hat out in front of him with his left hand, while his right hand, which he conceals behind his back, is clutching some pages of manuscript. The porcelain figure in its delicate shades of grey presents the image of the young Andersen holding on tight to his dream of becoming a writer and his longing for freedom, whilst also acquiring the virtues of bourgeois cultural refinement. Andersen has also been portrayed in 1987 by the American pop-artist Andy Warhol (1928 – 1987), who, basing himself on a photograph of the writer, produces a large blue-coloured portrait, underlining the idea that the blue poetics<sup>7</sup> and the dream of freedom of Romanticism permeate everything in Andersen’s life and works.

On the occasion of the bicentenary of Hans Christian Andersen’s birth in 2005, the Danish artist Bjørn Nørgaard created the eight-metre-high statue *the shadow, the Travelling Companion and the Improvisatore — a three-in-one portrait of Hans Christian Andersen*, which has been erected in Andersen’s native city, Odense. Bjørn Nørgaard writes the following about interpreting the writer as three figures:

I see Andersen as a highly complex person, a split personality, where travelling and his writing give him an identity now within himself but outside himself — and that is extremely modern. So I cannot make a single sculpture of him, but choose instead a sculpture where Andersen meets himself — as a writer, as a travelling companion, as a man who, deep down, has doubts about himself. This three-in-oneness, this trinity, between the genius, the searcher, traveller, the unhappy and doubting man that all of today can probably recognise, is then the motif for a present-day interpretation of Hans Christian Andersen which is

neither a Romantic idealisation nor a realistic illusion, but an image superimposed on an image on an image on an image. . . a recognition of the fact that we build on layer upon layer of possible interpretations of Hans Christian Andersen. (Nørgaard)

The foundation for the many possible conceptions of Hans Christian Andersen was perhaps laid by the writer himself with his three different autobiographies: the German *Das Märchen meines Lebens ohne Dichtung* (*The True Story of My Life* 1847), the Danish *Mit Livs Eventyr* (*The Fairy Tale of my Life*, 1855) and *Levnedsbogen* (“Reminiscences” [Autobiography]), written as early as 1832, but only rediscovered and published in 1926.

Andersen does not provide a fixed interpretation of his own life. Like a modern artist, he considers the recipient and the context in these autobiographies. He does not break the autobiographical pact between the reader and writer that there is an identity between the empirical writer and the ‘I-figure’ of the autobiographies. But the I-figure can vary in angle and focus, and there is clearly a distance between the written I-figure and the empirical author. As the contemporary French symbolist Arthur Rimbaud (1854 – 1891) expressed it: “For I is someone else/Je est un autre”.<sup>8</sup>

Both Hans Christian Andersen’s tales and the story of his life are modern narratives from a world in motion and subject to change, both of them full of hope, despair, disappointment, beauty and a longing for freedom. In his own time, Andersen was a celebrity, known for his ability to realise his own strong longing for personal freedom, despite all social barriers and ties, and to become an artist of the first water.

And we still have the artist’s works, not least in the form of the world-famous fairytales, but both the tales and Andersen’s interpretation of himself and his destiny are things we will never exhaust. And yet another cubit has been added to the stature of Hans Christian Andersen and his fairytales when the sculpture of his little mermaid visits the Shanghai World Exposition in 2010 and is actually a great success. That story Andersen would have loved to turn into a modern fairytale!

## Notes

1. The tale, “Thousands of Years from Now”, 1853, opens with the sentence: “Yes, thousands of years from now men will fly on wings of steam through the air, across the ocean. The young inhabitants of America will visit old Europe”. Cf. Jean Hersholt’s translation at the address: <http://www.andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/hersholt/ThousandsOfYearsFromNow.html>
2. Cf. Jørgen Erik Nielsen: *Dickens i Danmark* (København : Museum Tusulanums forlag, Københavns universitet, 2009) 221.
3. See for example Johan de Mylius’ comments in his portrait of Hans Christian Andersen the author at the Archive for Danish Literature [http://adl.dk/adl\\_pub/fportraet/cv/ShowFpItem.xsql?ff\\_id=22&p\\_fpkat\\_id=indl&nnoc=adl\\_pub](http://adl.dk/adl_pub/fportraet/cv/ShowFpItem.xsql?ff_id=22&p_fpkat_id=indl&nnoc=adl_pub).
4. Letters from and to Hans Christian Andersen can be found at the H. C. Andersen Centre database, see the letter to Mathilde Ørsted at the address: <http://www.andersen.sdu.dk/brevbase/brev>.

htmløbid = 18799&s = 369701e16d33232b00f8dc05be3cdcd3&st0 = Pygm% E6&f0 = 127. Mathilde Ørsted (1824-1906) was the daughter of the natural scientist H. C. Ørsted.

5. *Hans Christian Andersen's Diaries 1866 – 1867*. Accessible electronically at the address: [Http://base.kb.dk/hca\\_pub/cv/main/Page.xsql?nnoc=hca\\_pub&p\\_VolNo=7&p\\_PageNo=277&p\\_mode=text](http://base.kb.dk/hca_pub/cv/main/Page.xsql?nnoc=hca_pub&p_VolNo=7&p_PageNo=277&p_mode=text).

6. In the contemporary Nordic literary debate, the relation between the actual, the biographical and the fictive in fictional and autobiographical texts is much discussed. John Helt Haarder provides a fine introduction to this discussion and its sources in French poststructuralism and American performativity theory in the article “The special relation we had to the author. Towards a concept of performative biographism”, *Norsk Litteraturvitenskapelig Tidsskrift*, 1 (2005); 2 – 16. The theme of Andersen role as a writer is also dealt with in detail in Jens Andersen's biography, *Hans Christian Andersen: A New Life* (Tiina Nunnally; Overlook Duckworth, 2005).

7. The blue colour of the Warhol picture refers to the conception of the Romantic blue flower. The German writer Novalis, in his novel fragment, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802) made a deep-blue flower the symbol of the Romantic longing to experience truth and beauty. The blue colour also has a particular symbolic value for Warhol's own generation of beat poets and musicians.

8. Arthur Rimbaud's so-called visionary letter of 15 May 1871 with the line “Je est un autre”, can be read in the original at the address: <http://www.mag4.net/Rimbaud/Documents1.html#Demeny>

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# The End of the Fairy Tale: Hans Christian Andersen's "The Shadow"

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**Abstract** The article shows how Andersen's narrative technique discards both the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic approach to the fairy tale, in that the story reverses or inverts the fairy tale structure, thus becoming modern and comparable to the fiction of, for example, Nikolai Gogol, Franz Kafka and Bruno Schultz. Binary oppositions such as 'light' and 'shadow' are transcended, and like Alice in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* the learned young man's shadow approaches a type of knowledge different from the True, the Good and the Beautiful; but *The Shadow* (italized by Andersen) approaches this type of knowledge in reverse, claiming that he has seen "everything" whereas in fact he has seen "nothing". Since *The Shadow* nevertheless emerges victorious and marries the princess in the end, Andersen has reached the end of the fairy tale and is writing something else. Salman Rushdie's novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* contains explicit allusions to Andersen's story so that the two texts may be viewed as intertexts. Further, "The Shadow" may be compared to Bruno Schultz's "Under the Sign of the Hourglass"; Paul Auster's "Portrait of an Invisible Man"; and Haruki Murakami's story "TV People". *The Shadow* is a three-fold metaphor of inversion: the inversion of the self, of knowledge and of language. Andersen discards mimetic poetry and engages in a pre-modernist critique of *logos*. This critique culminates in the insight that there is no source of the light emanating from the figure of *Poetry* in the story; the light is an immanent illumination and cannot be represented; representation is distortion and *The Shadow's* knowledge is a deviant form of investigation of that which is hidden and secret.

**Key words** reversal of the fairy tale; "The Shadow" in modern fiction; critique of *logos*

Classifying Hans Christian Andersen's "The Shadow" ("Skyggen", 1847) as a fairy tale presents almost insurmountable problems and will eventually lead to more questions than answers. A tentative solution to the problem of classification might be to suggest a paradigmatic rather than a syntagmatic analysis. In his introduction to the second edition of the English translation of Vladímir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* Alan Dundes says that there are two types of structural analysis in folklore; one type of analysis follows "the chronological order of the linear sequence of elements in the text as reported from an informant", resulting in a "linear sequential structural

analysis we might term "syntagmatic" structural analysis" (xi). Propp's work is an example of this approach. A different approach in structural analysis is the paradigmatic model, exemplified by the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Dundes describes this model as a "paradigmatic matrix" where "polar oppositions such as life/death, male/female are mediated" (xii). In the paradigmatic matrix elements are removed from the original order in which they were placed and relocated. Dundes notes that according to Lévi-Strauss the "linear sequential structure is but apparent or manifest content, whereas the paradigmatic or schematic structure is the more important latent content" (xii).

We may inquire further, posing the question whether either type of structural analysis will yield results as far as understanding Andersen's story is concerned. I have already hinted at an answer to this question by re-naming his fairy tale, i. e. by calling it a "story". My position is that Andersen exploits the fairy tale structure, syntagmatically and paradigmatically in order to reverse that structure; the reversal, or better still, *inversion* of the fairy tale structure results in a curiously anomalous anti-fairy tale reminiscent of the fiction of Nikolai Gogol, Franz Kafka and Bruno Schulz, authors whose works exemplify the eerie shadowy existence of the modern subject. It would be tempting, of course, to analyze Andersen's tale following the paradigmatic model; but then one would run into the problem of what to do with the typical structuralist binary opposition. As I see it, Andersen critiques this opposition after having put it into play, since the basic insight gained by the reader after perusing the tale is that the problem of the "learned gentleman", who is the protagonist of the story, not only thinks but *feels* in terms of oppositions; indeed, opposition and contradiction characterize his very being. These oppositions may be described, initially, as thematically constructed contradictions between the inside and the outside; self and other; ego and shadow; knowledge and ignorance; light and darkness.

Andersen's story starts out by adhering to the syntagmatic linear structure described by Propp and goes on to outline the paradigmatic pattern. After having followed these procedures or traditional prescriptions as we may call them, Andersen proceeds to reverse everything. The basic linear structure offered by Propp consists of the following elements, the functions of dramatis personae, briefly summarized and highlighted: absence from home of a senior family member; an interdiction, for example against going out; the interdiction is violated at which point the villain enters; the villain receives information and attempts to deceive his victim; a lack is made known and the hero is dispatched; the hero is tested and receives a helper or magical agent; the hero is led to an object of search; the hero and the villain engage in direct combat; the initial lack is liquidated; the hero is pursued; a false hero presents unfounded claims; the hero is recognized and the villain exposed; the hero is given a new appearance and is married.

The opening situation in "The Shadow" constitutes what Propp calls an "unclear" element. From the very beginning of his tale Andersen evokes a strange setting, "the hot countries" where the sun can really burn and where the learned gentleman, recently arrived from the cold countries, thinks he can run around outside but finds himself confined to his room like everyone else because of the glaring sun. This

“unclear” element, present from the very beginning, might become clearer if subjected to a paradigmatic analysis whose aim would be to indicate the presence of a binary opposition. However, such a procedure only results in more “unclear” elements. The typical binary opposition valorizes one side of the spectrum, dividing it into a negative and a positive pole. Sun and light should belong to the positive pole, and it is indeed in search of light that the learned gentleman, a young man, has ventured south into one of the hot countries; but the glaring sun seems to be on the negative side, confining him to his room and making him defer any going out till late evening. Further, the young man has a shadow who suffers as much from exposure to the sun as he does; both of them grow thin and come alive only at night when *artificial light* is brought into the room, at which point the shadow stretches “all the way up the wall, yes, even along the ceiling, it grew that long, it had to stretch in order to recover” (Andersen 379). At this point at least there is no opposition between the young master and his shadow; they seem almost identical as they react to the climate and the external and internal environment in a similar fashion. Being in the shade and using only artificial light seems beneficial here; as a consequence an attempt to delineate a clear schematic opposition divided into positive and negative values is doomed from the outset. Everything seems to be mixed in a way that defies any normative judgment. Neither the syntagmatic nor the paradigmatic model will suffice to penetrate Andersen’s story. That much is clear from the beginning.

The glaring sun prohibits people from going out during the day; hence everyone, including the learned gentleman and his shadow, come alive at night. The inversion of day and night creates what Propp calls an “interdiction”, but this interdiction appears in an inverted form which, according to Propp, “is represented by an order or a suggestion” (Propp 27). The order, or suggestion issued by the young man himself is that his shadow ventures out, albeit at night, in order to penetrate the house opposite from where music is heard and where beautiful flowers grow on the balcony in defiance of the glaring sun. The young man’s landlord describes the music as dull and repetitive, as if someone was practising the same piece over and over again, being unable to relinquish or finish it. One night the young man notices a strange bright light enveloping the neighbor’s balcony; the flowers are glowing, and he sees a slim, lovely woman standing among the flowers; she is also glowing and the light radiating from her figure is so strong that it makes his eyes ache; the pain is acute, also because he has just woken up, or is in the process of waking up. One night as the young man is sitting on the balcony he notices that his shadow reaches all the way across the street and is visible on the balcony opposite, and he suggests, in a jesting tone, that the shadow venture into the beautiful maiden’s apartment with the intention of finding out what exactly is in there. The narrator continues:

... the stranger got up and his shadow on the neighbor’s balcony got up too; and the stranger turned around and the shadow also turned around; indeed, if one was paying close attention one would plainly notice that the shadow entered the neighbor’s apartment through the half-open balcony door, precisely when the stranger entered his own apartment, letting the long curtain drop down behind

him. (Anderson 381)

Lewis Carroll, the master of inversion, lets Alice address the following remark to her cat in *Through the Looking Glass* (1872):

Now, if you'll only attend, Kitty, and not talk so much, I'll tell you all my ideas about the Looking-glass house. First, there's the room you can see through the glass - that's just the same as our drawing-room, only the things go the other way. I can see all of it when I get upon a chair - all but the bit behind the fire-place. Oh! I do so wish I could see that bit! I want so much to know whether they've a fire in the winter; you never can tell, you know, unless our fire smokes, and then smoke comes up in that room too - but that may be only pretense, just to make it look as if they had a fire. Well then, the books are something like our books, only the words go the wrong way; I know that, because I've held up one of our books to the glass, and then they hold up one in the other room. (Carroll 19 - 20)

The passages cited from Andersen and Carroll are curiously similar, and things will indeed get "curiouser and curiouser", to quote another phrase from Carroll, as Andersen's story continues. The young man, who is a "stranger" in the hot country he is visiting, and Alice who is an imaginative young girl, are both attracted to light, and they approach it in an inverted fashion, exchanging right and left, forwards and backwards so that "the things go the other way". And, just as in Alice's looking-glass room, Andersen's words "go the wrong way", counteracting and contradicting all epistemological rules. The laws of perception and, indeed, the very mode of being are "curious" from the outset in "The Shadow". The "hero" is young, although not as young as Alice, and apparently has no parents or other family at "home", wherever that is. The young man, though learned and capable of writing books on the True, the Good and the Beautiful, is in search of knowledge of a different kind, perhaps unknown to himself; like Alice who enters a dream-world by going through the looking-glass, and becomes an other, the learned man is a double whose other, the shadow, is immanently present in his mind; the dual presence of self and other produces an inverted representation of knowledge, or rather, produces knowledge as representation. As Alice notes, the smoke in the other room "may be only pretense" to make it look as if there is a fire. Indeed, the young man needs his double and is seriously disturbed when his shadow disappears, having not come back after the visit to the neighbor. However, after some time a new shadow grows out, starting from his legs, and he returns to his home country where he continues representing knowledge in the form of printed books on "Truth". Of course, the words "go the wrong way", and the evidence of this is two-fold: The learned gentleman is for some reason or other dependent upon the presence of a shadow in order to function; and the "original" shadow returns after many years have gone by, inquiring whether he "owes" the gentleman anything in compensation for his loss - that loss being the several year long absence of his "double" or "other". The original shadow has become a "real" hu-

man being, or appears to be so, and has accumulated a fortune as well as fame. *The shadow*, written in italics from now on in Andersen's text, claims to have seen Poetry personified in the house the learned man sent him to investigate; he also claims he has seen everything and that he knows everything. Yet he cannot specify what exactly he saw in the residence of Poetry; asked by the learned man what he saw there, he replies "everything" and informs his former master that he was standing in the ante-chamber which was semi-dark; he could not venture into the other rooms of which there was a whole suite, because the light was too bright, and proceeding further would have killed him. The learned man repeats his question, inquiring whether *the shadow* saw a holy church, a fresh forest, ancient gods and playing children, and *the shadow* repeats his answer, claiming he saw "everything" and that he knows "everything".

