The Law and the Void: Hans Christian Andersen and Franz Kafka. Two Modern Parabolists

Helena Březinová
Univerzita Karlova, Prague

Abstract

Of Franz Kafka, Walter Benjamin aptly wrote: 'everything he describes makes statements about something other than itself'. Indeed, we are constantly challenged to decipher what Kafka's meticulous prose is pointing at, though the story itself works on its own premises. The inherent polysemy of 'Eine kaiserliche Botschaft' ('An Imperial Message') or 'Ein Hungerkünstler' ('A Hunger Artist') suggests, instead, the ancient parable tradition. But Kafka's modern parables diverge radically from the tradition. They obey a law, yet it is elusive, hence they are examples of the modern parable. In this article I take as my starting point Gila Safran-Naveh's claim that Kafka is chronologically the first in the modern parable tradition. I assert that Hans Christian Andersen's much earlier fairytales 'Skyggen' ('The Shadow'), 'Ole Lukøie' and 'Hjertesorg' ('Heartache') can legitimately be interpreted as modern parables as well, because there is a striking structural similarity between them and the Kafka stories. In my article I focus on the parabolic character of Andersen's tales since — unlike in Kafka's stories — this topic has not yet been discussed by scholars exhaustively. Kafka's short stories serve merely as a benchmark of the modern parable. Generally, I suggest reading many of Andersen's stories as literature that sabotages the didactic parable.

Keywords

Hans Christian Andersen, Franz Kafka, Friedrich Nietzsche, fairytale, modern parable

Preliminary remarks

In her book *Biblical Parables and Their Modern Re-creations: From 'Apples of Gold in Silver Settings' to 'Imperial Messages'* (1999), Gila Safran-Naveh inquires into the genealogy of the parable. Beginning with biblical parables, she arrives at Franz Kafka's modern parables such as 'Eine kaiserliche Botschaft' ('An Imperial Message'), a story dealing with a message that cannot be deciphered. In the book, Safran-Naveh shows how productively Kafka re-employs the parable and creates a modern version of the genre.

When reading Hans Christian Andersen's fairytales, one has an equally strong impression of reading a narrative dealing with something other than what it claims to be concerned with. Just think of the fairytale about the nightingale singing in the emperor's palace. Here too the reader strongly senses that although the story by no means lacks coherence it is concealing some abstract idea. Unlike the allegory, in which the logic and coherence of the plot is sacrificed so that the abstract idea can be illustrated in the most recognisable way, 'Nattergalen' ('The Nightingale') works perfectly on its own as a story, yet the text palpably signals that it refers to an abstract meaning hidden behind the primary story. A number of Andersen fairytales seem to allude to the parable, but they cannot truly be considered unequivocal or even didactic in any way. Indeed, they express deep scepticism and existential insecurity. One must therefore be less categorical than Safran-Naveh, who claims that Kafka is chronologically the first in the modern parable tradition. 'To state the mind's tragic realisation of the void', she writes, 'Kafka was the first to translate it into paradox; to organise it linguistically, he played on logic and logical structures with the precision of a most accomplished master' (Safran-Naveh 1999: 138). This characteristic can usefully be applied to a number of Andersen's tales.

In this article I use two of Kafka's parables, 'An Imperial Message' and 'Ein Hungerkünstler' ('A Hunger Artist'), primarily as benchmarks by which to measure the parabolic nature of two famous Andersen fairytales, 'Ole Lukøie' ('Ole Lukoie') and 'Skyggen' ('The Shadow') together with the less well known 'Hjertesorg' ('Heartache'). Kafka's

short stories and Andersen's fairytales share at least two remarkable features: they are built as texts in two layers and are, moreover, conspicuously open to interpretation. In the closing part of my article I refer to Friedrich Nietzsche to try to pin down Andersen's and Kafka's motivations for employing the parable. Obviously, Nietzsche could not have inspired Andersen, and I am not interested in Nietzsche's possibly direct influence on Kafka's writings. What interests me here is Nietzsche's subversive intent when recycling the parable; he uses it to attack its unequivocally didactic function. In the course of my argument, I seek to show that in Andersen's and in Kafka's hands the parable is a privatised genre; it does not aim at a community of the initiated, but is instead addressing the modern, isolated individual.

The parable in Andersen's writings

Paul V. Rubow observes that Andersen in his fairytales incorporated 'alle Arter af den lille fortællende Prosadigtning' (Rubow 1927: 149) (all types of the small narrative prose).[1] Rubow dedicates a whole chapter to the parable in his *H. C. Andersens Eventyr* (1927), though the only Andersen fairytale he labels a genuine parable is 'Boghveden' ('The Buckwheat') (Rubow 1927: 142). Of course, not all of Andersen's fairytales and short stories can plausibly be classified as parables; some of them are more closely related to the allegory (Bøggild 2012) and others are more connected with the legend, particularly, martyrology (de Mylius 2005: 202). Still, one of Andersen's most important and prominent narrative devices refers clearly to the parable. A fundamental characteristic of the parable is that it is based on dialogue: a sage strives to give insight into the real state of things, into some essential wisdom. The intricate system of Andersen's storytellers who assume a role of authority because of their advanced years or their familiarity with death more than suggests that the reader is going to be initiated into the mysteries of life, into valuable wisdom.[2] The fly in the ointment is that in Andersen's fairytales the insight into the mysteries of life, as Safran-Naveh appositely claims about Kafka, amounts to a 'tragic realization of the void' (1999: 138). I argue that Andersen – like Kafka several decades after him – recycles the parable genre in order to

depict the vulnerability of man in an existential vacuum instead of reifying religious or moral principles in a didactic manner. Hence, I will give evidence of some Andersen fairytales and short stories being examples of modern parables; in other words, 'negated parables' in which the confidence in the didactic message is invalidated.

Before I move on, I would emphasise that this article was not inspired by the interesting correspondence between Andersen's and Kafka's motifs, though Kafka definitely was familiar with Andersen's fairytales.[3] Here I focus solely on the parabolic structure that provides the framework for several Andersen and Kafka stories.

The parable according to Maimonides

First of all we may need a definition of the parable genre. The Greek word *parabellein* means 'thrown alongside', that is, to compare. According to Lothe, Refsum and Solberg (1997: 188), the parable is 'en lignelse der hendelser og gjenstander fra det jordiske illustrerer en åndelig sannhet' (a likeness where the plot and subjects from the earthly life illustrate a spiritual truth). And further we read here: 'Samtidig med at en parabel er illustrerende, kan den altså være gåtefull og vanskelig på en måte som krever tolkende aktivitet: Det er som om leserens tolkning fullfører eller kompletterer parabelen' (On the one hand, the parable is illustrative, yet on the other it can also be mysterious and difficult in a way that requires the reader's involvement and interpretation: it is as if the reader's interpretation fulfilled and completed the parable). The entry mentions Kafka's short stories as examples of the modern parable.

The nature of the parable is comprehensibly expressed in the metaphor of the golden apples covered in silver, which Safran-Naveh refers to in the subtitle of her book: 'Apples of Gold in Silver Settings'. The metaphor is from Proverbs 25: 11. In the New International Version of the Bible the wording is as follows: 'Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a ruling rightly given.' The philosopher Maimonides (1135/38–1204) uses this passage to describe what is at stake when we read a parable:

> The Sage has said: *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings* [*maskiyyoth*] *of silver*. (Prov. 25:11.) (…) The term *maskiyyoth* denotes filigree traceries; I mean to say traceries in which there are apertures with very small eyelets, like the handiwork of silversmiths. They are so called because a glance penetrates through them.
> (…) The Sage accordingly said that a saying uttered with a view to two meanings is like an apple of gold overlaid with silver filigree-work having very small holes. Now see how marvelously this dictum describes a well-constructed parable. For he says that in a saying that has two meanings — he means an external (*zāhir*) and an internal (*bātin*) one — the external meaning (*zāhir*) ought to be as beautiful as silver while its internal meaning (*bātin*) ought to be more beautiful than the external one (*zāhir*), the former being in comparison to the latter as gold is to silver.
> (Stern 2013: 26)

The apple appears to be made of silver, yet an observant eye can see that it is golden; in other words the core of the story is hidden behind the plot.

Let us continue with the parable definition. An important Andersen scholar, Klaus P. Mortensen, has pointed out that Andersen's fairytales have the same function as the ancient fables that were created in order to criticise without mentioning names (Mortensen 2001: 71). Mortensen's remark points back to Hegel's famous definition of the parable, which he sets out in his *Aesthetics* (1835). According to Hegel, the parable and the fable share the same tendency:

> Die *Parabel* hat mit der Fabel die allgemeine Verwandtschaft, daß sie Begebenheiten aus dem Kreise des gewöhnlichen Lebens aufnimmt, denen sie aber eine höhere und allgemeinere Bedeutung mit dem Zwecke unterlegt, diese Bedeutung durch jenen, für sich betrachtet, alltäglichen Vorfall verständlich und anschaulich zu machen.
> (Hegel 1835: 502)

> (Parable has with fable the general affinity that it takes up events drawn from the sphere of ordinary life but attributes to them a deeper and more general meaning with the aim of making this meaning intelligible and perceptible through this occurrence, an everyday one if considered by itself.)
> (Hegel 1975: 390–91)

The parable, nevertheless, wants to say more than the fable. The principal difference consists in its purpose: the function of the parable cannot be reduced to the criticism of society and man – this is precisely the purpose of the fable. To judge from the parables in the New Testament, it is reasonable to claim that the purpose of the parable is to present a fundamental wisdom and this wisdom should lead to one changing one's life for the better. As Kurt Erlemann puts it on the website *Das wissenschafliche Bibelportal der Deutschen Bibelgesellschaft*, 'The aim of the parable is the cognitive and emotional coming to terms with the view of God, or Jesus. And this should influence practical behaviour, or rather induce attitudinal change' (Erlemann 2009).

With this in mind, let us take a closer look at Andersen's 'Ole Lukoie'. This fairytale is about a little boy, Hjalmar, who for seven consecutive nights is visited by a character called Ole Lukoie. The Danish surname Lukøie means 'Close-your-eyes'; he is Andersen's version of the Sandman.

Ole Lukoie as a parabolist

The fairytale 'Ole Lukoie', first published in December 1841, is one of Andersen's canonical works, and is frequently included in fairytale collections all around the world. The eponymous supernatural character pays a visit to Hjalmar each night from Monday to Sunday. Ole arrives in the evening when the boy is supposed to be asleep and the storyteller announces that Ole is going to tell seven bedtime stories because there are seven days in a week. On Monday, Ole assigns handwriting exercises to improve Hjalmar's miserably written letters of the alphabet in his school exercise book. On Tuesday, Ole takes Hjalmar on a voyage down the river through green woods full

of supernatural creatures and on their way they pass little princesses from whom Hjalmar steals little sugar pigs. Finally, Hjalmar's nanny sings a farewell song to the boy. This means that Hjalmar has to say goodbye to his childhood on Tuesday as his voyage ends on the open sea. On Wednesday, Ole brings Hjalmar aboard a ship sailing out to sea and Hjalmar witnesses a quarrel between the poultry and the stork about whether it is better to stay at home or to fly away to warm lands. On Thursday and Friday, Ole takes Hjalmar to a wedding between two mice and a wedding between two dolls. Both experiences dismay Hjalmar by their obtuseness. On Saturday, Hjalmar has to help Ole polish the stars in the sky because the next day is Sunday. On Sunday, Ole introduces his brother – Death. And with Death, the story 'Ole Lukoie' ends. Ole Lukoie's seven stories are set in something like a state of sleep or a dream. I propose reading the seven night scenes that Ole Lukoie shows to little Hjalmar as seven mini-parables. But the frame story, in which the seven night stories are embedded, itself alludes in equal measure to the parable genre.

The 'stories' of Ole Lukoie do not have a classic narrative plot; as Johan de Mylius observes in *Forvandlingens pris* (The Cost of Transformation) the reader is presented rather with 'tegnefilmsagtig animation' (cartoon-like animation) or 'et lille stykke dukketeater, en animation med livlige replikker' (a little piece of puppetry, an animation with lively repartees) (de Mylius 2005: 23). The seven mini-scenes are indeed like tableaux, yet these concrete pictures Hjalmar is confronted with clearly point behind the literal, palpable layer of the text to another, abstract meaning. The night tableaux contain sharp criticism of the bourgeoisie, which de Mylius aptly observes. He argues that instead of bedtime stories we see here 'klaustrofobiske skrækscenarier' (de Mylius 2005: 29) (claustrophobic horror scenarios) and 'et spejlkabinet for sider af den voksnes liv' (26) (a chamber of mirrors with facets from the lives of the grown-ups). De Mylius ironically adds here that the narrative admittedly is '[m]eget lærerigt, men blandet med så megen satirisk snilde, at lærdommen nok ikke er at finde dér, hvor oldefar kan se den' (ibid.) (very illuminating, yet it is mixed with such a great deal of satirical wit that the learnedness probably is not to be found where the grandfather can see it). Clearly, de Mylius the interpreter himself

expects some kind of 'learnedness', which means that the bedtime stories themselves strongly indicate that they contain some deeper meaning. In other words, they invite one to read them as allegory or parable. In what follows, I try to pin down the deeper layers of the fairytale, and to discern its fundamental law.

On the first night, the upbringing and education of a child are being mocked. With exercises, Ole torments Hjalmar for the poor penmanship in his school exercise book. Two nights in succession, Ole introduces the boy to weddings, at which he feels alienated, buried alive: in order to attend these weddings one has to be emotionally and intellectually blinkered. This satirical depiction of bourgeois life is, however, merely a motif, not the topic of the fairytale. There is a golden apple hidden underneath the satirical silver of the story, a deeper meaning, which Maimonides equates with the key questions of the parable: what can belief do? and what is truth? Maimonides writes:

> Their external meaning (*zāhir*) contains wisdom that is useful in many respects, among which is the welfare of human societies, as is shown by the external meaning (*zāhir*) of Proverbs and of similar sayings. Their internal meaning (*bātin*), on the other hand, contains wisdom that is useful for beliefs concerned with the truth as it is. (Stern 2013: 27)

In a fairytale that so demonstratively touches upon initiation, the reader expects to be guided in matters of belief and truth. But 'Ole Lukoie' is built upon an obvious paradox: Ole, as Hjalmar's private tutor, signals that he is going to instruct the boy; he is mimicking a parabolist but the expectation of both the boy and the reader in matters of life being lived and the life to come are betrayed. Safran-Naveh points out that good early parables principally function as miniature stories told to the masses: 'The parabolist used parabolic speech mainly as an efficient tool to communicate a message, to "interpellate" the listener, and point him in the right direction in regard to religious belief and to the art of living' (Safran-Naveh 1999: 5). And she adds: 'These early parables mirrored a mode of existence in the world that allowed man to gain knowledge from the wise and instilled in him hope to enter the realm

of absolute presence in the world to come' (ibid.). Ole Lukoie promises that kind of knowledge, yet does not keep his word.

In the last bedtime story on Sunday, in which Ole introduces his brother, the reader realises that the brother is Thanatos himself, the personification of death in Greek mythology, whose brother is the god of sleep, Hypnos. Ole merely informs the boy that he need not fear death if the conduct marked on the report is good: '"Men Døden er jo den deiligste Ole Lukøie!" sagde Hjalmar, "ham er jeg ikke bange for!" "Det skal Du heller ikke!" sagde Ole Lukøie, "see bare til at Du har en god Characteerbog!"' (Andersen 1963: 176) ('"Why, Death is the most beautiful thing Ole Lukoie," Hjalmar exclaimed. "I'm not afraid of him." "You needn't be," Ole Lukoie told him, "only be sure that you have a good report card."')[4] The term 'report card' sends the reader back to the Monday tableau with the drunken letters and mindless school drill and in this way the circle of life is closed. But none of the preceding six tableaux offers any guidance on how to get a good report card. The golden apple in 'Ole Lukoie' seems to amount to the 'tragic realization of the void', as Safran-Naveh has aptly summarised the chief message of Kafka's parables. The development covers a whole life story, but this condensed ontogeny offers not a single clue about how to give life meaning or how to find meaning.

The dialogical structure of the fairytale is characteristic of the parable, and attests to the fact that Andersen did not not give up the search for the meaning of life. Or, as the aphorist Kafka puts it: 'There is a destination but no way there; what we refer to as way is hesitation.' Safran-Naveh observes this desire of Kafka's in his novel *The Castle* (*Das Schloss*):

> In modern times, like "the way" to Kafka's *Castle* that remained undisclosed while at a stone's throw from where the protagonist was, the gap in text remains unbridgeable, a "painful laceration" in the middle of the text, signifying that the fictive world is divorced from a final meaning in the real world. In Kafka's words, "the incomprehensible remains incomprehensible." In modernity, "the *aggadah* is without a *halakhah*," that is, the elaborate narrative has no basic

> underlying law to invest it with the necessary meaning. We can no longer get to our ontological truths, therefore, like the messenger in Kafka's parable, we shout meaningless messages. (Safran-Naveh 1999: 36–37)

The metaphor of the way in the quotation refers to Walter Benjamin's reading of Kafka. The metaphor originates from the etymology of the word *halakhah*, which means the path that one walks. In the Jewish tradition, *halakhah* is the Law that guides religious practices and beliefs and aspects of day-to-day life. *Aggadah* (*aggadot* in the plural), on the other hand, refers to non-legalistic texts in the classic rabbinic literature that includes folklore, historical anecdotes, and moral exhortations. These stories should primarily awaken the interest of the listener. An early interpreter of Kafka, Benjamin notices that Kafka makes use of *aggadah* in his stories, yet never refers to any fundamental law:

> Man könnte an die Form der Hagada erinnern: so nennen die Juden Geschichten und Anekdoten in Talmud, die der Erklärung und Bestätigung der Lehre — der Halacha, dienen. Die Lehre als solche ist freilich bei Kafka nirgends ausgesprochen. (Benjamin 1991: 433)

> (This is reminiscent of the form of the Haggadah. That is what Jews call the stories and anecdotes in the Talmud that serve to elucidate and confirm the teachings — the Halachah. Admittedly, the teachings as such are never enunciated by Kafka.) (Benjamin 1999: 478)

Hence, a modern parable does not refer to any law or maxim and this could explain why the only law operating in Andersen's 'Ole Lukoie' is death; death is Ole Lukoie's absolutely only card to play.