Following Propp's structuralist analysis to the next stage we might say that the "villain", here *the shadow* as the hero's *other*, receives information and deceives his victim, who is also the hero in this case, of course, since Andersen's story condenses several figures into one: hero, villain and victim are really one and the same figure, aspects of the same self. We may even add the "helper" or "magical agent" to the list, all of them one character trying to replenish a lack, or absence, by searching for an "object". Again, in this case the "object of desire", as we may call it, is not a simple treasure as in a normal fairy tale; rather, it is knowledge and poetry, inversely represented, or inverted because represented. Knowledge must be repeated in one form or another; indeed, the tendency to represent knowledge through repetition is anticipated, or rather stated à priori, in the musical piece that is repeated over and over again. What cannot be seen may be heard, perhaps, but only as repetition and therefore by definition deviant and lacking like the words that "go the wrong way". The learned gentleman's proclivity towards representing truth and poetry in some palpable form is echoed and repeated in *the shadow's* career as investigator of mankind's innermost secrets; his knowledge is the knowledge of evil and of the most "unthinkable", meaning sensational. *The shadow* says:

If I had written a newspaper it would have been read! But I wrote directly to the person himself, and there was a state of terror in all the towns I visited. They were so afraid of me! And they loved me so! The professors made me a professor, the tailors gave me new clothes, I am well provided for; the coin-master made coins for me, and the women said I was so goodlooking! — and then I became the man I am! (Anderson 385)

In his own words, *the shadow* has been supplied with all the "varnish", the exterior attributes that make him into a real human being.

Several years go by again and *the shadow* returns with a proposition. He proposes that the learned gentleman, who is in a state of despair because no one is interested in his ideas about the True, the Good and the Beautiful, accompany him on a trip to a health resort as his shadow. The learned man accepts; he becomes the shadow and his former shadow becomes the *master* and even requires his former master to ad-

dress him as "sir". *The shadow*, still indicated in the text in italics, meets a king's daughter who suffers from an illness; she sees "all too well". The young princess has noticed that *the shadow* has no shadow; but he explains to her that indeed he has one; only it is not an ordinary shadow, rather an extraordinary shadow dressed up as a real person. The princess is thus deceived into thinking that she has been cured of her "illness"; her eyesight is "normal"; she does not see "all too well" any more. The princess is impressed with *the shadow's* extensive knowledge about people and the world and proceeds to test him by asking the most difficult questions she can think of. *the shadow* asks her to approach his "shadow", and she is immediately supplied with answers to the most complicated questions about the sun and the moon and about people. She decides to bring *the shadow* home to her kingdom and marry him, for he must be the wisest man on earth since his "shadow" knows so much.

*the shadow* now presents the learned gentleman with an ultimate request: his former master is to remain at the castle, acting as shadow for the rest of his life. The learned gentleman protests, arguing that he refuses to deceive the whole country and the king's daughter as well, and threatening to tell her everything. However, *the shadow* dispatches the guards who throw the learned gentleman in prison. *the shadow* explains that his "shadow" has gone mad: he suffers from the delusion that he is a real human being and that *the shadow* is his shadow. The princess decides that it would be better to dispose of the poor insane "shadow", thus freeing him from his suffering. Thus the learned man dies and *the shadow* rules.

Propp's function "the hero and the villain engage in combat" is of course reversed or negated in Andersen's story since there is no real combat and since *the shadow* emerges victorious. The "hero", i. e. the learned man, is not recognized, and the "villain", i. e. *the shadow*, is not exposed. Rather, *the shadow* is "given a new appearance", as Propp's function reads, and marries the princess. The "liquidation" of the "initial lack" never occurs since the "object of search" is never found, that object being knowledge and Poetry personified. The ending of Andersen's "*the shadow*" signifies the end of the fairy tale genre for Andersen, both as form and substance. The story anticipates modernism and even turns into a modernist tale by engaging in a series of complex inversions and negations, comparable to Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, as I have noted above; the story may also be traced in much later fiction, for example Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990) where the protagonist, the young boy Haroun (named after Haroun al-Rashid, the legendary Caliph of Baghdad) has ventured into the dark region called the Land of Chup where he encounters a character called Mudra and his Shadow. *the shadow* explains the following to the boy:

... in the Land of Chup, a Shadow very often has a stronger personality than than the Person, or Self, or Substance to whom or to which it is joined! So often *the shadow* leads, and it is the Person or Self or Substance that follows. And of course there can be quarrels between *the shadow* and the Substance or Self or Person; they can pull in opposite directions — how often have I witnessed that! — but just as often there is a true partnership, and mutual respect. (Rushdie

132)

Mudra *the shadow* Warrior explains the following about the ruler of the Land of Chup, Khattam-Shud;

He has plunged so deeply into the Dark Art of sorcery that he has become Shadowy himself — changeable, dark, more like a Shadow than a Person. And as he has become more Shadowy, so his Shadow has become more like a Person. And the point has come at which it is no longer possible to tell which is Khattam-Shud's Shadow and which his substantial Self — because he has done what no other Chupwala has ever dreamt of — that is, he has separated himself from his Shadow! He goes about in the darkness, entirely Shadowless, and his Shadow goes wherever it wishes. *The Cultmaster Khattam-Shud can be in two places at once!* (Rushdie 133).

The passages cited from Rushdie's novel may serve as an example of intertextuality; they are also an indication of how far into modern literature Andersen's story has reached. If one wishes, one may pursue parallel motifs in fiction by Bruno Schultz, Paul Auster and Haruki Murakami, to name just a few authors. In Bruno Schultz's story "Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass" (1937) the protagonist's father leads a dual existence; firstly, a shadowy existence as a patient in a sanatorium where he is being treated after having died at home and where time is suspended, or rather translocated into the past so that the father's death has in fact not occurred yet; secondly, the father leads the life of an active, dynamic businessman in the town where the sanatorium is located, a town that appears to be an exact, ghostly replica of the protagonist's home town. The protagonist describes his father's face as "a remote, trancelike face, which, having left its earthly aspect, was confessing its existence somewhere on a distant shore by solemnly telling its minutes" (Schultz 243).

In Paul Auster's autobiographical "Portrait of an Invisible Man" (1982) the author's father is described as a "block of impenetrable space in the form of a man" (Auster 7), living in his house like a ghost, being invisible to others and to himself. In Haruki Murakami's story "TV People" (1993) the protagonist's apartment is invaded by ghostlike television installers who set up a TV that has no picture, only a grey, flickering screen. The TV installers are not real people, in fact — they have entered the apartment through the TV screen and are described as being the size of persons on TV, i. e. a grade smaller and one-dimensional. The protagonist finally turns into one of them himself;

I look at the palms of my hands. They have shrunk slightly. Ever so slightly. Power of suggestion? Maybe the light's playing tricks on me. Maybe my sense of perspective has been thrown off. Yet, my palms really do look shrivelled. Hey now, wait just a minute! Let me speak. There's something I should say. I must say. I'll dry up and turn to stone if I don't. Like the others. (Murakami 216)

The contemporary "shadow" may be different from Andersen's *shadow*. However, the difference is a difference and a resemblance at one and the same time. The relationship between Andersen's *shadow* and our shadow — as we find it in the fiction of, for example, Bruno Schultz, Paul Auster and Haruki Murakami, cited above — can be illuminated by referring to Tzvetan Todorov's model of narrative transformation. Writing specifically about plot structure, Peter Brooks comments on Todorov's model of transformation, stating that plot "is constituted in the tension of two formal categories, difference and resemblance". Brooks says, further, that transformation "represents a synthesis of difference and resemblance; it is, we might say, the same-but-different. Now, "the same-but-different" is a common (and if inadequate, not altogether false) definition of metaphor" (Brooks 91).

*the shadow* — ours and Andersen's — is a three-fold metaphor of inversion: the inversion of the self; of knowledge; and of language (here, i. e. in Andersen's story, the figure of Poetry). The metaphor contains a tension between the same and the different, inversion being by definition a positing of difference within sameness. This tension exists within Andersen's story as an immanent split in the subject; here the learned young man who strives to be the same, i. e. self-identical and autonomous by conceptualizing the True, the Good and the Beautiful but fails because his shadow is extended beyond himself, creating a fearful "difference" from its master. The same-but-different model, when applied to a case of intertextuality as I am doing here, reaches beyond Andersen's text into contemporary modernism so that "our" shadow becomes an extension of Andersen's fearful (in the sense of frightening, terrifying) *shadow*; "our" shadow, brilliantly portrayed by Schultz, Auster and Murakami, is anticipated by Andersen's powerful metaphor. The metaphor operates in Andersen's story on a fairly traditional level of representation, since the story is masked as a "fairy tale", so that the tension Todorov and Brooks speak of is acute and striking; it is carried out as an epic drama typical of the fairy tale. "Our" shadow seems to be toned down by comparison; Schultz's, Auster's and Murakami's shadows are, perhaps, emblematic of a contemporary tedious existence without substance or purpose, and these shadows may represent the lifeless existence of protagonists — two of them fathers — characterized as persons without an identity and subject to infinite metamorphoses that simply serve to perpetuate the state of emptiness within and without. By comparison, Andersen's *shadow* seems to be a person risen to power, raised up to a status of social affirmation and, not least, self-affirmation.

So "our" shadow is different from Andersen's; yet they are the same. The falsification of knowledge and language (*Poetry*) perpetrated by *the shadow* is the precondition for the modern or modernist loss of self. That loss begins with the learned man waking up as his mind is aroused and perplexed by a virtual revelation, a strong light emanating from the house opposite:

One night the stranger woke up, he was sleeping with the balcony door open, the curtain in front of it was lifted up by the wind, and it seemed to him that a strange radiance was coming from his neighbor's balcony, all the flowers were shining like flames with the most lovely colors, and amidst the flowers a slender

young maiden was standing, it was as if she was also radiant; it really hurt his eyes, but he had opened them so terrifically wide, of course, having just woken up; in one jump he was on the floor, quietly standing behind the curtain, but the maiden was gone, the radiance was gone; the flowers were not shining at all, but were there the same as always; the door was ajar, and deep inside the music was playing so soft and beautiful, a person could really fall into a sweet state of mind by listening. It was just like magic and who lived there? (Anderson 380)

Poised between sleeping and waking, almost in a dream-state, the young man has a revelation. He is not content to leave it at that; he has to know, perforce, who lives there, and hence follows the inversion of the self and the inversion of knowledge manifested as *the shadow*. The figure of *Poetry*, purportedly “seen” yet of course not seen by the young man’s emissary, *the shadow*, is poetry as representation, mimetic poetry. Paul de Man says in *Blindness and Insight* that William Butler Yeats pointed to a significant contrast between mimetic poetry, the emblem of which is the mirror, and non-mimetic, modern poetry (Yeats’s own, for example), the emblem of which is the lamp, according to M. H. Abrams’s *The Mirror and the Lamp*. Paul de Man comments:

In Abrams’s book the lamp becomes the symbol of the constitutive, autonomous self, the creative subjectivity that certainly looms large in romantic theory, as an analogous microcosm of the world of nature. The light of that lamp is the self-knowledge of a consciousness, an internalized metaphor of daylight vision; mirror and lamp are both symbols of light, whatever their further differences may be. But Yeats’s lamp is not that of the self, but of what he calls the “soul”, and self and soul, as we know from his poetry, are antithetical. (Man 170 – 171)

The soul, according to Yeats, is a higher state of consciousness and autonomy than the self; one has to move beyond the self, and one way in which to do so is by creating a modern non-mimetic poetry, or at least a poetry whose diction indicates the contradiction and the tension between the mimetic and the non-mimetic mode. The soul, as a higher state of mind, is inward and does not seek representation in the external world; the knowledge of the soul lies hidden away in books, as indeed it does for the learned young man. Then why does the young “stranger” seek out representation, mimesis? Why does he want to know who lives across the street?

The reason is that for Andersen the inward kind of knowledge hidden away in books was also a deviation and a mimetic representation. The author does not state this explicitly for he did not write a theoretical treatise on poetry as did Yeats (much later). But “*the shadow*” implies a radical, pre-modernist (and certainly post-romantic) critique of knowledge, self and poetry. Andersen is confronted with a dilemma similar to Alice’s in *Through the Looking Glass*; he can see the smoke coming from the fire on the other side, but the adage “where there is smoke there is fire” does not apply. Even if you manage to penetrate deeply into the other side you will

find yourself in a place where "the things go the other way" and where "the words go the wrong way", as Alice says.

I believe that Andersen's "*the shadow*" is symptomatic of a crisis in knowledge and language (poetry) occurring in modernity. The learned man "knows" something but has a problem expressing it and conveying it. His knowledge is inward yet directed outwards, towards the house opposite. For some reason he is unable to mediate the two; inside and outside remain separate. Hence the subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge remain separate. The separation invades language, causing an absolute split between the same and the different in lieu of a mediation and complementary co-existence of the two. The result is *the shadow* which poses an absolute antithesis to *Poetry*; *the shadow* is *Poetry* and the *self* inverted, represented as negative imprints of themselves. The radiant light emanating from the female figure in the house opposite would, if permitted to do so, ultimately entice the subject of knowledge, ethics and language (the True, the Good and the Beautiful) to abandon mimetic diction by subsuming the different under the same. The metaphor would, then, become open and inclusive rather than closed and exclusive; Light in shadow and shadow in light rather than a strict light/shadow opposition. Andersen's employment of the dual light/shadow metaphor is complex and ironic; he employs it in order to make it collapse. The metaphor of *the shadow* becomes enclosed in its own sameness rather than open to its own difference. Thus the author indicates his alertness vis à vis the epistemological and poetical crisis the story is really about.

As I see it, Andersen's story reaches far beyond his time, even into our own debate on the Greek *logos*. In *Writing and Difference* Jacques Derrida comments on the thought of Emmanuel Levinas. In his essay "Violence and Metaphysics" Derrida states that Levinas's thought makes us dream of "an inconceivable process of dismantling and dispossession" and that it "summons us to a dislocation of the Greek *logos*, to a dislocation of our identity, and perhaps of identity in general", making us move toward "what is no longer a source or a site (too welcoming to the gods), but toward an exhalation. . ."; Levinas's thought is "faithful to the immediate, but buried nudity of experience itself" and it "seeks to liberate itself from the Greek domination of the Same and the One (other names for the light of Being and of the phenomenon) as if from oppression itself . . ." (Derrida 101 – 102).

The light radiating from the house opposite in "*the shadow*" has no source; it is a ubiquitous suffusion, an immanent irradiation enveloping subject — the female figure — and object — the flowers. The approach to the light occurs as a physical approximation as the young man, referred to as "the stranger", gets up, turns around and walks into his apartment while his shadow performs the exact same motion in reverse, getting up, turning around and walking into the house opposite. One act contains the other; paradoxically, the inversion of self, knowledge and language is predicated upon the very concepts of the True, the Good and the Beautiful occupying the learned man's thoughts. The "book" he wants to read is in the house opposite, only the words "go the wrong way"; they go backwards, as does *the shadow*. It is therefore logical to assume that when the young master asks his former shadow, or servant/slave as he also was in a sense, what he actually saw, *the shadow* really saw *nothing*,

the reverse of “everything”, or everything spelt backwards, metaphorically speaking.

Of course, *the shadow* did see something, at least enough to precipitate him to fame, fortune and a kingdom. The “everything” he saw was the reverse of knowledge, modern religious and instrumental knowledge. In his *History of Sexuality I. The Will to Knowledge* Michel Foucault explains how knowledge, starting in the 17th century, assumed the form of a discourse produced by desire:

An imperative was established: Not only will you confess to acts contravening the law, but you will seek to transform your desire, your every desire, into discourse. Insofar as possible, nothing was meant to elude this dictum, even if the words it employed had to be carefully neutralized. The Christian pastoral prescribed as a fundamental duty the task of passing everything having to do with sex through the endless mill of speech. The forbidding of certain words, the decency of expressions, all the censorings of vocabulary, might well have been only secondary devices compared to that great subjugation: ways of rendering it morally acceptable and technically useful. (Foucault 21)

When *the shadow* claims to be privy to people’s innermost secrets he does not mention sex, of course; however, it is once again logical to assume that the erotic dimension of beauty personified in the figure of *Poetry* is inverted by *the shadow*’s subsequent actions in the world at large; eroticism, beauty, knowledge and language turn into a prohibitive discourse meant to extract information. In the figure of *the shadow* looms the appalling personality of the inquisitor and the modern dictator. Knowledge and language have become perverted forms of power. In his *Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious* C. G. Jung writes the following about megalomania and psychic inflation:

... the state we are discussing involves an extension of the personality beyond individual limits, in other words, a state of being puffed up. In such a state a man fills a space which normally he cannot fill. He can only fill it by appropriating to himself contents and qualities which properly exist for themselves alone and should therefore remain outside our bounds. What lies outside ourselves belongs either to someone else, or to everyone, or to no one. (Jung 88)

Psychic inflation is characteristic of *the shadow* — and of the young man as well. *the shadow*’s propensity for fame and fortune is a distorted, magnified extension of the young stranger’s desire for recognition. This desire makes him blind to the illumination of *Poetry*. Had he been able to perceive the real nature of the female figure standing on the balcony across the street, he would not have named the figure; the name *Poetry* comes from *the shadow*. The very naming of *Poetry* is symptomatic of what Jung, in his essay *the shadow*, refers to as “resistance” and “projection”:

Although, with insight and good will, *the shadow* can to some extent be assimilated into the conscious personality, experience shows that there are certain fea-

tures which offer the most obstinate resistance to moral control and prove almost impossible to influence. These resistances are usually bound up with projections, which are not recognized as such, and their recognition is a moral achievement beyond the ordinary. (Jung 146)

Jung notes how projection operates as a tendency to see, for example, negative features as belonging to the other person, not oneself. The young master fails to recognize his own fateful desire for recognition; this failure infects his entire search for genuine selfhood, knowledge and for the expression of both in language and poetry. The result is a false naming of *Poetry*. Ironically, *the shadow* ends up marrying a young princess who suffers from the illness that she "sees all too well" and hence has to be cured of her insight; she has to learn to see nothing, the reverse of everything. The marriage between *the shadow* and the nameless princess is a union of inversion and negation.