The absence of any fundamental law or wisdom is the topic of Kafka's parable 'An Imperial Message'. First, one should note that Kafka's text is not a plot-driven narrative; it is like the seven night scenes in 'Ole Lukoie' built as a tableau. The dying emperor whispers

his last words in the ear of the messenger who should bring the message to 'dir, dem Einzelnen, dem jämmerlichen Untertanen, dem winzig vor der kaiserlichen Sonne in die fernste Ferne geflüchteten Schatten, gerade dir hat der Kaiser von seinem Sterbebett aus eine Botschaft gesendet.' (Kafka 1986b: 128) ('you, the humble subject, the insignificant shadow cowering in the remotest distance before the imperial sun; the Emperor from his deathbed has sent a message to you alone') (Kafka 1995: 24). But the messenger cannot make it to the recipient through the labyrinth of corridors, staircases, and hallways of the emperor's palace; he does not succeed in delivering the message. The last sentences of the parable are significant in our context: 'Niemand dringt hier durch und gar mit der Botschaft eines Toten. – Du aber sitzt an deinem Fenster und erträumst sie [the message] dir, wenn der Abend kommt.' (Kafka 1986b: 129) ('Nobody could fight his way through here even with a message from a dead man. But you sit at your window when evening falls and dream it to yourself') (Kafka 1995: 24). The storyteller addresses the reader explicitly in the last sentence, which in the German original is separated from the previous text by means of a dash (and by an ellipsis in this translation). This narrative device can therefore be usefully described, to employ William Labov's term, as a *coda*. Labov defines the coda as the 'final clause which returns the narrative to the time of speaking, precluding a potential question: "And what happened then?"' (Labov 1997). According to Joshua Waletzky and Labov, at the core of this rhetorical tool is the fact that the narrator returns to the starting point of the narration: 'A coda is a functional device for returning the verbal perspective to the present moment' (Labov and Waletzky 1997: 35). In the coda the narrator points out the relevance of the story for the listener, connecting it to events or actions outside the story. Greger Andersson has observed the high frequency of codas in Andersen's fairytales (Andersson 2005: 179) and we might add that a copybook coda also appears in Andersen's 'Ole Lukoie'. Here the storyteller addresses the reader by means of the informal singular *you* pronoun: 'See, det er Historien om Ole Lukøie! nu kan han selv i Aften fortælle Dig noget mere!' (Andersen 1963: 176) ('You see, that's the story of Ole Lukoie. Tonight he himself can tell you some more'). When one knows what

Ole told little Hjalmar for seven consecutive nights, the closing address in Andersen's fairytale, unlike in the the Kafka story, does not sound melancholic; instead, it sounds almost threatening.

In both Kafka's and Andersen's stories the coda is used to restore the dialogue with the reader and we have to bear in mind that a core parameter of the parable is its dialogical–argumentative strategy. The purpose of a parable is to convey to the reader that the story is in fact about her or him personally. Klaus P. Mortensen claims that the whole of Andersen's fairytale production can usefully be understood as 'lige så mange forsøg på at bryde en […] uønsket lukning om det individuelle. Altså som gentagne forsøg på at nå tilbage fra det individuelles eksil til fortællingens fællesskabsstiftende grund' (Mortensen 2000: 24) (as so many attempts to tear down […] the undesired hermetic seal around the individual, that is, the repeated attempts to leave the exile of the individual and return to the storytelling that constitutes community). In fact, an identical nostalgia seems to be the driving force behind Benjamin's essay 'Der Erzähler' ('The Storyteller') (1936) in which he laments the loss of traditional storytelling based on experience. It is fair to say that the moment an author refers to such a dialogical genre as the parable, he or she does so in an attempt to reach the community and, in the form of a dialogue, stir the recipient.

One of the inherent characteristics of parable is that it is aimed at inspiring the listener to see existence from a new perspective. Robert Detweiler, whose research focused on the connection between literature and religion, has pointed out that the parable always contains a rousing appeal:

> The parable not only demands completion and fulfilment through decisive action; it not only asks that one change one's life; it anticipates a radical change in world order — and in this way also it serves as a microform of kerygma. (Detweiler 1976: 235)

Kerygma is ancient Greek for the herald's annunciation in which the Christian gospel of the salvation of man is pronounced. But, as I pointed out at the beginning of this article, the good news is a

somewhat more complicated affair in Kafka's parables and a number of Andersen's fairytales and other stories. This is why I shall now scrutinise Andersen's tale 'The Shadow' (1847) and juxtapose it with Kafka's parable 'A Hunger Artist' (1922). Both stories are about an unacknowledged artist who is misunderstood by his audience. And both stories force the reader to view existence from a radically new perspective.

'The Shadow' and 'A Hunger Artist' – a couple of negated parables

The first question is whether Andersen's short piece 'The Shadow' may legitimately be classified as a parable. The protagonist of this fairytale is a learned Northerner, a writer who during his stay in the 'hot countries' is drawn to the female dweller living in an eerie room across the street from him. But he does not dare to go there himself, and sends his shadow instead. The shadow does not return; it frees itself from its previous master and only years later visits him for the first time. Here, the shadow tells the Scandinavian scholar that he gained respect and money writing anonymous blackmail letters and thus became something like a real man. Later, the shadow puts pressure on the scholar to swap roles. The scholar then accompanies the shadow on his travels — or rather he becomes the new shadow of the original shadow. Eventually, the shadow marries a princess and the scholar is executed.

'The Shadow' has been interpreted in various ways, and in the better part of the interpretations scholars have endeavoured to uncover a presumed hidden, second story or abstract meaning. The influential Danish critic Georg Brandes (1842–1927) construed this Andersen story as being about epigones;[5] the writer, literary critic, and philosopher Villy Sørensen (1929–2001) internalised the conflict in his reading and interpreted 'The Shadow' as a doppelgänger story in which Andersen diagnoses the crisis of humanism (Sørensen 2004: 34). Eigil Nyborg (1916–2005) offers a Jungian interpretation of the story and also identifies a doppelgänger motif in the story, or, more precisely, argues that the story incorporates a motif of splitting. According to him, 'The

Shadow' is a story about a man who meets his downfall because he did not succeed in integrating his psyche (Nyborg 1962: 64–67). Johan de Mylius sees the shadow as an incarnation of the raw materialism that is emblematic of the new reality of overly busy urban life (de Mylius 2005: 241–42). The interpretations point in various directions, but all imply that this fairytale invites or seduces the reader to interpret the plot as having a meaning other than the literal one. No doubt the interpreters consider the text to be as seductive as Kafka's story about the starving artist. Safran-Naveh describes the alluring effect of the parable on the reader:

> As a result of a seductive ploy, parables instill in the reader a desire to stay longer "in" the text and acquire added competency of decoding, even though, in actuality, what the reader learns is to deduce one parabolic sequence from another and make inferences from each parabolic segment. The seduced reader is drawn in [sic] the spatiotemporality of the parabolic narrative. He is absorbed, as it were, in the text and is transformed into a disciple by an ever-present make-believe, and goes on reading, re-reading, and interpreting, in order to grasp the parable's "hidden" meaning/s. (Safran-Naveh 1999: 149)

The parable is presented as a text in which the reader is tempted to install something else, something abstract, instead of the concrete characters and their actions, because they make us believe that they are unknowns or, rather, known variables. The many and various interpretations of both 'The Shadow' and 'A Hunger Artist' are evidence of the reader's urge or instinct to look beyond surface meaning.