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# Comparativism in Slovenia: Introduction

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From its very beginning, the Slovene literary culture has been oriented towards the European, or, in the last decades, the world literary field. This holds true for literary production itself as well as for literary studies. Slovene literature has always been strongly tied to the international literary periods, currents, movements, being in a constant productive dialogue with them. Consequently, beside the national literary history, quite soon the discipline of Comparative literature emerged, and Anton Oc-virk's *The Theory of Comparative Literary History* (1936) appeared as the third monograph on Comparative literature worldwide.

In the earlier period, the main task of Slovene CompLit was to install the Slovene literature into the broader context of the world literature, particularly European. In pursuing this aim, several monographs on major Slovene writers or important literary periods emerged, illuminating the complex intertextual and intercultural intertwine-ment of Slovene and European literary spaces. In addition, a detailed study of maste-rpieces of World literature was encouraged, resulting in many very valuable, mono-graph-length interpretations. All these efforts culminated in Janko Kos' momentous *Comparative History of Slovene Literature* (1987).

From the 80's on, the focus gradually shifted from the Euro-centric perspective to the world literature proper. Scientists of younger generations broadened the range of Slovene comparativism on the one side by exploring poststructuralist, postcolonial-ist, new-historicist, gender etc. theories, and on the other by studying (beside Euro-pean and North American) also South American, Asian, Middle – Eastern, and Afri-can literatures.

In the following short “Slovene section”, articles of representatives of three dif-ferent generations of Slovene comparatists are presented. Janez Vrečko's study *Oedi-pus and Joseph K.* appertains to the “classical tradition” of Slovene CompLit. The comparison of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Kafka's *The Trial* has its implicit method-ological grounding in a variety of interpretative approaches, such as archetypical, mythological, thematological, philosophical, reception (particularly Jauß') criti-cisms. Similarly to a very fine conclusion of J. L. Borges' *Kafka and His Precursors*, namely that each author creates his own predecessors, Vrečko concludes that the reading of Kafka's famous novel may help us to understand *Oedipus Rex* in a new way.

Some major “classical” representatives of Slovene CompLit, such as Janko Kos

and Dušan Pirjevec (both based in phenomenological criticism), have been largely engaged with the genre theory, particularly with the novel. The article of Tomo Virk *The Short Story as a Genre of Ontological Uncertainty* appertains to this tradition. With the support of phenomenological, historicist, and pragmatic approaches, it aims to demonstrate that the term “short story”, applied in Anglo – American literary criticism to denote the entire variety of short fiction, neglects the differences between many subgenres of short story that for their part display various — in György Lukács’ terms — “Formwillen”.

The article of a comparatist of the younger generation, Vanesa Matajč, *The Historical Novel, Ideology and Re – organization of the Semiosphere: The Case of the Slovene Historical Novel*, is based on poststructuralist and (Lotman’s) semiotic approaches. It deals with the modifications which the Slovene historical novel went through after 1990, when significant political changes occurred (Slovenia gained independence, and the parliamentary democracy was established). In the theoretically well – grounded discussion the author demonstrates how these modifications were influenced simultaneously by theoretical and political shifts.

# Oedipus and Joseph K.

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**Abstract** We could be forgiven for asking why Joseph K. was one of those modern heroes who took root, to the point of us identifying with him. We see our own fate in his, our own life's "trial". This same question however applies equally well to Hamlet and Oedipus. These, too, are our "alter egos"; the latter in particular still stands for "the most versatile work of world literature" (Lesky 48). This work not only influenced Shakespeare but no doubt others as well. We shall argue that Franz Kafka was one of those. Philosophical questions about guilt and punishment, liberty, decision making, agency and death have the same weight in Kafka as they do in Sophocles. The similarities between the two are astounding, even though it might be difficult to perceive them at first sight according to Dönt. A comparison of the two texts is therefore bound to open up new layers of understanding of *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles.

**Key words** Sophocles; Kafka; Oedipus; Josef K., hamartia; anagnorisis; theophany

## 1

Soon after his arrest, Joseph K. gets into conversation with Frau Grubach, his landlady; she is most insistent in her advice that he should not take the unfortunate event too seriously. "You are indeed under arrest, but not like a thief is under arrest. When a man is arrested like a thief, then it's bad, but this arrest - it seems to me like something scholarly, forgive me if I'm saying something stupid, it seems to me like something scholarly which I don't understand, but which one doesn't have to understand either" (Kafka 15). The scene resembles the key conversation between Jocasta and Oedipus, moments before Jocasta's suicide. The Theban queen has undergone the discovery or anagnorisis before Oedipus; as the prophecy was coming true, she was able to piece together minute details from the past of Oedipus. This rational, decidedly masculine drawing of conclusions did not however divert from her feminine essence; concerned with preserving life, she entreated Oedipus, now no longer only her husband but also her son: "Oh, as thou carest for thy life, give o'er/This quest. Enough the anguish I endure" (Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* 1056)<sup>1</sup>.

Jocasta's point was that in life, not everything needed to be explained and untangled, as nothing good can come of it. A similar point of view is adopted by K.'s landlady, Frau Grubach, who is also of the opinion that not everything needs to be under-

stood. The advocate's housemaid Leni, too, cautions K. in an accommodating fashion that he is too unforgiving as far as the court is concerned, "you can't defend yourself against this court" (Kafka 85). However, neither Oedipus nor Joseph K. follow this feminine advice and will not be persuaded; on the contrary, with all the might of their reason, they insist on casting light on the whole of their past and, that way, make clear their complicated present.

Apart from his landlady, Frau Gruber, already mentioned above as being on K.'s side, Fräulein Bürstner, his next door neighbour, was also very important. She was the first one K. told the details about his arrest and then his hearing. He suddenly seized her, "kissed her on the mouth and then all over her face like a thirsty animal who scours with his tongue the surface of a spring he has found at last. Finally, he kissed her on the neck, on her throat, and lingered there with his lips" (23). All that left K. satisfied with his behaviour; he was "surprised he was not even more satisfied" (24). He thought a talk with her essential and waited for her late into the night, as if suspecting it would be her who showed him the way on his last journey, pointing him to anagnorisis, just as Oedipus would finally be able to shed both his in-born and his subjective hamartia on Kithairon.

K. had another important encounter with Fräulein Bürstner: she will be the person to show the executioners and K. the way through the night streets into the quarry. Up to that moment, K. was resisting the executioners, while now, his coming across his neighbour fills him with happiness; she is his last ray of courage before his death. K. was now choosing where to walk, following "the course the Fräulein was taking in front of them, not because he wanted to overtake her, not because he wanted to keep her in sight as long as possible, but only because he wanted to keep in mind the reproach she signified for him" (175). For K. these moments of last happiness were also moments of essential understanding, that his life was wasted precisely because he "always wanted to grab at life, and not with the best of intentions either" (176). It was precisely the meeting with the Fräulein that enabled him, once and for all, "to say what has to be said to myself" (176).

At this realisation, "the Fräulein had turned off into a side street, but K. could do without her now" (176). The woman acquitted herself of her feminine role in K.'s last moments; she carefully guided him and ensured that he stayed on the path to knowledge, so that he should not, in this decisive moment, "want it to begin again" (176). Not to succumb again to his subjective hamartia which he had only just got rid of when he renounced his rebellion. He had to die alone, as the knowledge he had just reached was any moment to be followed by blindness, his eyes will extinguish, just as, immediately following his knowing, Oedipus extinguished his own eyes. An astounding similarity, not easily discernible, even though it works every time.

## 2

Two more important encounters have to be mentioned, that with the painter Titorelli and later, that with the priest at the cathedral.

Joseph K. went looking for Titorelli after it was levelled at him that he does not

do enough for his cause. The painter of such artistic name “knows a lot of judges and even if he himself may not have much influence”, he could advise K. “how to get in touch with various influential people” (107).

What is most important for the understanding of Kafka’s novel is how Titorelli understands art and, more particularly, how he understands its key principles, such as the principle of artistic inspiration and the principle of imitation and the consequent principle of artistic reality. Titorelli is a painter utterly devoid of artistic élan; he paints by commission, by dictation, and only at times, according to his own imagination.

When it came to the manner of imitation, the painter took the sitters’ wishes into account. They were mostly judges that he depicted “just as the great old judges were painted” (107). That was the reason why all the portrait renditions of the judges resembled one another, and the same went for landscapes that showed “not the slightest perceptible difference” (128). The images were therefore not similar to one another, they were “absolutely identical” (128), as were the three pictures of the “moorland scene” that Joseph K. was forced to buy from the painter in gratitude for the advice received.

The other side of the coin, where his works were full of a wilful kind of imitation, when Titorelli entirely gave himself over to imagination, it was difficult to ascertain the meaning of the pictures that were, at first sight, completely illegible and therefore incomprehensible. Thus, the painter’s intervention was needed for the meaning to emerge. It was precisely because of his freed imagination that they contained an intangible image of the courts’ pretences and injustice. Such was Titorelli’s depiction of Justice that K. immediately and easily recognised it as such, due to its accepted iconography of bound eyes and scales. What was unusual is that it was not motionless as tradition demanded, but appeared to be rushing somewhere. Titorelli explained that this particularity was demanded by the patron; however, not even this cowardice was able to do away with the rush of the artist’s free imagination. While talking, the artist continued working on the picture and under his fingers, guided by free imagination, the image changed so much “it was scarcely reminiscent of the goddess of Justice any more, nor of the goddess of Victory either; now it looked exactly like the goddess of Hunting” (115).

This reversal was not merely following the logic of the workings of the court, uncovering its hidden essence, but also a literary precedent Kafka was following, that of *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles. In the first stasimon, following the famous dialogue between the prophet Teiresias and Oedipus, there is talk of the Delphic Oracle and the fleeing beast that cannot escape the pursuing “voice immortal”. It may, at first sight, seem entirely fanciful that a complete précis of Kafka’s novel may be found in this Choral response in *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles. This is how it goes:

Who is he by voice immortal named from Pythia’s rocky cell,  
Doer of foul deeds of bloodshed, horrors that no tongue can tell?  
A foot for flight he needs  
Fleeter than storm-swift steeds,

For on his heels doth follow,  
 Armed with the lightnings of his Sire, Apollo.  
 Like sleuth-hounds too  
 The Fates pursue. (Sophocles Oedipus Rex 475)

In accordance with this sudden metamorphosis of the goddess of Justice into the goddess of Hunting, Titorelli was helping his 'clients' and thus also Joseph K. The painter's philosophy of law and his legal logic have achieved an incredible level of sophistication, so that his aid seemed to the client as easy as stepping from Justice to the goddess of Hunting and back again, while not a word is said about the goddess of Victory. As regards K. proclaiming his innocence, Titorelli has three suggestions, three possible acquittals: actual acquittal, apparent acquittal and playing for time. The painter had not read the rules; however, he was aware that they stipulated that an innocent man has to be acquitted. Yet, as in reality judges can be influenced, Titorelli had never heard of an actual acquittal. K.'s understandable comment that followed was that "the whole court could be replaced by one executioner" (Kafka 121). As therefore there was no chance of an actual acquittal, all K. was left with was apparent acquittal and playing for time. In apparent acquittal, the first release is followed by a new arrest, the second release by another arrest and so forth. "That's already contained in the concept of apparent acquittal" (125), Titorelli explained to K. In the playing for time as the third option, the proceedings are kept permanently at their first stages. In this case, "the proceedings don't come to a stop, but the defendant is almost as safeguarded against a conviction as he would be if he were free" (26). At the end, Titorelli summed up his argument as follows: "What both methods have in common is that they prevent conviction of the defendant." To which Joseph K. added: "But they also prevent actual acquittal" (127). This confirms the theory above, which is that the court can only move between two extreme positions, between justice and hunting; a thought confirmed by Titorelli's statement that "the case must be kept constantly moving in the small area to which it has been artificially restricted" (126).

And just as Oedipus reached "a truce to argument" after he had blinded himself, he was really only freed at Colonus. Such was also the case with Joseph K.; after the arrest, there was "a truce to argument" and he was only finally freed at the quarry. Colonus and the quarry thus only act as the "highest court" where the goddess of Justice will finally come to rest and thus evict from herself both hunt and victory.

### 3

It seems that the decisive event before the final reversal is K.'s meeting with the priest at the cathedral. The scene is reminiscent of the famous meeting between Teiresias and Oedipus. This can initially be concluded by analysing the names of the two main protagonists, Oedipus and Joseph K., both obviously linked to their fates.

In the initial scene of *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles, Teiresias and Oedipus come to verbal blows, that is a verbal war or *logomachia*, where Oedipus calls the prophet names, putting down his prophetic talents. In answer, Teiresias foretells the tragic

fate that awaits Oedipus; soon it will become clear that he is his children's brother and father, his mother's son and husband and his father's killer "all unwitting art a double foe /To thine own kin, the living and the dead" (Sophocles *Oedipus Rex*, 451). In his speech, the seer reveals to Oedipus the secret of his birth and death: "This day shall be thy birth-day, and thy grave" (483). As the Corinthian herdsman was later to point out, his name was connected with both: "Whence thou deriv'st the name that still is thine!" (1036)

The name of Oedipus is therefore linked to both his birth and his death; his name signifies 'the one with swollen legs', the one therefore who was to be sacrificed through being suspended from a tree by his ankles. This was an ancient manner of sacrificing a firstborn son, so that he should hang off a tree like a fruit, "which should benefit the fruit tree and all other vegetation that would bear more and better that season." (Pavlović 186). As we know, this sacrifice was not brought to completion, it was interrupted, and the offering that was intended for the benefit of the vegetative cycle was taken down and transported to Corinth. The only reminder of the botched ritual were the pierced feet of Oedipus. And Oedipus will have to pay for this failure until his death at Kithairon, where he will re-enact the once unsuccessful ritual and, through it, leave this world.

The meeting between K. and the priest started in a completely empty church. The priest greeted K. with an inclination of the head. K. simultaneously crossed himself. The priest "gave himself a little swing to gain momentum and quickly climbed up the steps" (Kafka 162). Seers and prophets always assume an elevated position from which to deliver their oracles. Teiresias uses a wooden tower for this purpose, the tower that the angry Oedipus had demolished. Thus, the priest's prophetic words could also only be proffered from the pulpit. He had to establish a distance between himself and K., otherwise he could allow himself to be influenced and forget his job. And he had to maintain a certain ceremony of his being.

Just like Oedipus, K., too, attempted to ignore the prophetic word, in his case by leaving the church. "He had almost left the pew area and was approaching the open space between this and the entrance doors, when he heard the priest's voice for the first time. A powerful, practised voice. How it pierced the expectant cathedral! But it was not directed at a congregation. It was unambiguous and there was no escape; he was calling: 'Joseph K. !'" (163)  
This sudden summons kept K. for a while:

For the time being he was still free, he could walk on and make his way from there through one of the three small dark wooden doors/. . . / That would show he had not understood, or that he had indeed understood but was taking no notice. But if he turned round he was caught, for then he was admitting he understood very well, that he was really the person called for, and that he would comply. (163)

K. seemed to think this was some sort of a childish hide-and-seek, so he only just turned toward the pulpit, when the priest "beckoned him nearer with his finger"

(163). And, as guilt attracts courts, K. even broke into a run in order to reach the pulpit, where the priest checked his identity: “You are Joseph K.?”, and, “You are accused”, which Joseph confirmed by saying, “Yes”. “Then you are the one I am seeking”, said the priest. “I had you summoned to this place” (164).

This in turn confirmed Leni’s suspicion. The housemaid let him know during a telephone conversation that his departure for the cathedral could have nothing to do with any tourism, guiding some random Italian through art-historical treasures, but quite simply with the fact that they are “hounding” K. Joseph K. could not stand pity, so he hurriedly brought the conversation with Leni to an end, however, “as he replaced the receiver he said, half to himself and half to the distant girl whose voice he could no longer hear: ‘Yes, they are hounding me’” (158). The priest’s naming him therefore settled K.’s identity. Something that was extremely ambiguous if not impossible at the beginning of the novel has been clarified and confirmed, namely that it was Joseph K. and nobody else who was accused. A long process is needed, with the prison chaplain obviously part of it, which has now reached its apogee at the cathedral of all places. During the first hearing, K.’s identity is anything but clear, as the investigating magistrate initially thought Joseph K. to be “an interior decorator” (31).