With regard to these two stories, it is useful to recall a general feature of the traditional parable: the reader of the parable is confronted with an extravagant plot twist, which forces her or him to open up to the possibility of seeing existence from a different perspective. On the website *Das wissenschafliche Bibelportal der Deutschen Bibelgesellschaft* in the chapter Gleichnisse und Parabeln we read: 'Der Hörer wird in der Erzählung plötzlich mit einer extravaganten

Wendung im Geschehnisablauf konfrontiert, die ihn zwingt, sein bisheriges Weltverstehen in Frage zu stellen und sich einer neuen Sinnsetzung zu öffnen' (Gleichnisse und Parabeln n.d.) (The listener is suddenly confronted in the story with an extravagant twist in the tale in the course of events, forcing him to question his previous understanding of the world and to open himself up to a new way of thinking). Here, one such extravagant twist is the emancipation of the shadow from his master. In Kafka's story we are confronted with the extravagant or, rather, eccentric behaviour of starving oneself. But what exceeds the boundaries of reasonability even more is the downfall of the idealist in each of the two stories – the starving artist dies in oblivion and merges with the straw bedding he is lying on; the scholar in 'The Shadow' is put to death without anyone noticing. And, finally, what goes most beyond the norms of literature of the two periods is that in both narratives the destruction of the idealist is depicted without any sentimentality.

Actually, the scholar and the starving artist are strikingly dubious characters and it is even fair to say that the implied authors belittle them. Even in the opening scene of 'The Shadow', a negative pall is cast on the scholar because he does not dare to cross the street to meet the mysterious inhabitant of the alluring room — he is content to send his shadow instead. In his later conversation with the shadow, the scholar is presented as a hopelessly typical romantic and idealist. This becomes clear in his complaint addressed to his previous shadow. The scholar answers the how-are-you-doing question of the shadow: '"Ak!" sagde den lærde Mand,"jeg skriver om det Sande og det Gode og det Skjønne, men Ingen bryder sig om at høre Sligt, jeg er ganske fortvivlet, for jeg tager mig det saa nær!"' (Andersen 1964: 135) ('"Alack," said the scholar, "I still write about the true, the good, and the beautiful, but nobody cares to read about such things. I feel quite despondent, for I take it deeply to heart"'). The scholar clearly worships art that is based on an ideal, specifically on the Platonic triad of the true, the good, and the beautiful. In the dialogue the scholar learns that in the chamber to which he has dispatched his shadow lived Poetry herself — yet the shadow only visited the vestibule of her abode. By asking the shadow about how Poetry lives, the scholar

confirms his image of being a hopeless romantic. Confronted with the scholar's ideal of poetry, the reader cannot be surprised that nobody feels an urge to read his books in 1847, the year 'The Shadow' was first published:

> "Hvorledes saae der ud i de inderste Sale?" spurgte den lærde Mand. "Var der som i den friske Skov? Var der som i en hellig Kirke? Vare Salene som den stjerneklare Himmel, naar man staaer paa de høie Bjerge?"
> "Alting var der!" sagde Skyggen. "Jeg gik jo ikke ganske heelt ind, jeg blev i det forreste Værelse i Tusmørket, men der stod jeg særdeles godt, jeg saae Alting og jeg veed Alting! Jeg har været ved Poesiens Hof, i Forgemakket."
> "Men hvad saae De? Gik gjennem de store Sale alle Oldtidens Guder? Kjæmpede der de gamle Helte? Legede søde Børn og fortalte deres Drømme?"
> (Andersen 1964: 134)

> ('"How did the innermost rooms look?" the scholar asked. "Was it like a green forest? Was it like a holy temple? Were the rooms like the starry skies seen from some high mountain?"
> "Everything was there," said the shadow. "I didn't quite go inside. I stayed in the dark anteroom, but my place there was perfect. I saw everything, and I know everything. I have been in the antechamber at the court of Poetry."
> "But what did you see? Did the gods of old march through the halls? Did the old heroes fight there? Did fair children play there and tell their dreams?")

The scholar writes literature that seems to be as thin as Kafka's undernourished artist. As has been observed, for example, by Klaus P. Mortensen (2001: 85) and Jacob Bøggild (2014: 25), what makes 'The Shadow' an animated and relevant story is solely the new poetic style embodied by the scholar's shadow. The shadow, as an example, teases the reader's imagination with this line: '"Jeg saae det Allerutænkeligste hos Konerne, hos Mændene, hos Forældrene og hos de søde mageløse

Børn; – jeg saae", sagde Skyggen, "hvad ingen Mennesker maatte vide, men hvad de Allesammen saa gjerne vilde vide, Ondt hos Naboen."' (Andersen 1964: 135) ('"I saw the most incredible behaviour among men and women, fathers and mothers, and among those 'perfectly darling' children. I saw what nobody knows but everybody would like to know, and that is what wickedness goes on next door."').

As we have seen, the shadow becomes human by means of sending blackmail letters to the members of the nobility but prior to that he hides under the skirts of the cake-woman, a place that may be understood as the seamy side of noble society. Andersen's story first gets juicy when we leave the ideal promoted by the scholar, an ideal comprising the unity of the Platonic triad, the good, the beautiful, and the true. The blackmail motif and the carnal reality of being under the skirts of a woman as opposed to the Platonic triad, in fact, illustrates another of Kafka's famous aphorisms: 'Das Gute ist in gewissem Sinne trostlos' (Kafka 1986a: 63) (The good is in a certain sense comfortless) (Kafka 2012: 191).

The other characters treat Andersen's scholar and Kafka's hunger artist with disdain, as is particularly evident when we compare two passages from the end of both stories. First, the description of the last days of the hunger artist:

> "Du hungerst noch immer?" fragte der Aufseher, "wann wirst du denn endlich aufhören?" "Verzeiht mir alle", flüsterte der Hungerkünstler; nur der Aufseher, der das Ohr ans Gitter hielt, verstand ihn. "Gewiß", sagte der Aufseher und legte den Finger an die Stirn, um damit den Zustand des Hungerkünstlers dem Personal anzudeuten, "wir verzeihen dir."
> (Kafka 1986b: 199)

> ("What, you're still hungering?" asked the supervisor, "When are you going to stop?" "Forgive me, everyone," whispered the hunger artist; only the supervisor, who had his ear to the cage, could understand his words. "Of course," said the supervisor, pointing his finger at his forehead, as a sign to the attendants of the hunger artist's state of mind, "we forgive you.")
> (Kafka 2012: 64)

This dialogue between the hunger artist and the patronising warden who is pointing with his index finger at his forehead expresses basically the same as this dialogue between the princess and the shadow in the Andersen story:

> "Tænk Dig, min Skygge er blevet gal, han troer at han er Mennesket og at jeg – tænk dig bare, — at jeg er hans Skygge!"
> "Det er frygteligt!" sagde Prindsessen, "han er dog spærret inde?"
> "Det er han! Jeg er bange han kommer sig aldrig."
> "Stakkels Skygge!" sagde Prindsessen, "han er meget ulykkelig; det er en sand Velgjerning at frie ham fra den Smule Liv han har, og naar jeg rigtig tænker over det, saa troer jeg det bliver nødvendigt at det bliver gjort af med ham i al Stilhed!"
> (Andersen 1964: 168)

> ('"But imagine! My shadow has gone mad. He takes himself for a man, and — imagine it! he takes me for his shadow."
> "How terrible!" said the Princess. "He's locked up, I hope!"
> "Oh, of course. I'm afraid he will never recover."
> "Poor shadow," said the Princess. 'He is very unhappy. It would really be a charitable act to relieve him of the little bit of life he has left. And, after thinking it over carefully, my opinion is that it will be necessary to put him out of the way."')

But the point is that the disdain for the delicate artists is, in fact, justified in the plot, which means that the reader can identify herself or himself with the negative stance towards the idealists. The artists can by no means embody the values and messages of the implied authors. Each of the two idealists, not wanting to experience real life, die a martyr's death, yet neither of the stories can properly be read as hagiography – the protagonists are clearly not extolled or mourned for. Kafka's narrator merely notes that the dead hunger artist is replaced by a panther and the predator's arrival is presented as clearly being a relief for everyone: 'Es war eine selbst dem stumpfsten Sinn fühlbare Erholung, in dem so lange öden Käfig dieses wilde Tier sich herumwerfen zu sehn. Ihm fehlte nichts.' (Kafka 1986b: 200) ('It was

a recovery that even the bluntest of senses could feel, to see this wild beast leaping around in the cage that had been desolate for so long. It lacked for nothing.') (Kafka 2012: 65).

Hence, a legitimate reading is that both parables extol the predator. Seen from this point of view, Andersen's fairytale 'The Shadow' can legitimately be read as proclaiming a style and aesthetics that is the antithesis of the classic ideal that rests on the Platonic triad; it is a proclamation of a style that follows on from the satanic undercurrents of Romanticism and anticipates, among other things, Charles Baudelaire's maledictions in *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857).

Theo Elm and Hans H. Hiebel, the editors of the anthology *Die Parabel: Parabolische Formen in der deutschen Dichtung des 20. Jahrhunderts* (1986), claim on the flyleaf of the volume that the parable in modernity was deprived of its main characteristics: the didactic element vanished, the clear reference to an idea became fragile, and the imperative appeal turned into an empty gesture. In other words, in modernity it is a negated parable. If we recall Detweiler's claim that the parable always functions as a microform of *kerygma*, that is, the joyful proclamation of the Christian gospel, and that parable foreknows a radical change of the world order, then we are dealing with two truly remarkable examples of modern parable. They anticipate a radically different world order than the gospels do; they depict death to the idealist living in truth with himself. He is replaced by the triumphant predator freed from scruples.

The fragility of the message is an immanent parameter of the modern parable. This is emphasised by Dirk Oschmann when he claims that 'A Hunger Artist' may also be read in reverse, which is a key attribute of Kafka's writings:

> Der jeweilige Gang der Argumentation hängt demnach auf elementare Weise mit von der Wertungsperspektive ab: Folgt man als Leser dem Hungerkünstler in seiner Schilderung, oder liest man den Text gegen ihn? Wertet man also auf der Ebene des Erzählers oder auf der Ebene des Erzählten?
> (Oschmann 2009: 137)

> (The course of the argumentation thus basically depends on the perspective of the judgement: as a reader, does one follow the hunger artist in his portrayal or does one follow the text against him? Does one therefore judge at the level of the narrator or the narrated?)

This dilemma is intentionally built into the story and it is a cornerstone of Kafka's method. The reader of Andersen's fairytale 'The Shadow' is confronted with precisely the same question: here too it is impossible to decide who the narrator is rooting for. Hence, both stories are radically perspectivistic. In *Zur Genealogie der Moral: Eine Streitschrift* (1887), the founding father of perspectivism, Nietzsche, writes:

> Es gibt *nur* ein perspektivisches Sehen, *nur* ein perspektivisches "Erkennen"; und *je mehr* Affekte wir über eine Sache zu Worte kommen lassen, *je mehr* Augen, verschiedne Augen wir uns für dieselbe Sache einzusetzen wissen, um so vollständiger wird unser "Begriff" dieser Sache, unsre "Objektivität" sein.
> (Nietzsche 1973: 818, emphasis original)

> (There is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival "knowing", and *the more* affects we allow to speak about a matter, *the more* eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more complete will our "concept" of this matter, our "objectivity" be.)
> (Nietzsche 1998: 85, emphasis original)

Kafka's connection to Nietzsche has often been disputed. Max Brod in particular denied there was any affinity between the two men, in order to present Kafka as a religious writer (Brod 1974: 259). Josef Billen, on the contrary, observes that Kafka and Nietzsche share 'gemeinsame Erfahrung der Auflösung oder Gefährdung des Transzendezbezuges' (Billen 1982: 279) (a common experience of the dissolution of, or threat to, the relation to transcendence), and he refers to Günther Anders's *Kafka, pro und contra* in which Anders claims that Kafka's writings are based on the notion that God is dead (Anders 1972: 84).

Oschmann too detects a clear affinity between Nietzsche and Kafka regarding structure and topic. The first obvious intersection is, in his view, in what he calls 'sceptical anthropology'. Oschmann, quoting from Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse: Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft*, 1886), provides evidence that both writers regard the human being as 'the animal *whose nature has not yet been fixed*' (Nietzsche 1990: 88, emphasis original). Sceptical anthropologists question the supreme place of humans among other living creatures, which Kafka expresses in the transformation of the human to a creepy-crawly, as experienced by Gregor Samsa. The painful reverse process occurs in 'Ein Bericht für die Akademie' ('A Report to an Academy') (1917) in which an ape is transformed into a human. I would argue that the same scepticism towards humankind holds sway in Andersen's 'The Shadow'. Here too we are confronted with the deconstruction of a man, an artist, and, as in Kafka, the outcome is fatal.

I would, however, re-emphasise that I am not concerned with a direct influence between Andersen, Nietzsche, and Kafka. What matters to me is the striking affinity between these authors with regard to their employment of the parable. It is useful here to note that Nietzsche himself employed the parable and he did so like Andersen and Kafka – his intentions were downright subversive. Nietzsche used the traditional parable in which man has been made in the image of God, yet Nietzsche's mirror distorts the image completely. A prominent example of Nietzsche's work with this is his parable of a mad man, 'Der tolle Mensch', part of the third book of *Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (*The Gay Science*) (1882). Nietzsche makes use of a parable-like construction in order to proclaim the opposite to what we find in the Christian parable tradition: humans, due to their laxness, are inexorably about to kill God. In his parable, Nietzsche depicts a scene in which a mad man with a lantern searches for God in a market place. Consequently, the mad man tells the astonished crowd that God is dead because they have killed him. The godless people cannot understand him since, as he himself remarks, he has come too early. The plot in Nietzsche's text is made of an abstraction translated into common language; in other words it is a parable. Concerning the nature of this Nietzsche

parable, Heinz Politzer writes: 'Diese Abstraktion in verständliche Sprache zu übersetzen, war ein Unternehmen, das zumindest so paradox erschien, wie der Gedanke, den es vermittelte' (Politzer 1978: 145) (To translate this abstraction into comprehensible language was a project that seemed at least as paradoxical as the thought it conveyed). Politzer adds that a modern parabolist like Nietzsche does not have a clearly decipherable language at his disposal in contrast, for instance, to the biblical parable of the prodigal son: 'Diese deutbare Bilderwelt is einem modernen Paraboliker wie Nietzsche prinzipiell versagt' (ibid.) (This interpretable world of images is in principle denied to a modern parabolist like Nietzsche). He also notes that Nietzsche's parable is a product of an insatiable desire for transcendence and of an endless disappointment with metaphysics:

> Wie die biblische Parabel hat auch der Aphorismus Nietzsches eine Tendenz zur Metaphysik. Es bedurfte eines Geistes mit einem unstillbaren Verlangen nach der Transzendenz und einer ebenso unstillbaren Enttäuschung an allem Metaphysischen, um sie zu erfinden. Die moderne Parabel aber unterscheidet sich von ihrem biblischen Vorbild dadurch, daß sie keinerlei eindeutige Maxime mehr zu verkünden vermag.
> (Politzer 1978: 144)
>
> (Like the biblical parable Nietzsche's aphorism also has a tendency to metaphysics. It required a mind with an insatiable desire for transcendence and an equally unappeasable disappointment in everything metaphysical to invent it. The modern parable, however, differs from its biblical model in that it cannot bring forth a clear maxim.)

Indeed, Politzer observes the same attribute in Nietzsche's modern parable that Benjamin ascribes to Kafka's parable writings: modern parabolists do not refer to any fundamental law, to any *halakhah*.

It would be hard to claim that Andersen's 'Ole Lukoie' or 'The Shadow' expresses the same radical scepticism towards or fear God's existence as does Nietzsche's parable of a mad man. But Andersen most likely

does not refer to an unequivocal wisdom either. Besides, Andersen, Nietzsche, and Kafka share a common strategy in their recycling of the parable: all three writers use it to subvert. In the following section, I will examine Andersen's tale 'Hjertesorg' ('Heartache'), because it clearly asks to be construed as a parable, of the modern kind. Specifically, it alludes to the didactic function of the classic parable, but the reader ends up bitterly disappointed since the story offers no lesson or wisdom whatsoever. And what is more, in 'Heartache' the reader is mocked when trying to make sense of it as a parable.

Andersen's 'Heartache': a lampooned and lampooning parable

Walter Gebhard, who has considered the parable in the writings of Kafka and Nietzsche, notes that Nietzsche grew up with the trivial parable typical of *Hausväterliteratur*, that is, devout and ethical Christen literature. According to Gebhard, this is the reason why Nietzsche formulated his early questions as parables — in protest against the alleged unequivocalness of this type of literature. Nietzsche twisted the didactic message of the parable in a revolt against the patronising tendency and moral superiority of the genre. Gebhard ascribes the choice of the genre to the process of internalisation:

> Nietzsche kann, so möchte ich pointieren, vor allem deshalb in die grosse Reihe der aufklärenden Gleichnisdichter und parabolischen Philosophen eingereiht werden, weil er das fulminante Beispiel einer gelungenen Erziehung darstellt (darin an Lessing, Herder, Krummacher, Pfeffel, Pestalozzi in der Aufklärung anknüpfend, aber auch — und das scheint mir für die Problematik der Modernität interessant — an Rilke und Kafka: es handelt sich ausnahmslos um Persönlichkeiten höchster Internalisierungskompetenz). Freilich: gelungene Erziehung — mit höchster Irritation!
> (Gebhard 1986: 81)

> (Nietzsche can, I would point out, therefore be included in the great series of enlightening parabolists and parable philosophers because he is a brilliant example of successful education (linked to Lessing, Herder, Krummacher, Pfeffel, and Pestalozzi in the Enlightenment, but also — and this seems to me to be interesting with regard to the question of modernity — Rilke and Kafka: these are without exception figures with the greatest ability to internalise). True, successful education — with great annoyance!)