The investigating magistrate was therefore unable to identify the accused. Perhaps he really did order an interior decorator to be apprehended, equally as innocent as Joseph K., but the warders chose Joseph K. and no one else. It was only the priest who managed to call him by his real name and know who he was addressing—the one whose name, just as was the case with Oedipus, was linked to his fate. It was by now clear, and the priest made a special point of it, that the court found K. guilty and that it held his guilt to be proven. Joseph assured the priest that he was not guilty, as a person cannot be guilty, for “we are all human beings here after all.” “‘That is right,’ said the priest, ‘but everyone guilty always talks like that’” (164). — the exact way in which Teiresias parried Oedipus.

With this, the priest acquitted himself of his prophetic business and could allow himself to descend from the heights to the church nave. It seems though that the priest did not possess the omniscience of Teiresias, even though he preached from on high. He did not know how the trial would end; he feared it would end badly.

Even though K. had the impression that the priest’s grandeur was in no way diminished seen from close too, he was nevertheless overwhelmed with a sense of infinite trust in him and was willing to talk quite openly. That was however not in accordance with the office of the priest as judicial chaplain, who tried to point out K.’s naivety with regard to the court, as well as vis-à-vis himself as a court official. It was all part of a ruse, a constituent part of the court and its essence, something that could be checked in the annals of the Law.

This brings us face to face with one of the problems in *The Trial* that is so closely linked to *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles. It is the widely-known parable about the Law. The doorkeeper before the Law takes the place of the Sphinx, the door to the Law is the gates to Thebes and the man wishing to enter is both Oedipus and Joseph K. Oedipus entered Thebes as a supposedly free man; the fate of the Sphinx was linked to the

gates of Thebes. By entering the city where he was driven (“hounded”) by the prophecy, he decided his tragic fate. Having solved the riddle, Oedipus opened the gates into Thebes. He was the first stranger to have managed the feat. And he managed because he was fleeing the prophecy about himself; guilt always attracts the court, therefore the Sphinx had to plummet and the gates had to open. Thebes however transformed from a safe into an unsafe place after the fall of the Sphinx. Inside Thebes, Oedipus encountered plague, decay, demise of all living things. By solving the riddle, Oedipus himself became a riddle. He was now inside the fortifications and until he found the killer of old Laius, he didn’t stand a chance of salvation. Did the Sphinx therefore deceive Oedipus, who was only able to learn the truth about himself when there was no possible escape either for himself, or for those close to him? Were the Theban gates for him alone and slammed shut once he finally entered? Did the Sphinx take fright at the anthropocentric answer of Oedipus to her riddle and thus thrust into oblivion her own, anachronistically conceived cosmocentric riddle? “As a man, who took the part of history against things ritual and mythological, Oedipus answered the riddle historically. The Sphinx expected a ritual solution to the riddle, based on the foundations of death and life, as apparent periods of transition between youth, maturity and old age. What she got instead was the banal answer of a pragmatic man of history who will any moment now place himself at the centre of the universe. Oedipus knew no other answer. /.../The three ages are no longer to do with vegetative growth/.../ but the three ages of man, to be ousted only by death. (Vrećko, *Epic and Tragedy* 423). Just as Oedipus was hoping for a fault in the prophecy, so he misunderstood the riddle of the Sphinx.

Joseph K. tried to solve the riddle of his abduction and yet at the very beginning, as soon as he crossed the threshold of the court, a woman said: “After you, I must shut this door. Nobody else may go in” (Kafka 30). And some time later, when the information officer tried to get him out of the court, he realized that K. wanted to go to start with, “then you can tell him a hundred times this is the way out and he doesn’t move” (57). Such details indicate how caught K. is. It seems that the parable of the man before the Law is for him more appropriate than his own confinement at the court. K. can no longer enter the Law; in the end, he gives up trying, betrayed by his body. All he can do is haplessly to realise that the door was meant for him all along and that he will never know what hides behind it. Unless, that is, K. did not open the doors with his journey to the quarry, the ultimate doors reserved only for him to step through. He will however never know whether his sacrifice was successful in clearing away all the filth that had accumulated around him. He came to some important conclusions just regarding himself; his death was his alone.

Oedipus, too, fled before the oracle, even though it was always “open” to him, as one cannot doubt the validity of oracles. Unlike K., Oedipus was able to go through the doors at Kithairon, open for him since the beginning: “My tomb predestined for me by my sire and mother” (Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* 1451).

All the while, Oedipus was able to look back at his past, garnering elements towards his self-knowledge. As far as the message of *Oedipus at Colonus* is concerned, it could be argued that Oedipus passed in time over the threshold of the doors of Law

only meant for him. What is not yet clear is whether such an assertion can be made for Joseph K. as well.

When Joseph K. argued with the priest and tried to persuade him that he should not believe everything the doorkeepers said, the latter warned him he is on the wrong path, “one does not have to believe everything is true, one only has to believe it is necessary” (Kafka 172). K. found this miserable: “It makes the lie fundamental to world order” (172). If we accept K.’s premise that lie is the only truth in the world, the foundation and the basis of everything, truth herself becomes the victim of ubiquitous lie. And if there is no more truth, there is no more truthfulness; everything is mere construct that must be taken as necessary. Such loss of truth and truthfulness can only lead to nihilism. Kafka does warn that K. “was too tired to follow all the deductions that could be drawn from the story” about Law (172), but it seems that even in more propitious circumstances, he would not have reached significantly different conclusions from the ones quoted above.

#### 4

K.’s last journey to the quarry bears many similarities with Oedipus journeying to Colonus, accompanied by his daughters Antigone and Ismene. K. was led by two men, “in frock coats, pale and fat, with top hats, apparently the non-collapsible kind” (Kafka 174).

From the very beginning, we are surprised that to K., they are “clapped-out old actors” from some obscure theatre. At the same time, it is made clear that they hardly say a thing, gesturing “like a mute” (174), something that ill accords with their possible theatrical origin. The question is therefore why K. perceives the last scene in the novel, which doubles up as the last act of his life, as a play, even a theatrical play. If we want to be precise, the novel started off with a similar consideration, about it all being a comedy that Joseph K. would not like to miss, as we read on page three of *The Trial*. This human comedy is about to end.

The similarity between these events and a theatre play needs to take a step back, to those elements that made theatre possible- the ritual. The ritual elements in the last scene are recounted in a way that makes them easily recognisable or, at least, makes it easy to discern their absence.

To start with, it is important how the gentlemen apprehended Joseph; one can deduce from their gestures that K. is about to die, that he will soon become, as Kafka puts it, inanimate matter.

As an example of a ritual gesture that presages the death of the main hero, let us quote the holding of the head of Achilles. It was supported in a special way by his mother Thetis, knowing that her son will not live much longer; such were the gestures adopted by mourners supporting the heads of the already deceased. Similarly, both gentlemen treated the living K. as if he were already dead. When still in the flat, they tried to take him under the arm; K. refused and only allowed this to happen in the street, in the public domain, the domain of ritual death. “But right at the door they took him by the arms in a way K. had never experienced before. Their shoulders were close behind his, they did not bend their arms but twined them round the length

of K's outstretched arms, and down below they held K.'s hands in a regimented and rehearsed grip which was irresistible. K. walked stiffly between them; all three now formed such a unity that if one were destroyed all would be destroyed. It was the kind of unity which hardly anything but *inanimate matter* can form." (Kafka 174 – 175) Kafka is astoundingly meticulous in describing this scene; it indicates that he must have been very familiar with the rules of ritual, or else he would not have compared this yet living mass with inanimate matter. Joseph K. was therefore "formally" dead even on his way to the execution.

The second important ritual element is connected with the willingness or compliance of the victim. One can say that K. initially tried to resist, as he knew that he was going to die and would no longer need much energy, so he decided to use it up for that purpose before the end. The ritual demanded that only willing animals or people were sacrificed, those who voluntarily gave themselves over to the slayer. No amount of resistance was acceptable for the offering. A good example of this is the sacrifice of Iphigenia that we meet in all the tragedians, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. The latter two treat her death as an act of sacrifice, while Aeschylus understands it as murder, identifying it as an outrageous and unacceptable offering. (Aeschylus 150) This was in accordance with the incipient law of the Greek polis, where the ancient obsession with demonic powers that made you commit all manner of acts was supplanted by the concept of an act punishable by law and that of personal responsibility. The first part of the *Oresteia* tells us that Iphigenia was callously thrown onto the altar, like a heifer. As the virgin resisted, they forced a piece of cloth into her mouth, so as to stop her uttering curses on the *oikos*. Such resistance was responsible for the fact that Iphigenia could not rise as a deer from under her father's knife and become a follower of Artemis. All that was left for the rebel was death, pure and simple- a case of murder.

As far as K.'s willing going to his death is concerned, there is an interesting question, which is why Kafka did not include Joseph's dreams in the novel. In his dream, K. saw a stonemason hesitated over entering his name on the headstone, until he willingly decided to die, which is entirely consistent with the above, particularly with Joseph's possible ritual death in the quarry.

The situation was reversed the moment the stiff threesome came across a woman, most probably K.'s adored neighbour, one of the most important women in his life, Fräulein Bürstner. Joseph immediately understood that any resistance would be useless. Moreover, he was overcome by unexpected joy and all three followed the woman's footsteps with ease; she was now their guide. This was needed until they found the right way; after that, as we have seen, she was free to turn into a side street. It was as if Fräulein Bürstner had a task, to make sure K. was on the right path and did not succumb to the old mistakes. The reason why this had to be accomplished by a woman and why it was a woman who, in the last moment, tried to change K. the rebel into K. the willing victim, is possible to explain through K.'s immense faith in female help, expressed so often throughout the novel: "Women have great power. If I could persuade some of the women I know to work together to help me, I would be bound to succeed" (Kafka 165). The only way out of a world where he was the ac-

cused was precisely a woman, a detail that leads us back to the events in *Oedipus*.

To help sustain the argument, let us point out that “Colonus (the word for a Greek municipality, as well as a grave, a burial place), where Oedipus took refuge after long years, was a mythical place, a blessed place, where he entered as carrier of filth, while there was to be found the Garden of the Eumenides, the female deities of fertility and power.” (Vrečko, *Between the Antique and the Avant-garde* 144), underworld goddesses with whom he was connected by means of his lameness and his name. Here, with the help of two guides, his daughters Antigone and Ismene, and in the company of underworld Eumenides, his life came full circle. He was in the place he had been in before and where, by rights, he should have died. He became the victim of the prophesied innate hamartia. It is therefore understandable that K.’s life also concluded with the help of a woman and that Kafka was clearly aware of this.

Before Oedipus left Thebes for Kithairon, Kreon warned him that not everything could be his: “Crave not mastery in all/ For the mastery that raised thee was thy bane and wrought thy fall” (Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* 1525). This was also followed by Kafka who put the self-critical words in his hero’s mouth, words full of repentance: “I always wanted to grab at life, and not with the best of intentions either. That was not right. . . I’m thankful they have given me these stupid inarticulate companions for this journey and that they’ve left it to me to say what has to be said to myself” (Kafka 176). What was it that K. wanted to say to himself at that moment? What was the purpose of his internal monologue? Was this hope that the final knowledge would come, that it would have to coincide with death as the end of life, death as mere death?

The ritual procession also entails public ridicule. However, as the latter, like the majority of the events in this novel, happens at night, the only people they encounter on their way out of town are a few policemen; one of them even tries to check all is well with this suspicious threesome, an intention decisively stymied by K., with the two gentlemen having to follow his lead.

In *Oedipus at Colonus* that Sophocles wrote just before his death in 406 B. C., he allowed his hero the ritual death denied to him so long before. In the Garden of Eumenides, Oedipus ritually cleansed his body, offered libations to the gods and readied himself to depart this world. At that moment came thundering from the underworld. Mother Earth, who had been deprived of her offering of Oedipus three days after his birth, was now ready to take him to her. The oracle said he would sleep with his mother. Now the prophecy, in its primeval, ritual-mythological sense, will come true. The underworld goddesses have permitted him to lie in their furrows, without the danger of any revolting incest. Nor was the murder of his father any longer taken to be patricide. Oedipus was cleansed. Even though deprived of his earthly eyes, Oedipus saw everything and knew everything. After the agon between Polyneikes and Oedipus, where the father cursed his son, Oedipus spoke of ‘first things’, accompanied by incessant thunder and lightning. Then the messenger tells of all that was visible before the mighty light, when nothing could be seen any more. This mighty light was the epiphany of Oedipus. Called by the underworld and Olympus simultaneously, Oedipus knelt: “We saw him adore together the earth and Olympus of the gods in the

same prayer" (*Oedipus at Colonus* 1654).

Oedipus therefore, on his knees before Mother Earth and Olympus, said his prayer and went either to earth or was taken to the sky by a messenger of heaven. The Earth would receive him into her, with "painless cleaving of earth's base" (Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus* 1662). For Sophocles, the redemption of his hero is all important; the direction of the departure is left open.

And what is Joseph's 'theophany' like? When they found themselves outside town, which "in this direction merged into fields almost without transition" (Kafka 177), they came to an abandoned and dreary quarry. Was Kafka's quarry also chosen as an earth's furrow, like the last dwelling at Colonus, given to Oedipus by Sophocles, where both heroes, Oedipus and Joseph finally lay with their mother Earth? This is where the last part of the ritual begins: the undressing of the victim, preparing him for his ritual murder. K. is now a ready victim, with his "willing cooperation" (177). They were very particular about the position of K.'s head, very important from the sacrificial point of view, as the head and later the skull was used as a signpost into the after world. There, ample space is provided for the spirit and consciousness, both of which were in short supply six foot under. That is why they took such care in placing K.'s head on a large, loose stone and not, say, on the ground or just anywhere. The stone takes on the function of a sacrificial altar. However, they had great trouble finding the 'right' position for the head which would not be forced or improbable: "The one gentleman therefore requested the other to leave the disposal of K. to him for a moment, but even this did not improve matters. In the end they left K. lying in a position which was not even the best of those already tried" (177).

The above would indicate that the sacrificial ritual did not run according to plan, that Joseph K. was no longer representative of all those for whom he had to be the sacrificial lamb, as he was still thinking at the beginning of the trial. Then, he argued: "It's typical of the proceedings instituted against many people." He imagined that, "I speak here for those, not for myself" (Kafka 33).

He was now there in his own right; his death had no external reference. This however must mean that his human end was murder (slaughter) pure and simple, outside any ritual or cosmic concepts, as was the case with Oedipus. This is confirmed in what follows, when the "ultimate defect" was revealed.

Then one of the gentlemen opened his frock-coat, and from a sheath hanging on a belt round his waistcoat he took a long thin double-edged butcher's knife/. . ./ The repulsive courtesies began once more; one handed the knife over K. to the other, who then passed it back above K.'s head. At this moment K. was perfectly aware it was supposed to be his duty to seize the knife as it hovered from hand to hand above him and drive it into himself. But he did not do this; instead, he turned his neck, which was still free, and looked about him. He was not able to prove his own worth completely, he was not able to relieve the authorities of all work; responsibility for this ultimate defect lay with whoever had denied him the remainder of the requisite strength. (Kafka 177 – 178)

The destruction of the ritual continued. Seeing his struggle with the authorities, K. should have stabbed himself; this would have taken the responsibility off the authorities and the court and made the matter a suicide. There can be no question of execution, as he was not condemned by any “high court”.

As his posture was in no way in accordance with the prescribed position of a ritual, and what is more, K. kept moving, looking at his surroundings, rather than abandoning himself to the murder (ritual death), the gentlemen are forced to do the job themselves. Instead of a ritual killing, suicide or execution, there was a brutal murder. They finished off the unfortunately placed K.’s head and body like one finishes off a rabid dog. K. therefore died like an animal and not like a human being. After everything he had been through, it became clear that he will only be outlived by shame. The man died a shameful, animal-like death. Does this also mean that it was not given to him to complete the circle, as Oedipus was able to do?

This is another reason why it can be said that Kafka leaves things open and unresolved. Instead of a peaceful, ritual death, instead of a judicial execution, instead of a suicide, there was slaughter of a man who was throughout proclaiming his innocence. Can that be why, in the last moments of K.’s life, during his last movement of the head and body, “the casement window flew open like a light flashing on; a human figure, faint and insubstantial at that distance and height, forced itself far out and stretched its arms out even further. Who was it? A friend? A good man? One who sympathised? One who wanted to help? Was it one person? Was it everybody? Was there still help?” (Kafka 178)

Let us for a moment return to Kafka’s short story, *The Dream*. One needs to add that Kafka often returned to the theme of the death of Moses (as, for example, in his short story *On Death Apparent*) which equally well collides with that of Oedipus; all this leads us to draw parallels between Joseph K. and Oedipus. Joseph wanted to go for a walk and the path took him in one direction only; to the cemetery, to his own grave, therefore to Colonus, where he fell to his knees. Three people awaited there: two gentlemen holding the headstone and an artist. At the funeral of Oedipus, there are also three people: Antigone, Ismene and Theseus. And as Oedipus was “incessantly” called by the underworld, and he had “waited and delayed for too long”, so Joseph dallied, until twice, he was called by the cemetery knell, and then the artist’s kicking at the grave mound. What follows is K.’s ritual wailing, corresponding to that of Oedipus. “Finally/. . ./ K. understood; there was no time left”, as this was the only way he would be able to finish the inscription on the headstone. “K. finally understood that he came to his own funeral and that he has to put himself into the grave” (Hribar 249–250). Joseph dug into the soil with his fingers and the earth became friendly, maternal, no longer resisting, and once he penetrated the thin crust of the earth, it opened up to him his underworld dwelling and the impenetrable depth welcomed him in. “He was now capable of doing what he was not able to do during the execution. Without thought or fear he lowered himself into his own grave” (249–250). Thus Joseph finally came to having the whole of his name on the gravestone, having his reputation back and his own identity.

At the beginning of the novel we learn that Joseph K. was arrested without hav-

ing done anything wrong. He was without fault, just like Oedipus. With that, he entered the Socratic self-reflection about man's universal guilt, about the fact that being a man automatically implies guilt-reflection, therefore about man's inborn *hamartia*. And it will be this that will lead Joseph from the domain of objective guilt and *hamartia* into the domain of subjective guilt, his struggle with the world. The court trial therefore served as a reminder of his generic guilt, and only on that basis could he see the truth about himself, about his shameless interference with the world that destroyed his life.

His voluntary descent into the grave (colonus) absolved him of the indictment at the beginning of the novel, that he is guilty without being guilty, and also of his wanting to "grab at life, and not with the best of intentions either" (Kafka 176). In the novel *The Trial* itself, things remain unresolved in the end. Instead of a peaceful ritual death, instead of a judicial execution, instead of suicide in the quarry, a man was slaughtered, a man who never ceased proclaiming his innocence. Moments before the inhuman slaughter, shutters opened on a window and a man reached out towards Joseph, and Joseph, too, "raised his hands and spread his fingers wide" (Kafka 178). In the name of humanity, two people joined hands from afar. Kafka did not finish his novel by blinding his hero and did not place Joseph's coming to knowledge before the blinding itself. Such was also the sequence adhered to by Sophocles in *Oedipus Rex*. (Vrečko, *Between the Antique and the Avant-garde* 130 – 161)

And as the events in the quarry led him to knowledge but not redemption, it was necessary to continue in the short story *The Dream*, just as Sophocles needed to continue his *Oedipus in Oedipus at Colonus*. The knowledge negated his inborn subjective *hamartia*, as just before his eyes were extinguished, he discovered that it was possible to extend one's arms in one way only - man towards man, and not in order to own the world. Only then was Joseph able to die blind and cleansed, but not redeemed. This would only come with his willing death at the cemetery, when he lowered himself into his own grave that would be his Colonus. Is it possible for Kafka to have stressed the grave so much without being aware of the conceptual connection between the grave and Colonus, and if, for him, the equation between Oedipus and Joseph were not complete, an equation with nothing carried over? Joseph K. and Oedipus are guilty without guilt, seeking salvation, finding themselves at two crossroads - Joseph at the entrance to the court and on his way to the quarry, Oedipus before the killing of his father and at the entrance to Colonus; they both receive knowledge before blinding and both opt for a willing exit from this world. Just as Oedipus was "temporarily freed" after blinding himself and was finally freed only at Colonus, so did Joseph continue with his everyday life after his arrest, until he "lowers himself" into the welcoming and maternal grave - colonus.

Oedipus is presented as "a hunter, pursuing, chasing and frightening the quarry, blundering in the mountains and sent scurrying by his pursuit, far away from people. However, in this hunt, the hunter turns hunted: Oedipus, pursued by the terrible curse of his parents, roams and roars like a wild beast, then pierces his eyes and flees to an uninhabited Kithairon" (Vernant 85). The notorious scene at the Titorelli studio shows how, under his brush, the painted image changed so that "it was

scarcely reminiscent of the goddess of Justice any more, nor of the goddess of Victory either; now it looked exactly like the goddess of Hunting” (Kafka 115). The trial against the accused Oedipus and Joseph could therefore only take place between two extremes, between justice and the hunt. Victory is won in Colonus - the grave.

Concerning the voluntary nature of K.'s choosing death, it seems particularly interesting to ask the question why Kafka failed to include Joseph's dreams in the *The Trial* and end the novel that way. Did Kafka leave *The Dream* out, as Sophocles, too, interred Oedipus outside the tragedy about Oedipus? Another proof that *The Dream* is part of the novel and that *The Trial* can be considered to be finished, if we read it against the background of the two Sophocles tragedies, that is, *Oedipus Rex* and *Oedipus at Colonus*. It was not for nothing that Borges proclaimed Kafka the precursor of Sophocles.

## Note

1. See Sophocles. *Oedipus Rex*. Trans. F. Storr. All the citations of *Oedipus Rex* are from the website <http://socrates.acadiau.ca/courses/engl/rcunningham/Fall2008/1413/pdf/OedipusRex.pdf>, and the line numbers instead of page numbers are listed here. In this article, line numbers are listed for all the citations from the website.

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# The Short Story as a Genre of Ontological Uncertainty

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**Abstract** The article takes a critical stance towards the Anglo-American use of the term short story as a collective term for the entire domain of short prose. Partially based on German literary criticism, which makes a clear distinction between the novella and the short story, it attempts to demonstrate that within the realm covered by the American term of short story. There are at least two, perhaps even three, genres with differing formal structures, organization of narrative, ideological basis, and pragmatic motivation.

**Key words** short story; novella; genre theory

What then is time? If no one asks me,  
I know; if I wish to explain it to one  
that asketh, I know not.  
Saint Augustine

Let us start with an allusion to the famous Raymond Carver short story: What we talk about when we talk about a short story? The answer to this question could be similar to that of St Augustine referring to time; although we all read short stories and know what they are, any attempt at theoretical determination and conceptual definition leaves us confused. This confusion is not only due to the existence of different theories of genre, similar to different concepts of the novel. When we talk about the novel, it is nevertheless clear that we are referring to the genre called by the term *novela* in Spanish, *romanzo* in Italian, *Roman* in German, *roman* in French, Slovene, Croatian, Serbian and Russian. However, it is not so clear and transparent when we refer to the short story. What is called a short story in Anglo-American theoretical writings becomes *novela corta*, *cuento* or *cuento corto* in Spanish tradition, *nouvelle* or *conte* in French, *racconto* in Italian, *Novelle* or *Kurzgeschichte* in German, *kratka priča* or *novela* in Serbian and Croatian, *kratka zgodba* or *novela* in Slovene, and *rasskaz*, *povest* or *novella* in Russian literary theory. While in Spanish, French and Russian traditions the above mentioned terms are almost synonymous, this is not so in German, Serb, Croat and Slovene criticism where what the American tradition defines as a short story falls into two separate genres: the *novella* and a genre which in the latter

literary cultures appears as a literal translation of the American term short story and which shall be called here, for the sake of clarity, *the short story proper* (in German *Kurzgeschichte*, in Serbian and Croatian *kratka priča*, in Slovene *kratka zgodba*). The question that inevitably arises is the following: does this form of short fiction, described by the terms mentioned above, cover a single genre with numerous types and variants or does it refer to (at least) two different genres, each of them with a different structure, pragmatic orientation and narrative purpose?

This review of terminological differences should further be complemented by adding that Anglo-American literary criticism also knows the term novella; the term is, however, usually understood as referring to a predecessor of the short story, and is therefore also considered as being subordinate to the more contemporary term. Some rare exceptions set aside, the term is characteristically described as in Cuddon's *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, where the novella is defined as a kind of short story.

Taking into account the complexity and large number of contemporary theories of the short story, this position becomes understandable. Moreover, the plethora of definitions of the term short story resulted in the fact that also this genre was defined following Bakhtin's definition of the novel as a Proteic genre. The argument that what some of the European literary studies distinguish as two distinct genres, i. e. the novella and the short story proper, is in fact just two manifestations of the numerous possible types of the genre short story, is tenable. It reflects the fact that the complex heterogeneity of the forms of short stories can be described at least in part with the system of different typologies that distinguish between e. g. epiphany- and anecdotic or plot-stories, between realistic and fantasy stories, between metaphorical and elliptical ones, between descriptive and impressionistic ones etc., and last but not least also between shorter and longer short stories. Despite this legitimate claim, I will attempt to defend the opposite argument and with the help of historical and phenomenological argumentation suggest that the novella and short story proper are two distinct genres with different genre typicality.

German literary studies (Neuschäffer, Auerbach, Jolles etc.) in particular showed that the novella first appeared in the Renaissance period where it developed from the *Milesian Tales* and from various other forms of Medieval short fiction (e. g. exemplum, casus, fabliau, 'novella' of the Italian *Il Novellino* etc). With Boccaccio and his followers (Bandello, Marguerite de Navarre, Cervantes) the novella became an esthetically perfected literary form and also a subject of theoretical discourse. The period after the Renaissance saw a temporary decline of this genre; its popularity was again restored in the Romantic period when the novella also gained its classical definition. Summing up different descriptions and definitions of the term by the brothers Schlegel, Tieck, Goethe, Novalis (and later also by Heyse), the novella is a brief fictional prose narrative shorter than a novel, which is usually concerned with a single significant event to which the entire narrative is dramatically and linearly oriented; its topic had to be taken from real life. Trying to broaden this definition with some more recent theories of novella, we can argue that the novella (contrary to the tale, which is characteristically less artistically refined and encompasses numerous episodes, or to the sketch, which does not focus on an event, an episode but on an

impressionistic emotional state or intimate reflection) has a typical narrative structure, it focuses on one, or at most two closely connected main events (the hawk theory) and is created in order to report on some unusual, extraordinary, fatal, unheard-of (Goethe), but real (or at least plausible) event. Many of the novellas by Kleist, Goethe, Hoffmann, Balzac, Mérimée and Pushkin belong to that kind of narrative, with elaborate exposition, gradation towards the dramatic climax, central event and the conclusion (i. e. the structure typical of the Renaissance novella as well).

In his conversations with Eckermann Goethe described this narrative form with a metaphor of a rose growing from its roots and ending in an unexpected but beautiful flower and added that the novella must have a symmetrical structure and realistic exposition. Yet German Romanticism not only kept its traditional form, but also added some new emphasis concerning the possible subject matter of the novella that was drawn from the growing Romantic interest for the irrational, surreal, its attitude towards religion, and also from the Romantic attempt to renew mythology.<sup>1</sup> This attempt could best be seen in some of the texts by Hoffmann, as well as in some of Goethe's remarks concerning his own prose writing.

Sigmund Freud, for example, in his treatise *Das Unheimliche* analysed the fantastic elements in Hoffmann's novellas, in particular in his novella *Der Sandmann*, and argued that those works evoke in their readers a specific feeling of horror, which is more than simple horror. He used to describe this feeling with the term *unheimlich* which is usually translated into English with the word *uncanny*. The German term, however, is ambiguous and thus untranslatable; in German the word denotes something foreign and domestic, horrifying and attractive at the same time. Freud claims that this feeling evokes in us the memory of a human animistic understanding of the world, the memory of the past (sacral) reality, which became unfamiliar and horrifying because it is distant to us now. According to Freud, Hoffmann with his novellas creates this same feeling of *unheimlich*.

Also Goethe's reflection concerning his own novellas was very similar to Freud's understanding of those by Hoffmann. In his conversations with Eckermann, he often touched upon the issue of the novella, in particular in connection to his novella, entitled simply *Novelle*. It was here that he used the metaphor of a rose, of an organic structure of the novella and of a realistic exposition. When insisting on the necessary surprising event in the novella, he also discussed the higher nature or ideal state to which this event points. Eckermann adds his own comment:

As a conclusion to Goethe's Novel, nothing is required but the feeling that the man is not quite deserted by higher beings, but that, on the contrary, they keep their eye on him, sympathize with him, and, in case of need, come to his assistance. There is something so natural in this belief, that it belongs to man, is a constituent part of his being, and is innate with all nations, as the foundation of all religion. (Oxenford 371)

It is widely known that this foundation of all religion Goethe also called *demonic*. When discussing Goethe's concept of *demonic* in his renowned book *Das Heilige*, the

Protestant theologian Rudolf Otto argued that Goethe uses this term for the feeling that surpasses every mind, that could not be rationally expressed and therefore remains incomprehensible, irrational. Goethe's *demonic* is then, according to Otto, one of the forms of the holy. The holy is defined by Otto in its relation towards the numinous as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, i. e. in its characteristic duality. And as one of the fundamental feelings of that duality Otto mentions also the feeling of *unheimlich*, which is in its expression similar to Goethe's notion of *demonic*.<sup>2</sup>

This specific meaning of the feeling of *unheimlich* (or *demonic*), which we touched upon here only briefly, shows that Romantic prose production witnessed a shift which will exert an important influence on the future development of different forms of short fiction. On the one hand, German Romantics resume the tradition of the novella and adopt its traditionally symmetrical structure with a surprising event at the forefront; on the other, they add new emphases regarding the subject matter, in particular irrationality, or rather *das Unheimliche*. It is also true that—as many of the novellas by Hoffmann prove—this feeling could be evoked through the traditional structure of the novella. But since the traditional structure with its narrative symmetry is not in accordance with the irrationality or uncertainty of the *unheimlich*, this new tendency seeks—in order to achieve the intended effect as fully as possible—a different, more suitable formal structure, indeed, a new genre of short fiction. And this is indeed achieved by Poe who adopts from the German Romantics this feeling of *unheimlich* (this term is used to denote his short fiction in Kilchenmann 31 ff.) and uses it for the underlying atmosphere in his stories, and at the same time (in accordance with his famous theory of short story) consistently introduces formal innovations which all results in the emergence of the short story proper.

The framework of the present study does not allow me to discuss in detail the Poe's closeness to the German Romanticism. It does seem necessary, though, to emphasize that the new genre emerged from that very need to express the new tendency as effectively as possible. The traditional symmetrical structure of novella, linearly oriented towards the central event, was appropriate for the depiction of unusual, surprising, fatal, but at the same time comprehensible events taken from the every day life of an ordinary person; however, its symmetry of form and subject matter which situated the events, although unusual, into the known, familiar world could not represent well that new, different tendency which stressed the human experience of discontinuity, uncertainty, irrationality, unknowability, the reality of the transcendence—that is of what the German Romantics called *das Unheimliche*. How different this tendency is, can perhaps best be demonstrated with the comparison of the formal differences between the novella and *Kurzgeschichte* (i. e. the short story proper) suggested by the German theoreticians Ruth Kilchenmann and Erna Kritsch Neuse.<sup>3</sup>

Their main arguments could be summarized as follows:

The novella is structured symmetrically, it rises linearly towards its climax and then declines, the sequence of events is logical and chronologically ordered; the short story proper, on the other hand, can be linear but also erratic, arabesquely reduced or elliptical, the events do not necessarily follow a logical or-

der;

The novella usually has a well-developed exposition, the main character is presented in considerable detail, also the time and place of the action are often defined; the short story proper more often starts with an open beginning, the main character simply emerges before an unprepared reader, the time and place of the action are usually not indicated;

The action in the novella is externally motivated and psychologically well-grounded; in the short story proper the motifs often remain unexplained, mysterious, barely sensed;

The novella depicts the hero against the background of a specific social environment, the narrator is omniscient in most cases in a third-person narrative; in the short story proper there is usually no concrete social setting; the heroes do not develop specific features of their characters, they do not develop psychologically; the point of view is almost always unified, the narrator is personal or neutral in mostly first-person narrative;

The action of the novella is explicit; in the short story proper the larger part of action is just sensed;

After reaching its climax the novella gradually closes down and finishes with a short report, with a general reflection, in more traditional novellas even with a moral; the short story proper, on the other hand, usually finishes with an open ending,<sup>4</sup> it stops abruptly, with a clear cut, usually unexpected, and its story remains uncompleted.

Those characteristics should not be understood as a watertight definition of both genres but more as the expression of their inner tendency. In accordance with this tendency, the typical novella is usually a third-person narrative with an elaborate exposition and characterization. The action usually intensifies linearly towards its climax which is an unusual event or—in the modern novella—a revelation, epiphany. At the end there is the denouement which concludes the story narratively and also metaphysically. On the other hand, the typical short story is usually a first-person narrative, without exposition and with incomplete characterization. Its action can be linearly or erratically intensified towards its climax which in a moment of crisis often concludes abruptly. The ending remains open, there is no narrative or metaphysical completion, there is, however, usually some irrational note present. The typical, classical novella is somehow more objective, while the typical short story proper is more subjective, and above all more nihilistic than the novella—and this metaphysical uncertainty makes the short story proper a more suitable medium for the expression of the feeling of *unheimlich*.