Internalisation is a process during which one acquires norms and values in order to be socialised and assert oneself in society (Berger and Luckman 1966).[2] For those who know something about Andersen's life the idea of internalisation and Andersen immediately brings to mind the remarkable process of cultivation which the Danes call *dannelse*. This term is a calque of the German *Bildung* and here one immediately thinks of the *Bildungsroman*. The whole concept of the *Bildung* comprises the formation and cultivation of the individual who acquires knowledge in a wide range of areas like languages, the arts, and history. This helps lead him to moral maturity, so that in the end he can face the world as a cultured, well-oriented, well-behaved human being. It was this process, especially concerning its formal aspects, that caused a great deal of irritation in Andersen.

Andersen began to attend 'Latin school' (grammar school) regularly at the age of seventeen, which means practically as a grown-up. Having passed the leaving exam from the 'Latin school', his internalisation was a success. Yet for him the process was painful. In a letter to his friend Bernhard Severin Ingemann, Andersen writes about 'Skolens Fabrik-Liv' (the factory-life of the school) (Andersen 1826). Despite his annoyance, Andersen is aware that he cannot get any further without the required 'basic knowledge', 'Forkundskaber' in Danish, which word-for-word translates as 'preliminary knowledge'. This term may well provide a key to understanding Andersen's motivation for using the parable. The term 'Forkundskaber' is a leitmotif in letters from Andersen's Latin School period. In 1823 he wrote to the actress Birgitte Andersen (1791-1875): 'Jeg føler nu fuldkommen, at Studeringer ere nødvendige for mig, for engang i Tiden at kunne sikkert betræde min

valgte Bane. Al elementær Dannelse og Forkundskaber manglede jeg' (Andersen 1823) (I now feel completely that the study-business is indispensable for me if one day I want to set out on the career I desire. I lacked all elementary *Dannelse* and *Forkundskaber*). Andersen used the expression in his own letters, but it also appeared in a letter from Den kongelige Teaterdirection (the Royal Theatre Management) of 1822 in which Andersen's play *Røverne i Vissenberg* (The Robbers from Vissenberg) was rejected:

> Idet de anordnede Censorer tilbageskikke Stykket: Røverne i Vissenberg, som aldeles uskikket for Skuepladsen, ønske de, at det med Hensyn til Forfatterens personlige Stilling maatte fra Theaterdirectionen blive ham tilkjendegivet, at med den fuldkomne Mangel paa elementær Dannelse og alle uundværlige Forkundskaber, som dette Stykke paa hver Side viser, det endog for de allerypperste Anlæg vilde være umuligt at frembringe noget, der kunde fortjene at fremstilles for et dannet Publicum eller forelægges smagfulde og kyndige Læsere.
> (Den kongelige Theatrerdirection 1922)
>
> (The censors in charge return the play Røverne i Vissenberg since it is absolutely inappropriate for the stage and the theatre management wishes to inform the author in regard to his personal situation that due to the total lack of elementary *Dannelse* and all the indispensable *Forkundskaber*, which this play gives evidence of on every single page, it will — even after the most superior adjustments — be impossible to produce something from it that would deserve to be performed for the cultivated [*dannet*] audience or be presented to readers of taste and erudition.)

The term *Forkundskaber* was also used by Andersen's teacher, the director of the Latin school, Simon Meisling. In 1823 he attested to Andersen's studies:

> Ved Skoleaarets Ende kan jeg ikke undlade at tildele H. C. Andersen en velfortjent Roes for den ufortrødne Flid, hvormed han, isærdeleshed i Aarets sidste Halvdeel, har stræbt at skaffe sig en Deel af de til videre Fremgang nødvendige Forkundskaber. Til Belønning derfor, samt for end mere at opmuntre ham, er han optagen i Skolens tredie Klasse. (Meisling 1823)
>
> (At the end of the school year H. C. Andersen deserves only my praise for the indefatigable diligence with which, especially in the second half of the year, he strived to acquire some of the indispensable *Forkundskaber* he needs in order to forge ahead. As a reward for this, as well as to encourage him, he is accepted to the third class of the school.)

In total, the term *Forkundskaber* occured five times in letters sent by Andersen in the period from 1822 to 1826 and it is most likely that he also used the expression intentionally in the ironical introduction to his 'Heartache' (1853). This tale may aptly be interpreted as a parabolic narrative and I would argue that the expression *Forkundskaber* provides us with a tool to grasp its meaning or, rather, lack thereof. The story opens with a sentence containing this key term, which in Jean Hersholt's version is translated as preliminary information: 'Det er egentligt en Historie i to Dele, vi her komme med; første Deel kunde gjerne være borte, – men den giver Forkundskaber, og de ere nyttige!' (Andersen 1964: 245) ('The story we have for you here is really divided into two parts. The first part could be omitted, but it gives us some useful preliminary information! which is useful'). Indeed, the story is in two parts, two very cruel scenes that show how lamentable human existence can be. The storyteller more than insinuates that the two scenes from everyday life conceal yet another story, which means that the storyteller not only stages his story as having two parts, but also two layers, that is, a parable.

In the first part, the storyteller depicts a realistic scene featuring an old widow who tries to convince the noble inhabitants of a manor to buy shares in her tannery. She arrives with an ugly pug and the fine

people, including the storyteller, advise her to write a letter to the absent owner:

> Hun hørte paa os, hun tog Pennen, standsede, og bad os om at gjentage Udskriften, men langsomt. Vi gjorde det, og hun skrev; men midt i "Generalkrigs" blev hun staaende, sukkede og sagde: "jeg er kun et Fruentimmer!" Moppen havde hun sat paa Gulvet, mens hun skrev, og han knurrede; han var jo ogsaa taget med for sin Fornøielse og Sundheds Skyld, og saa skal man ikke sættes paa Gulvet. Braknæse og Fleskeryg var hans Udvortes. (Andersen 1964: 245)
>
> ('She listened to us, took up the pen, then hesitated, and begged us to repeat the address slowly. We complied and she wrote, but in the middle of the 'General War—' she stopped, sighed, and said, "I'm only a woman!" While she wrote, she had placed her Puggie on the floor, and he was growling, for the dog had come with her for pleasure and health's sake, and a visitor shouldn't be placed on the floor. He was characterized outwardly by a snub nose and a fleshy back.')

Then, the other part of the story comes: 'Puggie died! That's the second part.' In the Danish original, the exclamation is in quotation marks, so it is hard to say whether the storyteller is citing someone who has found the dead dog or whether it is an emphatic heading of the second part of the story — if the latter, then it would function as a metanarrative remark. The second part deals with the pug's burial arranged by the widow's grandchildren. The entrance fee to the funeral is one trouser button, and a ragged little girl who does not own one is not admitted: 'da satte hun sig ned, holdt de smaa brune Hænder for Øinene og brast i Graad; hun alene havde ikke seet Moppens Grav. Det var Hjertesorg og stor, som den Voxnes tidt kan være det.' (Andersen 1964: 245) ('Then she sat down, put her little brown hands before her eyes, and burst into tears, for she alone hadn't seen Puggie's grave. It was a heartache as great as any grown-up can experience.') By now it is obvious to the reader of the story that the only thing linking the two

parts of 'Heartache' is the wretchedness of being human. This proves to be the golden apple, the hidden wisdom of the tale.

The last sentences of the tale again serve as a coda. Here, the storyteller addresses the readers directly, alerting them that the story was about us. Yet again we see the dialogical structure of a parable at work: 'Vi saae det ovenfra — og ovenfra seet — denne, som mange af vore og Andres Sorger, – ja saa kunne vi lee af dem! — det er Historien, og den, som ikke forstaaer den, kan tage Actier i Enkens Garveri.' (Andersen 1964: 245) ('We saw this from above — and seen from above, this, like many of our own and others' griefs could, made us smile! That's the story, and anyone who doesn't understand it can go and buy a share in the widow's tannery.') In other words, if you don't understand the deeper meaning of the tale, you can always 'go and buy a share in the widow's tannery' – this sheer nonsense may well be intentionally mimicking the parable and the notion that it could ever reveal deeper meaning. The storyteller announces here that of course the story has a deeper layer; it is not only about a widow, her pug, and a ragged little girl without a button; there must be more to it. But what? The end can plausibly be construed as the storyteller's candid confession that the reader has been presented a 'parable to which the key was stolen', to use Theodor Adorno's explanation of Kafka's parables. The storyteller in 'Heartache' signals vehemently that the first story should cast light on the meaning of life, but the sermonising, so typical of the parable, is mocked by the plot and the storyteller himself.

In fact, Andersen mocks the reader as well because he is ironical about our internalised urge to read allegorically — like assiduous pupils at school. Let's look at the passage. Note that in the English version the Danish adverb of manner *allegorisk* is translated as 'symbolic': 'Graven var indhegnet med Potteskaar, og bestrøet med Sand; øverst paa den havde de sat en halv Øl–Flaske med Halsen op, og det var slet ikke allegorisk' (Andersen 1964: 245) ('The grave was bordered with broken flowerpots and strewn over with sand; at its head they had stuck up a small beer bottle with the neck upward, and that wasn't at all symbolic.'). A beer bottle is a beer bottle and holds no deep meaning. The storyteller sabotages the *allegoresis* as a discipline and thereby all

expectation that the reader might have concerning the second story of the parable, its golden apple. It seems that Andersen employs the parable in order to reveal the fragile foundations of wisdom.