The development of both genres can be traced in the Euro-American post-romantic literature. Even after Goethe, Hoffmann and Kleist the traditional novella still remains important. It was developed by—to name just a few—Keller, Maupassant, Chekhov, L. N. Tolstoy, Pirandello, Th. Mann, Huxley, O' Connor, Camus, Hemingway, and in some works also Borges (e. g. *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*). However, it is the short story proper that nowadays grows in importance. We could trace its history from Hoffmann and Poe through Maupassant (e. g. *The Necklace*),

Brecht (*The Augsburg Chalk Circle*), Sartre (*The Wall*), Faulkner, Böll, Borchert to Atwood, Borges or Carver.

It is of extreme importance that in Germany the short story proper develops intensively in the period of crisis after the Second World War, and in some other literatures, for example in Canadian, American, Latin-American, Serbian, Croatian and Slovene, in the period of postmodernism—i. e. in the periods which could be called the periods of ontological uncertainty. The short story proper is structurally (the fragmentary state, ellipsis, open-endedness, subjectivity) and functionally (evoking the feeling of irrational, incomprehensible, unmanageable, mysterious, *unheimlich*) appropriate for the expression of feelings of uncertainty and crisis which appear in those periods. It could even be claimed that this characteristic makes the short story proper the quintessence of short fiction, of course, if we agree with Charles May's understanding of the function of short fiction: "Short fiction originated with the human need to narratize the perception of spiritual eruptions in the midst of the profane everyday world – those objectifications of fear or desire that Mircea Eliade has called the 'sacred' or 'true reality' for primitive man and woman." (May, "Forms of Reality: Reality in the Modern Short Story" 1993, 370). Metaphysical nihilism (if I may use Heidegger's term) of the modern person does not allow the holy to appear as the absolute or "true reality". The first ones to experience this with all its brutality were the romantics, who therefore strove for the reintegration of the holy into the everyday, secular life. And I believe that it was this double feeling of metaphysical groundlessness on the one hand and the intuitive sensation of the holy on the other that resulted in the emergence of a new genre: the short story proper.

The distinction between the novella and the short story proper and the argument that the latter is the genre of ontological uncertainty, however, do not cancel all ambiguities and differences in the understanding of the term short story which were mentioned at the beginning of this paper. It seems obvious at first sight that the terms novella and short story proper as used in some European literary studies do not cover the whole scope indicated by the American term short story. With that claim I do not only suggest that a more detailed analysis of the development in the last century should show significant, sometimes even radical modifications of the formal features of both genres while at the same time preserving their fundamental functions—the short fiction by the authors of American metafiction (eg. Barth, Barthelme, Coover) could certainly and rightfully be classified as prose of ontological uncertainty and should therefore be considered as pertaining to the genre of short story proper, although it does not usually show all those formal features presented above. However, there also arises the question whether the most characteristic form of what is called (according to many contemporary scholars, eg. May 1994) "the modern short story" does not reveal a different "formative will", as Lukács would put it, and consequently a new genre. I have in mind here that particular form of short story that does not grow from the legacy of Poe, but from that of Chekhov and Joyce (and which could also be found in Faulkner, I. Shaw, Steinbeck, Munro, H. Porter and to some extent also in Carver and Bartheleme) and which is characterized by a certain "impressionism" and the absence of event. I leave this question unanswered; it seems necessary to con-

clude with an open question to indicate that the short story does not allow theory to suggest any univocal and final definitions. Which is surely better for the future of the short story as an artistic form.

### Notes

1. See Charles May, "Forms of Reality: Reality in the Modern Short Story," *Style* 27 (1993): 369–379.
2. The importance of this *unheimlich* for the (Romantic) short fiction could also be found in May where considering the short story he discusses—with reference to Buber and Cassirer—the "uncanny moments" and "the momentary deity" (May, Charles. "The Nature of Knowledge in Short Fiction." *The New Short Story Theories*. Ed. Charles May (Athens: Ohio U P, 1994) 131–143. 137, 139).
3. See Kilchenmann 1968; Neuse, Erna Kritsch. *Die deutsche Kurzgeschichte* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1980).
4. The term is ambiguous because different authors bestow it with different and even contradictory meanings; see. Sugano, Marian Zwerling. "Beyond What Meets the Eye: The Photographic Analogy in Cortázar's Short Stories," *Style* 27 (1993): 332–351. 333; Clark, Miriam Marty. "After Epiphany: American Stories in the Postmodern Age," *Style* 27 (1993): 387–394. 389; Good, Graham. "Notes on the Novella." *The New Short Story Theories*. Ed. Charles E. May (Athens: Ohio U P, 1994) 147–164. 163; Kilchenmann 12, 18.

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# The Historical Novel, Ideology and Re-organization of the Semiosphere: the Case of the Slovene Historical Novel

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**Abstract** This essay intends to present some characteristic changes, i. e. , the inventions of motifs (referring to some new materials) and inventions in narrative strategies in the genre of the historical novel in the case of the Slovene historical novel, i. e. , the historical novel written in the Slovene language and referring to the Slovene historical-cultural context, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, or more precisely, after 1990, when the Slovene cultural community, self-identified as a national community, gained state-political emancipation. These new political-historical conditions, as well as the agent of post-structuralist thought, strengthened the tendency to multiply the historical imagination and the concepts of history or historiography. Explaining the innovations in motifs and narrative strategies of the Slovene historical novel will be based on a short theoretical introduction, which takes into account the agent of post-structuralist metahistory, of political history, J. M. Lotman's concept of the semiosphere and its accommodation to the ideological-critical perspective on the genre of the historical novel.

**Key words** historical novel; semiosphere; ideology; historiography; Drago Jančar

Many single cultural communities of the territories of Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, including the Slovene cultural community,<sup>1</sup> have constructed their cultural identities since the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the integrative ideological agent of nationalism(s). Nationalisms also invented the past(s) of these communities as the foundations of their contemporaneity. This invention of tradition was intensely at work in the intertextual field of relations between the single national literature and national historiography, i. e. , between fictional and scientific (historiographical) writing the past in the semiosphere of a single cultural community, identified by itself as a nation. During the 20th century, nationalism(s) which arose and developed themselves in the territories of Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, experienced very serious rivalry from universalistic political ideology of different kinds, i. e. , either from totalitarian political ideology (for example Communism, Fascism and Nazism) or from authoritarian political ideology (for example the ideology of political Catholicism)<sup>2</sup>. In

these political-historical conditions, a complex relationship developed between nationalist and universalistic political ideologies: this complex relationship includes the relation of appropriation (or consolidation) as well as the relation of opposition in a set of possible concrete intertwinings. The historic imagination which was generated by these ideological intertwinings was also represented and at the same time created by the genre of the historical novel and its intertextual relations with scientific historiography.

### **The Agent of Post-Structuralist Thought in Contemporary Historical Imagination**

The post-structuralist *episteme* articulates the contemporary imagination of the past by recognizing the multi-dimensional and complex character of the past. From the post-structuralist perspective, the great narration of the past written by non-fictional, i. e., scientific traditional historiography, is the construction of the past, which is formed by the narrator's focalization and ideological perspective. From the 1970s onwards, metahistory has argued the representational affinity between scientific historiography and (narrative) fiction, which is based on the common patterns of narration, as well as on a clear recognition of the myth-creating capacity of the historical imagination. "Histories gain their explanatory power by processing data into stories. Those stories take their shape from what White [Hayden White] calls 'emplotment', the process through which the facts contained in 'chronicles' are encoded as components of plots. . . . No historical event can itself constitute a story, tragic or ironic; it can only be presented as such from a particular historian's narrative point of view. The event emerges as a plotted story, which takes on meaning when it is combined with other elements in the limited number of generic plot structures by which a series of events can be constituted. . . . These generic deep-plot structures are shared between historians and their audiences by virtue of their participation in a common culture." (Leitch 1710) Based on this re-questioning of the capacities of historiography, metahistory has been able to include the theory of representation<sup>3</sup>: "the main principle of the aesthetic turn is that history as a narrative representation can only be compared with other narrative representations, and not with the past itself" (Munslow 22).

Another way of reading the past can be based on the concept of the semiosphere. The term semiosphere was invented by Yuri M. Lotman, who has passed as the central representative of the Tartu school of semiotics (Estonia).

### **Lotman's Concept of the Semiosphere and Semiosis of the Past**

In Lotman's opinion, every living culture is organized in the form of a certain space and time; it can't exist outside this organisation, i. e., the semiosphere, which enables communication within a certain culture. The semiosphere is also "the semiotic space necessary for the existence and functioning of languages, not the sum total of different languages; in a sense the semiosphere has a prior existence and is in constant interaction with languages . . . a generator of information" (Lotman 123, 127). However, the semiosphere is not a totally uniform (cultural) space; a mechanism of

multiplication of its languages is built into every living culture. This mechanism is at work also in the opposite direction, i. e. , in the direction of unifying the languages.

The interrelationship between cultural memory and its self-reflection is like a constant dialogue: texts from chronologically earlier periods are brought into culture, and, interactive with contemporary mechanisms, generate an image of the historical past, which culture transfers into the past and which like an equal partner in a dialogue, affects the present. (Lotman 272)

Operating in this sense, the semiosphere creates (and at the same time is also created by) the diachronic change of imagination and representation of the past. However, these imaginations and representations differ among themselves in the synchronic aspect, too, while there is a plurality of different languages at work inside the very moment or situation of the semiosphere. In the synchronic aspect, the representations of the past which appear on the borders of the semiosphere differ from those representations which form (and which at the same time are generated predominantly by) the centre of a certain semiosphere. The dynamic relation between the centre, which tends to unify semiospheric languages, i. e. , to generate temporarily predominant historiographical conventions, and the borders of the semiosphere can be read in the language of scientific historiography, as well as in the language of historiographical fiction, i. e. , in their intertextual relations.

### **The Semiosphere, Nationalism(s) and the Historical Novel**

Unlike scientific (historiographical) language, which tends to semantic monovalency, the explicitly fictional character of literature and (historiographical) fiction's tendency to semantic polyvalency enables a more complex, i. e. , less (methodologically or even ideologically) reductive representation of the past. "Myths, speculations, guesses, and seemingly illogical connections, which 'have no right to exist' in [scientific] historiography, enable the literarization of history. On the one hand, this produces great surpluses in the understanding of complex historical developments (e. g. , addressing moral and political dilemmas that literary characters can resolve, while historical facts can neither confirm nor deny them). On the other hand, this allows literature to suffer great shortcomings" (Pelikan 168). However, in many single cultural communities of Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe which maintained themselves in the conditions of political non-emancipation, literature (identified as national literature) contracted the pragmatic (non-fictional) function of arguing the foundations of political emancipation of the cultural community (the so-called cultural syndrome).

By taking over this function, literature was used (or tended to operate) as an indispensable agent in state-formative, integrative constructing of the common past. In the domain of historiographical fiction, a privileged position was bestowed on the genre of the historical novel, which enables representing the past in the form of the great story of a single cultural community. In this sense, the historical novel should aim even to fulfil the demands of the type of the novel-epopee as an attempt to regain

the lost “totality” of a (mythical) community of the epic period.<sup>4</sup> In such cultural-political conditions, the historical novel, otherwise read as an explicitly fictional great story of the past and despite the principal dialogic complexity of its semiosphere languages, paradoxically tended to be read as a representation of the unique truth of the past, i. e., history, using narrative strategies which are characteristic of the textual unifying of different voices of the past, such as the authorial narrator’s position.

In the tradition of the Slovene historical novel, such a narrative strategy is at work in the fairly typical case of Fran Saleški Finžgar’s novel *Pod svobodnim soncem* (*Under the Liberated Sun*) (1912). Finžgar’s novel represents the period of migration of peoples, i. e., the combats between the Byzantine empire’s army and, among others, different Slavic tribes, which resulted in the permanent settlement of Slavic tribes in the territories of Southeastern Europe. In the novel, these combats were considered as the beginning of the imagined Slovene history, based on the protagonist’s affiliation to his tribe in the sense of the future national community. However, as in Sinkiewicz’s novels, the religious (in this case, Christian) agent co-operates with the agent of national ideology. Henryk Sienkiewicz’s trilogy of the novels (1883, 1886, 1902), which refers to the Polish history of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, intensely suggest the opinion of the inseparable religious and national (in this case, Catholic and Polish national) character of the cultural community.

The authorial narrator’s position in the historical novel creates more or less obvious intertextual relations between this (traditional) variant of the historical novel and scientific historiography, i. e., its pragmatic integrative function in the cultural space, which constructed its identity by the national ideology. This process of unifying the languages of historiographical fiction and scientific historiography was gradually generated by the centre of the semiosphere of the Slovene cultural space in the last decades before the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy (1918), to which the Slovene cultural community belonged in the state-political sense.

### **Centre, Borders and Ideological Unifications of the Past**

Relations between the centre and borders which dynamically maintain the inner organisation of the semiosphere seem to be of special importance for those cultural spaces which, before their re-organisation to suit the post-modern present time, were explicitly engaged in self-organizing by the (modern) progressivist conceptualization of time. In the semiospheres of smaller cultural communities located in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, among which the Slovene cultural community also appeared, the dominant ideology (dominant in the very temporal sense of being the most permanently integrative for the community) seems to be national ideology, accommodated to the teleological concept of history. This accommodation was represented by Bogo Grafenauer’s *Zgodovina slovenskega naroda* (*History of the Slovene Nation*) (1954 – 1974) in five volumes. It served as a widely acknowledged and highly valued Slovene scientific historiographical reference.

However, the universalistic political ideologies of different kinds, like the ideology of political Catholicism, Communism, Fascism, and Nazism has gradually moved

to the centre of these semiospheres, especially since about the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These universalistic political ideologies strove to accommodate national ideology, i. e. the different nationalisms of these semiospheres. In this accommodating process, a double relation developed between single national and universalistic political ideologies, also the relation of opposition, as well as the relation of appropriation (consolidation) in a plurality of varieties. This process was generated by the centre of the gradually re-organized semiosphere, which in this period tended to unify the different languages of the semiosphere in the sense of ideological accommodation.

The historical novel, written in Slovene and referring to the past of the Slovene cultural community, does not reveal a very explicit tendency to distribute this or that universalistic political ideology. Generally (but not exclusively) it tends slightly to the political left. Such fictional representations of history can be read also in the more general aspect of the literary current of renovated (social) realism and naturalism of the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Political History as the Agent of Historical Representation in the Slovene Cultural Space after 1941**

The Slovene cultural community, which also identified itself as the Slovene national community during the course of the 19th century, was politically located in another multi-national state (the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia) after World War II. Within this state, the national ideology partly consolidated and partly opposed the universalistic political ideology of this multi-national state, i. e. , the socialistic concretization of communism.

In terms of appropriation (consolidation), the significant (cultural-) historical fact can be found already during World War II on Slovene territory (1941 – 1945): the military troupes of the partisan movement which in Slovenia revolted against the Nazi and Fascist occupation and at the same time acted for the communist revolution, were often named after those Slovene poets and writers who wrote literature of special national importance or of value for the Slovene cultural community. Giving the partisan military troops the names borrowed from the Slovene literary history gave mytho-creative cultural-historical legitimacy to the so-called national liberation combat and revolution in the nationally self-identified community.

With regard to opposition, a significant (cultural-) historical fact can also be found during World War II in Slovenia: some members of the Slovene community did not support the communist revolution. This revolt, mostly associated with religious reasons, led to collaboration with Nazi and Fascist institutions in Slovenia, together with their military troupes, and to civil war. After World War II, Slovene political emigrants formed Slovene cultural communities in non-Slovene territories, particularly in Argentina; these small communities maintained the national identity of the emigrants by their own national-cultural activities (e. g. systematically publishing the classics and contemporary authors of Slovene literature and texts of a historiographical character). Such a mytho-creative use of national literature and the national past gave a cultural-historical legitimacy to the political emigrants' communities, too, almost in

the same way as to the participants of the communist revolution in Slovenia.

Within the socialist multi-national state, constituted after World War II, the dominant political ideology was to be the universalistic, i. e., communist ideology, (in the Slovene case) based on the relation of appropriation or consolidation with national ideology, as outlined above. This (more or less) dominant relation of consolidation was generated by the centre of the semiosphere. However, the scientific historiography of this period seems to be a more unified language than the historical novel of the highest artistic value. The Slovene novel after the 1970s, for example Vitomil Zupan's modern novel *Menuet za kitaro; na 25 strelov* (*Minuet for 25-shot Guitar*) (1975) more explicitly articulates doubts about the communist regime of the partisan movement and the post-war situation, written by the strategy of the first-person's personal narrator's position. More precisely, it articulates or represents a doubt (just) as to the true worth of the progressive (communist) universalistic political ideology which through its institutions and practices creates a regime of power, annihilating the value of a single individual and his/her (sometimes lethal) experience of the past.