Incidentally, the same mockery of parable occurs in 'Ole Lukoie'. The portrait of the great-grandfather, which hangs on the wall, asks Ole to tell stories with morals to the little boy Hjalmar, yet the great-grandfather is humiliated twice in the story. First, Ole dishonours him in the Saturday story when he emphasises that he is Hypnos, the ancient Greek god of sleep, and is therefore much older than the old patriarch. And the Sunday story is initiated with Hjalmar turning his great-grandfather's portrait to face the wall 'so that it wouldn't interrupt them, as it had the night before'. The Sunday story about Death sanctioning a bad school report suits the great-grandfather well, as is evident from this passage. But we must bear in mind that his commentary about the instructiveness of the parable is delivered to the wall: '"Ja det er lærerigt!" mumlede Oldefaderens Portræt, "det hjælper dog, man siger sin Mening!" og saa var han fornøiet.' (Andersen 1963: 176) ('"There now, that's instructive," great-grandfather's portrait muttered. "It certainly helps to speak one's mind." He was completely satisfied.').

In a nutshell, the tradition personified by the great-grandfather is turned inside out in 'Ole Lukoie'. Theo Elm astutely claims that in modernity the parable has been replaced with the parabolic (*das Parabolische*) as a form of representation (Elm 1986: 17), in other words the modern author merely mimics the parable. This mechanism is at work in Kafka's parables and — as I have sought to demonstrate — to the same degree also in some of Andersen's fairytales and other short stories. Both writers refer vehemently to the parable as a genre, yet their play with the genre is ironical and lampooning.

Alfred Bourk has observed that one type of modern parable is characterised by the ironically playful twisting of the didactic trait of the parable. Bourk hits the nail on the head in his remarks on the parable when we apply them to Andersen's and Kafka's writings, too:

> Ein anderer Vorgang ist die ironisch-spielerische Umkehr der Lehrhaftigkeit: die pädagogische, begründende Gestik der alten

> Parabel wird dem Scheine nach beibehalten, das so Dargelegte aber ist geradezu ein Beweis dafür, daß es nichts zu begründen, nichts abzuleiten, nichts zu lehren gibt.
> (Bourk 1959: 215–16)

> (Another process is the ironic, playful inversion of didacticism: the pedagogical, grounding gesture of the old parable is preserved in appearance, but what is presented is practically proof that there is nothing to substantiate, nothing to derive, nothing to teach.)

The form of 'Ole Lukoie' and 'Heartache' strongly suggests that the reader will be presented with some wisdom, yet the storyteller turns the classic parable pattern inside out.

Andersen on the parable

It is highly instructive to consider the four passages in which Andersen mentions the word 'parable' in his diaries and correspondence. Two times at least he does so in a quite remarkable way. In a letter to Henriette Hanck from 1839, Andersen remarks that he wrote a parable entitled 'Boghveden'('The Buckwheat') (1841). This is the story of a haughty plant that wants to look straight up into heaven, which is why it does not bend and is struck by lightning and burns. This suggests that Andersen considers the parable to be precisely the kind of art with a moral which he seems to ridicule in 'Ole Lukoie' and 'Heartache'. 'The Buckwheat' is, however, similarly rounded off by a noteworthy coda:

> Og Piletræet fortalte om Boghvedens Stolthed, Overmod og Straf! den følger altid. Jeg som fortæller Historien har hørt den af Spurvene — de fortalte mig det en Aften, da jeg bad dem om et Eventyr.
> (Andersen 1963: 188)

> ('Then the willow tree told them of the pride and the haughtiness of the buckwheat, and of the punishment that he had to suffer. And I who tell you this story have heard it from the sparrows. One evening when I asked them for a tale, they told it to me.')

The storyteller asked for a tale or fairytale (*eventyr*) as the original has it — yet what he got was a parable. It is reasonable to see this coda as a metanarrative remark concerning Andersen's fairytale writing in general. The reader expects a fairytale but is offered a parable.

In a letter of 1860, Andersen tells Ingemann that he was asked to speak at Arbejderforeningen (the Workers' Association) where young professors and scientists take turns 'giving lectures on various subjects. Now, they want me to tell them the effect of poetry'. Andersen continues:

> […] jeg holdt et Foredrag, en Indledning om Poesiens Nytte og lærte dem hvorledes den traadte frem, selv i Bibelen, som Parabel og Lignelse, at man der ikke tog det lige efter Ordene, og at naar vi hørte Ecchoet, da vidste vi godt at det ikke var Mark og Høie, Træer eller Huse som svarede, men vi vidste at det var Gjenklang af os selv og denne var det vi skulle søge i Eventyret. (Andersen 1860)

> (I gave a lecture, an introduction on the beneficial effect of poetry and I taught them in what shape it appears, even in the Bible, in the shape of parable, that the people then didn't take it literally, that when we heard the echo we knew perfectly well that it was not fields and mountains, trees or houses that answered us; we knew that it was the reverberation of ourselves and this is what we were supposed to find in the fairytale.)

The function of the fairytale is, according to Andersen, the same as the biblical parable, yet we should not overlook a significant shift: in Andersen's view the parable no longer refers to a fundamental law, maxim, or religious dogma; rather, it has been privatised, echoing only with the reverberation of ourselves. As a whole the passage bears

witness to Andersen's urge to write stories in two layers, yet he sought to sabotage the genre — exactly what we see happening in the writings of Kafka, who was two generations younger than he was.

In the light of what Georg Brandes in his essay 'H. C. Andersen som Eventyrdigter' (H. C. Andersen as a Fairytale Author, 1869) notes about the parable in Andersen's writings, my argument becomes even clearer. Brandes claims that in some of his tales Andersen employs allegory. He compares Andersen's didactic fairytales with Søren Kierkegaard's parable on the worried wood pigeon from his *Opbyggelige Taler* (Edifying Discourses): 'Denne Allegoriseren optræder, som det i Fortællinger for Børn var at vente, hyppigt i Form af Belæren og Formanen. I enkelte Eventyr som *Boghveden* spiller det opdragende Element en vel stor Rolle.' (Brandes 1899–1910: 125) (This allegorising often appears, which actually is to be expected in tales for children, in the form of instructing and reprimanding. In a couple of fairytales, like 'The Buckwheat', the pedagogical element plays a big role).

Brandes's reference to Kierkegaard's parable, in which, with the support of the gospels, he tries to show that 'Sammenligning er maaskee en af de fordærveligste Arter Besmittelse' (Kierkegaard 2004: 278) (comparing is perhaps the most corrupting kind of defilement) illustrates the fundamental difference between the traditional parable, rooted in the gospels, and Andersen's tales 'Ole Lukoie', 'The Shadow', and 'Heartache', in which the joyful message is seriously challenged. When Brandes writes contemptuously about the overly explicit maxims in those Andersen fairytales which he himself classifies as parables, he can be so harsh because 'The Shadow', for instance, does not count as a parable in his view. I have argued here that tales like 'Ole Lukoie', 'The Shadow', and 'Heartache' can also be properly construed as texts alluding to this genre. They are not, however, kindred of the classic parable; rather, they are examples of the modern one. They may plausibly and usefully be regarded as forerunners of the modern, privatised parable for which Kafka is known. Both Kafka and Andersen use the parable to undermine its main premise.

Acknowledgements

The work was supported by the European Regional Development Fund Project "Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World" (No. CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_019/0000734).

Endnotes

[1] All translations from German and Danish are mine with the exception of the quotations from Franz Kafka, G. W. F. Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Hans Christian Andersen's fairytales.

[2] Walter Benjamin ascribes these qualities to the classic storyteller in his famous essay 'Der Erzähler: Betrachtungen zum Werk Nikolai Lesskows' (1936). Benjamin writes: 'Der Tod ist die Sanktion von allem, was der Erzähler berichten kann. Vom Tode hat er seine Autorität geliehen' (1977: 450). Greger Andersson observes this feature of Andersen's storytelling in the article 'Metanarrative Remarks in the Fairytales of Hans Christian Andersen' (Andersson 2005: 161).

[3] For example, Philippi, Klaus-Peter (1966). Reflexion und Wirklichkeit: Untersuchugen zu Kafkas Roman 'Das Schloss'. Tübingen, p. 116.

[4] All English wordings of Andersen's fairytales come from Jean Hersholt's translations, which are accessible online (unpaginated) at http://www.andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/hersholt/index_e.html (accessed 17 January 2019).

[5] Brandes sums up 'The Shadow' as follows: 'Det er alle Skyggers, alle Andenhaandsmenneskers, alle uoprindelige, eftergjorte Aanders Drapa, alle deres, som tror, at de ved den blotte Løsrivelse fra deres Original naaer Personlighed, Selvstændighed og sand Menneskelighed' (Brandes 1899–1910: 129) (It's a drapa [Norse heroic] of all the shadows, all the second-hand people, all the unoriginal and imitated souls. All those who believe that if they just rip them off from their original they come into possession of personality, autonomy and true humanity).

[6] See particularly the chapter 'Internalization of Reality'.

References

Anders, G. (1972). *Kafka, pro und contra*. Munich: C. H. Beck.

Andersen, H. C. (1823). Letter to Birgitte Andersen, April. Available online: <http://andersen.sdu.dk/brevbase/brev.html?bid=255> Accessed 15 January 2019.

Andersen, H. C. (1826). Letter to to B. S. Ingemann, 8 June. Available online: <http://andersen.sdu.dk/brevbase/brev.html?bid=301> Accessed 25 May 2017.

Andersen, H. C. (1860). Letter to B. S. Ingemann, 21 January. Available online: <http://andersen.sdu.dk/brevbase/brev.html?bid=9622> Accessed 15 January 2019.

Andersen, H. C. (1963). *H.C. Andersens Eventyr*, vol. 1. Ed. E. Dal. Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Andersen, H. C. (1964). *H.C. Andersens Eventyr*, vol. 2. Ed. E. Dal. Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Andersson, G. (2005). 'Metanarrative Remarks in the Fairytales of Hans Christian Andersen'. In Hansen, P. K. and M. W. Lundholt (eds.), *When We Get to the End...: Towards a Narratology of the Fairytales of Hans Christian Andersen*. Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark. pp. 155–203.

Auster, P. (1993). 'Kunsten at sulte'. *Kritik*, 26 (101): 55–64.

Baudelaire, C. (2012). *Les Fleurs du Mal: édition de 1861*. Paris: Gallimard.

Benjamin, W. (1977). 'Der Erzähler: Betrachtungen zum Werk Nikolai Lesskows'. In *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2. Tiedemann, R. and H. Schweppenhäuser (eds.). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. pp. 438–65.

Benjamin, W. (1991). 'Autobiographische Schriften'. In *Gesammelte Schriften VI*. Rexroth, T. (ed.). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Benjamin, W. (1999). *Selected Writings: 1927–34*. v. 2. Jennings, M. W., H. Eiland, and G. Smith (eds.), trans. R. Livingston et al. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University press.

Berger, P. L., and T. Luckmann (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality*. New York: Anchor Books.

Billen, J. (1982). 'Nachwort'. In *Deutsche Parabeln*. Josef Billen (ed.). Stuttgart: Reclam Philipp Jun. pp. 251–97.

Bourk, A. (1959). 'Geste und Parabel'. *Akzente*, vol. 3 (June): 214–21.

Brandes, G. (1899–1910). 'H. C. Andersen som Æventyrdigter'. In *Samlede Skrifter*, vol. 15. Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag. pp. 91–132.

Brod, M. (1974). *Über Franz Kafka*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.

Bøggild, J. (2012): *Svævende stasis: Arabesk og allegori i H. C. Andersens eventyr og historier*. Hellerup: Spring.

Bøggild, J. (2014). 'Skygger fra "Skyggen" i H.C. Andersens eventyr og historier'. In Bom, A. K., J. Bøggild, and J. N. Frandsen (eds.), *H.C. Andersen i det moderne Samfund*. Odense: University of Southern Denmark Press. pp. 21–35.

Den kongelige Theaterdirection (1822). Letter to H. C. Andersen, 16 June. Available online: <http://andersen.sdu.dk/brevbase/brev.html?bid=16238> Accessed 15 January 2019.

Detweiler, R. (1976). 'Response to Louis Marin'. In Patte, D. (ed.), *Semiology and Parables: An Exploration of the Possibilities Offered by Structuralism for Exegesis*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock. pp. 230–35.

Elm, T. (1986). 'Die Rhetorik der Parabel'. In Elm, T. and H. H. Hiebel (eds), *Die Parabel: Parabolische Formen in der deutschen Dichtung des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. pp. 9–41.

Elm, T. and H. H. Hiebel (eds.) (1986). *Die Parabel: Parabolische Formen in der deutschen Dichtung des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Erlemann, K. (2009). 'Parabel (erzählendes Gleichnis, Gleichniserzählung)'. Available online: <https://www.academic-bible.com/en/wibilex/the-bible-encyclopedia/lexikon/sachwort/anzeigen/details/gleichnisse-nt/ch/e9ab6b94d2c521a0abc6213c11ef6e44/#h4 > Accessed 22 April 2019.

Gebhard, W. (1986). 'Nietzsches Umkehrung der Gleichniswelt'. In T. Elm and H. H. Hiebel (eds.), *Die Parabel: Parabolische Formen in der deutschen Dichtung des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. pp. 79–108.

'Gleichnisse und Parabeln' (n.d.). Available online on Das wissenschaftliche Bibelportal der Deutschen Bibelgesellschaft: <https://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/de/bibelkunde/themenkapitel-nt/gleichnisse/gleichnisse-und-parabeln/> Accessed 22 April 2019.

Hegel, G. W. F. (1835). *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik*. Berlin: D. H. G. Hotho.

Hegel, G. W. F. (1975). *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. Vol. 1. Trans. T. M. Knox. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Holy Bible. New International Version. 2011. Biblica. Available online: <https://www.biblica.com/bible/niv/proverbs/25/> Accessed 23 April 2017.

Kafka, F. (1986a). *Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande*. Ed. M. Brod. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer.

Kafka, F. (1986b). *Erzählungen*. Ed. M. Brod. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer.

Kafka, F. (1995). 'An Imperial Message'. In *The Complete Stories by Franz Kafka*. Trans. Willa and Edwin Muir. New York: Schocken Books. p. 24.

Kafka, F. (2012). *A Hunger Artist and Other Stories*. Trans. Joyce Crick. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kierkegaard, S. (2004). 'Opbyggelige Taler i forskjellig Aand'. In *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, vol. 8. Copenhagen: Gads Forlag. pp. 111–307.

Labov, W. (1997). 'Some Further Steps in Narrative Analysis'. Available online: <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~wlabov/sfs.html> Accessed 25 May 2017.

Labov, W., and J. Waletzky (1997). 'Narrative Analysis: Oral Narratives of Personal Experience'. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*. Vol. 7 (1–4): 3–38.

Lothe, J., C. Refsum and U. Solberg (eds.). (1997): *Litteraturvitenskapelig leksikon.* Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget.

Meisling, Simon Sørensen (1823). Note on H. C. Andersen's school record, 6 October. Available at: http://andersen.sdu.dk/brevbase/brev.html?bid=20301. Accessed 30 April 2019.

Mortensen, K. P. (2000). 'Den sande prins: Om "Den lille Havfrue"'. In Svendsen, E. and H. Ljungberg (eds.), *Ud af det moderne: Den kritiske tanke anno 2000*. Hellerup: Spring. pp. 16–24.

Mortensen, K. P. (2001). 'Forbudt for børn? H. C. Andersen: "Gaaseurten" og "Skyggen"'. In P. Schmidt, et al. (eds.), *Læsninger i dansk litteratur* , vol. 2: *1820–1900*. Odense: University Press of

Southern Denmark. pp. 69–85.

Mylius, J. de (2005). *Forvandlingens pris – H.C. Andersen og hans eventyr*. Copenhagen: Høst & Søn.

Nietzsche, F. (1973). 'Zur Genealogie der Moral: Eine Streitschrift'. In Schlechta, K. (ed.), *Friedrich Nietzsche: Werke in drei Bänden*. Vol. 2. Munich: Carl Hanser. pp. 761–905.

Nietzsche, F. (1990): *Beyond Good and Evil*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin Classics.

Nietzsche, F. (1998). *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Trans. M. Clark, A. Swensen. Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing.

Nyborg, E. (1962). *Den indre linie i H. C. Andersens eventyr*. Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel.

Oschmann, D. (2009). 'Skeptische Anthropologie: Kafka und Nietzsche'. In Valk, T. (ed.), *Friedrich Nietzsche und die Literatur der klassischen Moderne*. Berlin: De Gruyter. pp. 129–46.

Philippi, K.-P. (1966). *Reflexion und Wirklichkeit: Untersuchugen zu Kafkas Roman 'Das Schloss'*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Politzer, H. (1978). *Franz Kafka, der Künstler*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Rubow, P. V. (1927). *H.C. Andersens Eventyr*. Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaards Forlag.

Safran-Naveh, G. (1999). *Biblical Parables and Their Modern Re-creations: From "Apples of Gold in Silver Settings" to "Imperial Messages"*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Stern, J. (2013). *The Matter and Form of Maimonides' Guide.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Sørensen, V. (2004). 'H.C. Andersens Skygge'. In Brostrøm, T. (ed.), *Sørensen om Andersen. Villy Sørensens udvalgte artikler om H. C. Andersen*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.