However, the more traditionally conceptualized (realistic) historical novel, characterized by the narrative strategy of the authorial narrator's position, maintained its general intertextual relation with traditional scientific historiography. This intertextual relation is clearly manifested by Tone Svetina's historical novel *Ukana* (*Stratagem*) (1965 – 1969) in three volumes. Svetina's novel was especially appreciated by the political regime, while it forms the past of the partisan movement on Slovene territory (1941 – 1945) to the great (hi)story of the Slovene cultural community (politically integrated into the multi-national state of Yugoslavia) from the ideological point of view, which was in this case the communist one. As a proof of the high value which was ascribed to this novel by the regime, the novel was re-made in the medium of a large picture book (1977), so that it could distribute its representation of the war past among the largest audience, forming its historical imagination in the imagined proper way.

Actual multiplication of the concepts of history in the Slovene semiosphere can be read no earlier than about the 1990s.<sup>5</sup> In the present-day Slovene cultural space, this multiplication of the intertextual relationship between fictional and scientific historiography is created by (and at the same time creates by itself) the agent of political history and the agent of the post-structuralist historical turn. Both of these agents motivate (and are motivated by) the re-questioning of former fictional and scientific representations of the past as history, as well as the capacities of historiography in accessing the (empirically inaccessible) past. One of the most significant signs of this general re-organization of the Slovene semiosphere after the 1990s seems to be the very multiplication of the concepts of history, which (paradoxically) articulates and creates the democratic policy of ideological pluralism as the contemporary unifying process of the semiospheric languages, which is generated by the centre of the semiosphere.

This multiplication appears in the scientific historiography written in Slovene, which has been divided into different sub-disciplines, such as oral history, micro-history, cultural history, mytho-critical history, etc., as well as into different ideolog-

ical points of view as the starting points for interpreting the past. However, this multiplication of the concepts of history, i. e. , the multiplication of historical representations appears as significant changes in the intertextual domain of the genre of the historical novel, after the 1990s written in Slovene and referring to the past of the Slovene cultural community. Even if not in a radical way, i. e. , as explicit historiographical metafiction, the contemporary (Slovene) historical novel articulates the post-structural re-questioning of history and at the same time multiplies the representations of the past by articulating either different concepts of history or, in a special case, the past in its stressfully unrestrained dialogical complexity.

What kinds of inventions can be read in the genre of the historical novel, co-operating in the process of pluralisation, i. e. , multiplication of the concepts of history and representations of the past?

### **The Slovene Historical Novel after 1990: Inventions of Motifs in Revisions of Slovene History**

The first set of inventions includes inventions or re-using of motifs which thematize the materials of the past, which were ignored or ideologically oppressed in the previous process of intertextual unification of scientific and fictional historiography, nor were they considered a proper subject for motivating the historical imagination. The historical imagination should be principally led by the relation of appropriation (or consolidation) between the universalistic (communist) political ideology and national ideology. The new or re-used motifs can be read as signs of the new semiosis of the past. In this innovation or re-using of motifs, the past has been presented in different narrative strategies, which above all refer to the degree of the narrator's mastery over the past, i. e. , to the degree of the narrator's capacity for interpreting the past in order to articulate the truth of it.

The first narrative strategy follows the pattern of traditional scientific historiography and (social-realistic) fictional historiography, re-using the authorial narrator's position. The invention refers to the expanded, more complex past of the cultural community which is now subjected to historical revision from the predominant perspective of ideological pluralism. Especially the period 1900 – 1940/45 is the focus of historical revision, while in this period different universalistic political ideologies (particularly the ideology of political Catholicism and communist ideology), moving in the centre of the semiosphere, tried to accommodate the national ideology of the cultural community. In this revisionist historiographical focus, the past of this period also appears as, in some way, real or actual foundations of the ideological pluralism of the period after the 1990s. Between 1945 and about 1970, this complex past was also represented either by way of a more or less reductive selection of motifs or in a negative evaluation, i. e. , thematizations of such motifs as the Catholic priest, Nazi officer, wealthy peasant or countryman, rich industrialist, etc. All of these social roles could be developed to the function of negative icons, i. e. , representations of the anti-communist stand, annihilated by intertextually unified scientific and fictional historiography. All of the social types in this function appear in Tone Svetina's parti-

san historical novel mentioned above, which by the intensive presence of the implied author and by narrating from the authorial narrator's position forms the emplotment of past events from the ideological perspective to the common truth of the past of this period. The same pattern of the authorial narrator's position or the indisputable capacity for recognizing the truth of the past appears after 1990, namely in Miloš Mikeln's novel *Veliki voz* (*The Great Bear*) (1992), with the significant distinction of a different ideological perspective in presenting the social structure of the Slovene community in the period about 1900 – 1940 to the largest extent. In this novel, the individuals which represent the above-mentioned social types are not developed to the function of negative icons of the past; on the contrary, they represent a dialogical plurality of voices, i. e., ideological stands and more complex world views in order to represent the complexity of the so called foundational past period of the Slovene cultural community. However, this dialogical plurality and its result of complexity of the past in another way articulates (and co-operates in the process of) unifying the historiographical languages generated by the centre of the semiosphere, which principally privileges the resisting national ideology, accommodated to the plural co-existence of different universalistic political ideologies and world views. The contemporary historical novel, using the narrative strategy of the authorial narrator's position, can also form the great narration as the history of the nation. The contemporary Slovene historical novel can also maintain the contiguity and coherence of past events, categorizing the Slovene cultural space as to the examined temporal vertical, by which it maintains the intertextual relation to traditional historiography, its preoccupation with political history and its formation of the great story of (Slovene) history. This kind of multiplication of representations of history, maintaining the privileged position of the national ideology, also gained the national annual prize for the novel.

Mikeln's novel *Poročnik z Vipote* (*The Lieutenant from Vipota*) (2002) further develops the representation of national history, emplotting the past situation of World War II on Slovene territory. However, the continuity of the national history, based on causality, is now projected onto the individual life course of a single protagonist, who from one political-ideological orientation (of a Home Guard lieutenant) passes over to another (a partisan soldier). His final role is that of a British agent.

The second narrative strategy, re-used in the course of historical revision and as one aspect of multiplications of representing history, is the third-person variant of the personal narrator's position. This narrative strategy, used in Alojz Rebula's historical novel *Nokturno za Primorsko* (*Nocturnal for the Littoral*) (2004), for example, explicitly represents the oppressed materials of the past of the national community during the period about 1900 – 1945. These materials refer to the anti-communist ideological position of the Catholic clergy, which in the civil war period (about 1941 – 1945) often resulted in murders of the priests. These oppressed materials of the past are also thematized as newly invented or re-used motifs. The priest as protagonist of this anti-communist, in this case religious stand, is positively evaluated by the implied author which is invisibly at work. The technique of the stream of consciousness, formed by the third person variant of the personal narrator's position, intensifies the direct representation of the priest's experience of the civil war and strengthens the

reader's empathy towards the victim of (the communist) revolution. This revision, or political-ideological reevaluation of history accommodates the national ideology to the universalist religious world view, in some way following the practice of the ideology of political Catholicism. Representing just one ideological stand of the historical period being discussed certainly does not articulate the ideologically pluralistic policy, generated by the centre of the semiosphere. However, the historical representation of Rebula's novel co-operates in creating this plurality as one voice of it, i. e. , in the role of possessing knowledge of one part of the truth of the past. This historical novel obviously maintains the intertextual relation to contemporary Slovene scientific historiography. The novel was also awarded the national prize for the novel.

The third narrative strategy for articulating an (in this case more slight) invention or re-using the motifs can be identified as the third person personal narrator's position, referring to the author's life. However, these novels do not form the genre of autobiography, which co-operated in the process of multiplying representations of the past since the period of Modernism (which in Slovene literature reached its peak during the 1960s and the 1970s). The protagonists of these novels do not represent any exposed social role of the so-called public past; on the contrary, they represent just the very individual, i. e. , their own life course. This life course is of course intertwined with the agent of the political-historical changes. The narration also intertwines the subjectively important signs of the so-called private past (in the function of leit-motifs, or symbols) with the signs of the public past. In this strategy, the past presents itself in its open complexity, i. e. , not being able to reach its final interpretation, or truth. It also cannot be reduced to any ideological representation of the past, especially not in the form of great narrative. This narrative strategy was used, for example, in Nedeljka Pirjevec's novel *Saga o kovčku* (*The Story of the Suitcase*) (2003) and Jože Snoj's *Gospod Pepi* (*Mister Pepi*) (2000). This narrative strategy of representing the past reveals its intertextual relationship with contemporary scientific historiography's sub-discipline, namely micro-history. In this aspect, it co-operates in the contemporary multiplication of the concepts of history.

### **The Slovene Historical Novel after 1990: Inventions of Forming the Past**

One of the most significant inventions for forming the past in the course of revising Slovene history appears already in 1984. This invention includes representing the past partly from an explicit futurological point of view; however, this futurology enables knowledge about the history of the present time and in this aspect is the fictional one, i. e. , the falsification of futurology. It is developed by explicitly multiplying the narrator's position, which alternates the third person personal narrator's position with the first person personal narrator's position, as well as with the authorial narration which is powerlessly directed to the future, i. e. , generalized results of the represented historical situation, viewed by the knowledge of the present times. This technique was significantly used by the German writer Alfred Döblin in his novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929). In this narrator's position, the grammatical past and present tense of the narration changes to the future tense. This narrative strategy, by using which the past gets its judgement or generalized truth, appears in Drago Jančar's historical novel

*Northern Lights* (1984). “Shortly after that the facades of the buildings will sport the name of the victorious Red Army, and just when the street activists will have gotten people used to the new name, the Red Army will drop to the pavement, too, and from then on this will be Revolution Square. . . . A short while later, as hammers drive nails into the tobacconist’s coffin, his place in the shop will be taken by a comrade who would never even think of comparing this piece of the world, which she stares at in boredom for most of the day, to a hart, and the streets to arteries.” (Jančar 72) This judgement can be simply summarized by the word catastrophe, which certainly could not be used in the former historiographical interpretations of the Slovene past about 1939, guided by progressive universalistic political ideology. Jančar’s novel does not explicitly maintain the intertextual relation with contemporary Slovene scientific historiography. In a more general way it co-operates in the revision of Slovene history, produced in different ways by scientific and fictional historiography in the contemporary period of multiplying conceptualizations of the (Slovene) past. However, Jančar’s novel also maintains the intertextual relation with historio-critical fiction, namely by quotation-like fragments, referring to Döblin’s novel.

Two significant Slovene novelistic re-formings, or multiplications of the concepts of history through their whole texts draw attention directly to the post-structuralist questioning of historiography, including the modern conceptualization of irreversible and progressive time, as well as the absolute legacy of the great (hi)stories, constructed by traditional historiographies.

The first kind of invention in historical imagination and historiographical representation in the context of the Slovene historical novel uses the montage technique: the text of Rudi Šeligo’s novel *Izguljeni sveženj* (*The Lost Bundle*) (2002), awarded a national prize, creates the effect of discontinuity by setting the indefinite crossings of the protagonist through time and space, dispersed to approximately recognizable times (from about 2000 back to about the 1930s) and territories, i.e., more or less well-known historical or trans-historical situations. This dispersion of chronotope creates incessant metamorphoses of the protagonist, who appears in the roles of a contemporary businessman, a participant in the Spanish civil war, a professional revolutionary, a partisan soldier, the shepherd and probably also as a variant of the biblical figure of doubting Thomas. In this way, the (Slovene) past presents itself as an uncaptured complexity of meanings which cannot be fixed in any final signifiant. The protagonist’s vague identity through the set of metamorphoses is maintained just in the vague feeling of his ethical determination, namely that he (in his opinion) carries the tradition across the thresholds of history. Rudi Šeligo’s novel therefore articulates the post-structuralist doubt concerning history and at the same time relativizes the former Slovene representations of (Slovene) history. In doing this, it creates one of the most obvious representations of the multiplication of the concepts of history.

The second kind of invention in historiographical representation in the context of the Slovene historical novel is created by the allegorical textual strategy of narration which, reminding one of mytho-criticism, confronts two types of myth in order to reveal the myth as the base of historical imagination. This mytho-critical form of invention appears in Drago Jančar’s novel *Graditelj* (*The Constructor*) (2006). The narra-

tion also confronts the pre-modern, i. e. , classical myth of Daedalus (the constructor of the mythical labyrinth) and the modern political-ideological type of myth which is revealed as a representation of modern nihilism. The modern myth as the historical foundation of a single progressive political ideology is of course based on the modern concept of time. Because of this (modern) temporality, the modern myth annihilates its very essence.<sup>6</sup> In Jančar's novel, the classical myth serves to annihilate the modern communist myth. The common reference of both myths is the labyrinth, or the prison in the sense of Michel Foucault's ideological-critical interpretation of Jeremy Bentham's *panopticon* as the space of total surveillance. Both of the narrators, of whom one acts as the protagonist, too, interpret the practice of progressive political ideology by using the classical myth's motifs. The narration also systematically reveals the modern regime's construction of history as a myth; moreover, as a myth of temporary value. This mytho-critical tendency of the novel intertextually refers to contemporary scientific historiography's sub-discipline, i. e. , mytho-criticism, as well as to one course of contemporary Slovene historiography.

To conclude; Slovene historical novels, discussed in this article, also represent fictional historiography in its intertextual relationship with scientific historiography. This historiographic intertextuality creates and is at the same time created by the centre of the semiosphere of the Slovene cultural space between about 1900 and 2000. The centre of the semiosphere generated this process of unifying the different (historiographical) languages of the semiosphere in the wider range of accommodating the national ideology to the two different universalistic political ideologies, i. e. , the ideology of political Catholicism and later Communism. The semiosphere of the contemporary Slovene cultural space has been re-organized by the agent of post-structuralist thought, as well as by the agent of the political-historical changes about the 1990s. This change is articulated by the multiplication of the concepts of history in the contemporary Slovene historical novel. It is of course generated by the centre of the semiosphere of the contemporary Slovene cultural space which in this aspect paradoxically unifies different languages of the semiosphere, representing them as articulations of contemporary (Slovene) ideological pluralism.

## Notes

1. This essay will use the denotation "Slovene cultural community" mostly by taking into account the fact of the common natural language, named the Slovene language, which was of extreme importance for maintaining the integrity of the community during the political-historical changes in European territories.
2. The distinction between totalitarian and authoritarian political ideologies is based on the arguments of S. G. Payne and of E. Hanisch. See Stanley G. Payne. "The Concept of Fascism." *Who were the Fascists: Social Roots of European Fascism*. eds. S. Larsen, et al. Oslo, Bergen (Tromsø; Universitetsforlaget, 1980) 14 - 25. See also Ernst Hanisch, *Die Ideologie des Politischen Catholicismus in Österreich 1918 - 1938*. Wien, Salzburg; Geyer, 1977.
3. See Frank R. Ankersmit. *Historical Representation*. Stanford; Stanford University Press, 2001.
4. In Lukács' opinion, "[t]he artist's epic intention, his desire to arrive at a world beyond the problematic, is aimed only at an immanently Utopian ideal of social forms and structures; therefore

it does not transcend these forms and structures generally but only their historically given concrete possibilities — and this is enough to destroy the immanence of form.” See Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the novel*. Trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1974)144.

5. This approximate date refers to the political-historical processes that include *perestroika* and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the state-political emancipation of the (North) East-European national communities (for example, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia) and the Central-European national communities (for example, the Czech Republic, Slovakia); either in the form of peaceful constitutions of single states or through military combats, as in Slovenia (in its 10-day war) and in former Yugoslavia with its longlasting wars in (for example) Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

6. See Vanesa Matajc. “Communist Revolution and Daedalus’Labyrinth: Confronting Two Concepts of Time, Confronting Two Types of Myth.” *Interlitteraria* 13 (2008): 56 – 72.

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# The Voice We Need to Listen to: A Comment on Perloff's Poetic License

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**Abstract** In the voice Perloff added when she made comparative studies on Modernist and Postmodernist lyric in *Poetic License*, we hear three things: her understanding of poetic license, her view on modernism and postmodernism, and her critical formula formalism + cultural studies. It is this voice that we need to listen to as it is distinctive and remarkable, particularly today when we are puzzled about what's going on "after theory".

**Key words** Marjorie Perloff; poetic license; postmodernism; critical formula

## I. The Sense of *Poetic License*

Marjorie Perloff's *Poetic License: Essays on Modernist and Postmodernist Lyric* (1990) consists of 15 essays which "were written between 1984 and 1989; all but three have been published previously" (2). Though a collection of essays, it can be taken to be a monograph that deals with poetic license.

Right at the very beginning of the "Introduction", Perloff discusses the word *license* etymologically: "*License* as permit, as permission from an outside authority; *license* as defiance of authority, as failure to obtain a permit — the poetry of our time has navigated with difficulty between these options" (1). Her introductory remarks about the sense of poetic license are 1) that "For all the recent talk of *opening up the canon*, ... in practice *opening* rarely means more than the replacement of an X by a Y" (1-2), and 2) that Ginsberg's "Howl" is "a poem very much rooted in its late-fifties cold war moment — a poem ... that, I submit, no one, not even Ginsberg himself, would write in the late eighties" as it "can be (and has been) viewed primarily as a cultural and historical artifact" (3). The message these remarks convey is that "poetic license", which is obviously connected to the formation of canon, is inseparable from its culture and "moment".

## II. Perloff's View on Modernism and Postmodernism

In the collection Perloff offers "rereadings and reframings of some notable modernists" and "takes up problematics of contemporary poetry and poetics" (4). She even reads writers outside USA and UK such as Khlebnikov and Barthes. Just as T. L. Cooksey puts it, "While focusing on British and American poetry, Perloff crosses linguistic

boundaries to examine the larger context, including the work of Khlebnikov and French translations of American poets.” From these rereadings and reframings, we can see her attitude towards modernism and postmodernism. In this collection as well as in *The Poetics of Indeterminacy: Rimbaud to Cage* (1981), *The Dance of the Intellect: Studies in the Poetry of the Pound Tradition* (1985), *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant-Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (1986), *Radical Artifice: Writing Poetry in the Age of Media* (1991) and *21<sup>st</sup>-Century Modernism: The “New” Poetics* (2002), Perloff seems to say (and she does say in an interview) that “the distinction many of us made between modernism and postmodernism no longer seems as valid” (Luo 6) and that there are “deep-level connections and affinities between modernism and postmodernism” (Barry).

Take Essay 11 for example. In the essay, Perloff points out that “[t]wo things were safely ignored”. First, although Merwin’s free verse “may have seemed” enormously innovative, it “was nowhere as explosive as the free verse Pound and Williams were writing by 1916” (238). Second, what “should have struck the critics as slightly odd” should not be such seemingly explosive poems as *The Drunk of Furnace* but “that a poetry so seemingly explosive ... was routinely published in the *New Yorker*, *Poetry*, the *Hudson Review*, and *Harper’s* — hardly organs of the avant-garde” (238). Perloff’s argument is twofold here: first, if Merwin’s poem is explosive, its explosiveness does not go beyond Pound’s and Williams’s; and second, Merwin’s poem may have been explosive but was published in the traditional magazines, and so it follows that what is “odd” is not Merwin’s poem but the critics who think Merwin’s poem is odd. In other words, Merwin’s poem’s explosiveness, if any, derives from such notable modernists as Pound and Williams.

Another example is Essay 12 where, when she discusses Blackburn’s poetry, Perloff comments: “Blackburn is a poet I personally feel I should admire. He carried on the Pound-Williams tradition” (252). Obviously, Perloff traces Blackburn’s postmodernity to Pound-Williams tradition in the same way.

Perloff’s argument for the “deep-level connections and affinities between modernism and postmodernism” is more manifest and stronger in her *21<sup>st</sup>-Century Modernism: The “New” Poetics* where she “critiques the most commonly held assumptions about postmodern poetry, assumptions which she proves to be hazy, contradictory, and historically ill-informed,” and “debunks” “the two most popular lines of thinking about postmodern poetry” (Lazer 182). Perloff thinks that postmodernist poets such as Frank O’Hara and John Ashbery “were indeed a breath of fresh air”, “[b]ut from the hindsight of the twenty-first century, their fabled ‘opening of the field’ was less revolution than restoration: a carrying-on, in somewhat a diluted form, of the avant-garde project that had been at the very heart of early modernism” (Perloff 2002: 2–3). She says: “Now that the long twentieth century is finally behind us, perhaps we can begin to see this embryonic phase with new eyes. Far from being irrelevant and obsolete, the aesthetic of early modernism has provided the seeds of the materialist poetic which is increasingly our own” (ibid. : 3). All these remarks show that, in Perloff’s view, postmodernism is deeply rooted in modernism, and is nothing more than the “second wave of modernism”.

Upon this view of Perloff's, Materer comments in his "Review of *Twenty-First-Century Modernism: The 'New' Poetics*": "Marjorie Perloff is one of the few critics who is essential to our understanding of contemporary American poetry. Without her we could not trace its roots in twentieth-century modernism so clearly or distinguish the innovative from the imitative poets" (Materer 628). Materer particularly mentions the functions of the quotation marks in the subtitle of the book and in the title of the last chapter. He says that "[t]he challenge of experimental modernism has been taken up by avant-garde poets such as Bernstein, Susan Howe, Lyn Hejinian, and Steve McCaffery" (ibid.), and that the "quotation marks [again] signal Perloff's skepticism about our understanding of 'modernism' and 'postmodernism'" (ibid.: 630). Materer's analysis is convincing, for indeed Perloff's use of quotation marks simply implies that the so-called "New" Poetics in the Twenty-First-Century is actually rooted in the Modernism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and that the so-called "Modernism" at the Millennium can be traced to the Modernism in the early decades of the last century. In an interview Perloff herself made her view quite clear: "From the perspective of the early twenty-first century, the distinction many of us made between modernism and postmodernism no longer seems as valid. Obviously, the world has changed enormously since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but I have come to believe that the real revolution, so far as the arts are concerned, occurred in the tumultuous years before World War I" (Luo 6). No doubt, this is to say "that unless we reappraise modernism, we cannot understand postmodernism" (Barry).

### III. Perloff's Critical Formula: Formalism + Cultural Studies

Perloff got her PhD in 1965, and this indicates that she was taught New Criticism and trained as a New Critic. "I was trained as a 'close reader,'" she admits (Luo 4). After 1965, America entered its so-called Poststructuralist Period. In the year of 1966 Derrida published his influential paper "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences", blowing a storm of poststructuralism in the United States. In the 1970s the "School of Yale" was established, and in 1979 they published *Deconstruction and Criticism* which is "taken to be the manifesto of the school" (Takahashi 29).

Perloff is always a close reader. She is so, as Miller observes, not only in her early works such as *Rhyme and Meaning in the Poetry of Yeats* (1970) and *The Poetic Art of Robert Lowell* (1973), but also in her later books in which "often she employs the same tools of formal and metrical analysis" (Miller 155).

But Perloff is definitely not confined to close reading. Somehow, just in her *Frank O'Hara: Poet among Painters* published in 1977 there is a change which might result from the storm of deconstruction. In the book Perloff reads O'Hara's work "as part of a matrix of related cultural and artistic activity, rather than isolating it, in the New Critical fashion, as a uniquely supercharged variety known as 'literature'". Her "[p]lacing poetry within a cultural continuum in this way quickly becomes the keynote of her approach. Instead of reading the 'words on the page' she reads the words (as she has said) off the page and into the immensely active urban and technological cultures from which innovative poetries invariably arise" (Barry).

However, Perloff is not totally open to deconstruction and poststructuralism; she is careful with and even resistant to them to some extent. For example, in the second essay in *Poetic License*, she says: “In the wake of deconstruction, one would think it no longer necessary to repeat the truism that the verbal signifier is not equivalent to its signifieds. But the current wave of ideologically motivated criticism has ushered in a curious form of backsliding. When, on the one hand, we talk theory, we continue to talk of ‘difference’ and ‘erasure,’ of ‘decenteredness’ and ‘supplementarity.’ When, on the other, we engage in practical criticism, whether of poetry or of prose, we read texts as if language were a mere conduit to a truth beyond it. X is a poem ‘about’ finding one’s sexual identity, Y is ‘about’ the horror of rape, Z is ‘about’ exchange value or commodity fetish. And so on” (51). Here Perloff tries to make us aware that although we theoretically talk about the gliding of signifiers when we read poetry, in the end we will talk about the signifieds and make a study into what the poem is “about”.

As to what kind of critic she is, Perloff herself has the following description:

I would describe myself as a formalist, a literary historian, and an evaluative comparatist critic. It is my conviction that the poetry or fiction that matters is always of its moment, that formal, structural, metrical, and even thematic choices are determined, to an appreciable extent, by the poet’s culture and place in history. At the same time, I believe that individual poets can transcend (a loaded verb, I know!) their culture, producing great work that acts not only as an index to their culture but also as a diagnosis and critique of it. (Luo 2)

Obviously, in these words and in her practical criticisms we hear Perloff’s distinctive voice: Formalism + Cultural Studies. Actually, a close reading of her *Poetic License* will confirm Perloff’s self description. In the collection, Perloff’s approach to poetry is New Criticism or Formalism, but she is definitely not confined to formalism. She does analyze and comment on form, structure, rhyme scheme, and theme of a poem, but unlike the New Critics, she does not simply stop there. Instead, she goes on to explore the poet’s culture and place in history which is behind the poem. And for this purpose she is varied in critical approach: apart from formalism there are other literary theories at her disposal. She says: “Mine, in any case, is a syncretist position. I draw, for example, on the Marxist criticism of Terry Eagleton but also on the post-structuralist insights of Roland Barthes, my favorite among the French theorists of his generation. Poetry, for Barthes and Eagleton as for Jakobson, cannot be understood thematically—what is it about—rather, the role of sound, visual patterning, syntax, and genre are central to our understanding” (Luo 3).

Although most of the essays in *Poetic License* “were written for specific occasions or commissions” (2), “[t]hose who have followed her work for many years know how important these ‘occasions’ of criticism and commentary have been for her voluminous published works” (Miller 153). Although the fifteen essays were written between 1984 – 1989, it is a very commendable effort she made to remind us, with these essays, that poetic license and canon formation are influenced and even deter-

mined by the culture and age they are in, and that there are “deep-level connections and affinities between modernism and postmodernism”. Although in the British and American academia in the 1980s, structuralism and poststructuralism were so privileged and prevalent that few critics would stick to New Criticism in their practice, as is described in David Lodge's novel *Small World*, “[o]ne of Perloff's great strengths as a critic and theorist, then, is that ... her work retains its independence and is not swept along with it” (Barry). “We need her distinctive voice more than ever as literary theory (which was instigated by Aristotle) enters its third millennium” (ibid.).

Yes, indeed we do need her unique critical formula Formalism + Cultural Studies, just because it sees not only the form of a poem and but also the culture the poem reflects. Particularly today when we are puzzled about what's going on “after theory”, isn't it necessary for us to remember Perloff's words: “there is no way of understanding poetry without close reading as well as comparison and contrast”? (Luo 3)

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# Striving for a New Critical Approach: Rereading *English Literature in the Perspective of Ethical Literary Criticism*

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**Abstract** Nie Zhenzhao and his colleagues are exemplarily successful in turning out their *English Literature in the Perspective of Ethical Literary Criticism*, an insightful book that merits our attention. It aims to search for a new critical approach to literature, say, ethical literary criticism. Nie does an admirable job of identifying a largely neglected area in literary studies that purport to reveal and unearth the ethical heart of British writers' vision in China. His methodology is forthright and clear as he strives for an ethical approach to English literature.

**Key words** Nie Zhenzhao; literary studies; ethical criticism

Literary theories have existed as long as literature has. "Literary theory" isn't only something we learn, but something we are now aware of. We already have acquainted with a theory, or several theories, about literature, but we may not bother to think about them or articulate them. Covering a variety of approaches to texts, literary theory points to sets of ideas that have greatly influenced the way literature is read. It originates from "all kinds of disciplines, including linguistics, psychology, anthropology, philosophy, history, economics, gender studies, ethnic studies, and political science," but has little to do directly with what is perceived as literature (Klages 4).

Recently, Chinese literary scholars have encountered such a perplexity trying very hard to examine factors that shape how literature is written and how we observe it. In this sense, Nie Zhenzhao and his colleagues are exemplarily successful in turning out their *English Literature in the Perspective of Ethical Literary Criticism*, an insightful book that merits our attention. It is a collection of essays, aiming, in the words of the editor, "to search for a new critical approach to literature, say, ethical literary criticism" (Nie, et al 4). Nie does an admirable job of identifying a largely neglected area in literary studies that purport to reveal and unearth the ethical heart of British writers' vision in China. His methodology is forthright and clear as he strives for an ethical approach to English literature.

The essays are consistently insightful, offering an estimation of each author's value and some attempt to place them in relation to an ethical perspective. Some of the chapters clearly stand out. Chapter One, for example, exhibits smart scholarship

on the moral tradition of British humanist fiction in which Geoffrey Chaucer and Thomas More are explored in depth. The discussion of the latter is an engagingly written analysis of More's ethical concerns in his *Utopia*. Thomas More, Li An argues, cultivated ideal societies and perfect cities in the fiction. In his opinion, more knew how to merge Christian doctrines and classical ideas of great minds such as Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, implanting in earthly life a humanist politics. He was optimistic about man and his utopian world is filled with harmony and hierarchy (qtd. in Nie et al 87). Chapter Two focuses on the ethical turn that features British humanist playwrighting. Here, Yan Xuejun offers a case study of Shakespeare looking into his plays with reference to family, love, marriage and law. Yan, instead of confining his analysis to Shakespeare's tragedies, delves into his comedies and histories, maintaining that ethical dimensions pervade Shakespeare's writing. Yan explains that the notion of order dominates Shakespeare's social views and ethical thought apart from his comedian demarcation of good and evil (qtd. in Nie, et al 129). In a similar fashion, Lin Yupeng examines carefully the far deeply embodied ethical vision that permeates Shakespeare's poetry. What strikes the reader is Lin's close analysis of Shakespeare's secular dimension of humanist ethics. According to Lin, Shakespeare revitalizes ancient and traditional literary motifs, displaying in his verse a strong sense of ethical concerns as a humanist (qtd. in Nie, et al 155). Chapters Four and Five are persuasively argued and beautifully written. The two chapters are a model for how poetry is approached from an ethical perspective. The two discussions of both Metaphysical poets and poems of the Enlightenment are illuminating, limning a range of theoretical tools to keep us think more deeply about how 17th and 18th century British poetry implicates ethical themes. John Donne, for instance, called for a secular life affirming humanity. In his cultivation of morality lies his ambiguous understanding of both piety and rebellion (Nie, et al 187).

Similar undertaking also features the fifth chapter in which John Dryden was observed from the lens of pragmatism emphasizing his complex "vision of happiness" and "antagonism against reason" (Nie, et al 211 - 15). Continual discussions of poetry lead to a further look into the British Romantic period which gave rise to a boom of fine poets such as William Blake, William Wordsworth, P. B. Shelly, Byron and John Keats. This undertaking of Chapter Eight marks a critic's unique efforts to search for a moral poetics in Shelly and his contemporaries. It highly valorizes what constitutes Shelley's morality and cultivation of virtue on which man heavily relies in order to reach for salvation (Nie, et al 407 - 09). What follows is an interpretation of moral criticism in 19th century British poetry centering on the poets' human concerns for social reform and justice. Here Zhang Hongmin and his fellow critics approach the Victorian agencies and highlight the poets' democratic ideals of affiliation based on sympathy, sociability, justice and benevolence. The passages on Alfred Tennyson and Robert Browning are superbly well written, offering respectively various insightful remarks on the two Victorian poets. The other chapters are informative in many ways. In his final substantial chapter, Liu Lihui fittingly turns to playwrighting again, outlining the constant pursuit of ethical thought in 20th century British drama. W. B. Yeats, Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter are fairly well perceived, displaying

their ideas of judgment embedded in profound historical sense. A case in point is Yeats who added into his plays not only mysticism but also an obvious dimension of grand heroism. Yeats' plays, Li maintains, harbor his ethical and moral ideals (qtd. in Nie, et al 676). Besides their highly merited scholarship, they render enjoyment of reading. As a collection of essays, *English Literature in the Perspective of Ethical Literary Criticism* is full of insight, producing an impressive array of ethical criticism. Many chapters in the book demonstrate how Nie and his colleagues attend to and employ the approach.

Therefore, Nie and his colleagues are obviously aware of the difficulties implicit in such an academic journey. It is not easy job to theorize ethical criticism and its methodological appropriateness, but Nie has achieved what he has proposed to do. Each chapter, though well framed by historical and social forces, is based around an author's ethical vision. Whatever its meticulous search for both ethical and moral concerns, the book invites further investigations of critical intellectual thinking. Like most other books, *English Literature in the Perspective of Ethical Literary Criticism* also contains some fault in its large exclusiveness. There should have been more authors to be covered. Also, no one book could answer all of the important and complex questions raised so far, but Nie has produced a suggestive text that offers many avenues for further probes into ethical criticism of British literature. Only this can I suffice to say that *English Literature in the Perspective of Ethical Literary Criticism* is an excellent and groundbreaking book that will help to launch more coherent and extensive discussions of British literature from an ethical perspective. Nie has written a fine first book, offering an audacious entry into the contemporary literary critical maelstrom. Its critical wealth is enormous, extending to future studies in a similar vein.

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