In Andersen’s works, a barrier exists that more often than not prevents the protagonists from experiencing adult sexual fulfillment. Indeed, even if this barrier is overcome by the denouement on the level of plot, somehow the reader doubts the authenticity of the putative sexual happiness because the resistance to growing up and enjoying the physical side of adult life seem to be entrenched in the texts. This is well known and serves only as my point of departure. What I want to look at here are the techniques of avoidance in two texts in which the barrier that prevents mature sexuality is openly explored: “Sneedronningen” ["The Snow Queen"] and "lisjomfruen" ["The Ice Maiden"].

“Sneedronningen” begins with a cosmic prologue staging the opposition between God and the Devil and the latter's ability to harm the original goodness of man with the splinters of the enchanted mirror. The setting then shifts to a small idyllic ambience created by poor bourgeois parents in order to preserve benign nature within an urban milieu. Here the two children, Gerda and Kai, grow up in a humble earthly paradise. The advent of male puberty and the splinters of the mirror mean a fall/Fall and a break up of both the happy and innocent relationship between male and female children and the trust and love between the grandmother and the boy. Instead, little Kai is spellbound by the Snow Queen, a beautiful, mature woman incapable of caring and loving. Little Kai is, thus, not only kissed half to death by the Snow Queen, but her kisses also erase his memory of childhood, making it easy to hold him prisoner in the ice castle at the North Pole in Lapland. In Kai's case, the transformation is swift and irreparable as far as he is concerned since he cannot himself escape his confinement in eternal winter.

The story of Gerda’s quest and rescue of Kai, on the other hand, is divided into a series of adventures. Her quest begins with the sacrifice of her red shoes, which Kai never saw, to the river, a sacrifice that in Andersen's system of images means giving up selfishness, vanity, and sexual desire. The next stop in Gerda's quest is at the old woman's house. Here the old woman tries all manner of ploys to make Gerda forget her mission, such as combing her hair with the comb of oblivion and by making the roses--the symbols of true love--disappear. She wants to hold Gerda prisoner as a child in eternal summer (all the flowers are blossoming simultaneously). However, the tears of pity that Gerda sheds make this attempt vain. Interestingly, the stories that the flowers tell her at the old woman's house are all but one--the buttercup's story about love between grandmother and grandchild--about the transitory nature of happiness, the wrong way of loving, or the damning effects of erotic desire and longing. Three of these embedded stories are, notably, blatantly erotic: the tiger lily’s about a sexual desire that burns hotter than the
consuming fire of a funeral pyre. But Gerda answers the lily: "Det forstaaer jeg slet ikke!" (2:58) ["I don't understand that at all" (61)]. The hyacinth's story describes the fragrance that grows even stronger; and the account of the three sisters who vanish and die in the forest is laden with erotic overtones as well. In the last story, the protagonist, the narcissus-ballerina, is described as follows: "see hvor hun kneiser paa een Stilk! jeg kan see mig selv! jeg kan see mig slev!" (2:61) ["See how she stretches out her legs, as if she were showing off on a stem. I can see myself, I can see myself" (62)]. It does not take much effort to infer what is also implied in this self-mirroring.

At this point, then, Kai is imprisoned within the eternal winter of male pride and pubescent sexuality whereas Gerda barely escapes the imprisonment in eternal female childhood, a childhood, however, beset with erotic fantasies: to wit the curious passage: "da fik hun en deilig Seng med røde Silkedyner, de vare stoppede med blaae Violer, og hun sov og dømte der saa deiligt, som nogen Dronning paa sin Bryllupsdag" (2:57) ["then she slept in an elegant bed with red silk pillows, embroidered with colored violets; and then she dreamed as pleasantly as a queen on her wedding day" (60)].]

Her pure love for Kai, however, leads to escape from the entrapment of unfulfilled, pubescent longings. Her next stop at the prince and princess's castle shows two kinds of relationships that should be avoided: the stale idyll of the crows and the puerile, unconsummated relationship between prince and princess.

Her imprisonment in the robbers' castle in the woods addresses the unresolvable link between sexuality and destruction. On the one hand, there is the murder of coachman and footmen, the threat that Gerda herself is going to slaughtered and eaten, and the robber girl's sadistic treatment of animals. On the other, there is the unsavory sexuality of the robber witch and the robber girl's threats and sexual advances toward Gerda. Like the prince and princess, however, the robber girl takes pity on Gerda and facilitates her pursuit. She keeps Gerda's muff, though, as token of Gerda's continuing sacrifice.

Whereas the robber witch may be seen as a representation of the bad mother, Gerda next enters the realm of the good mothers (the Finnish woman and the Lapp woman) whose dwellings are reminiscent of wombs. By her faith, fidelity, and non-sexual love, Gerda defeats the demonic powers with the help of the angels. Gerda's tears make Kai remember, as her tears earlier made love blossom, and her love frees him of his imprisonment in intellectual pride and longing for the Snow Queen. Indeed, the pieces of ice dance and spell out the word "Eternity," which is the answer to the riddle of life.

In the present context, Gerda's and Kai's journey back to their point of departure, however is of greatest interest. First they meet or hear about some of the significant characters whom Gerda had met on her way out. Notably, both the little robber girl as well as the prince and princess have left their homes, i.e. have severed childhood ties. Second, their journey begins during the winter and continues through the spring; at the moment they enter the grandmother's drawing room though, the wholesome summer sun is shining. During the course of these events, they have matured into responsible adults but, nevertheless, sit on and fit into their little stools. They have grown up but remained children at heart.

As is well-known, an important structural homology links the fairy tale and the Bildungsroman: both have three sequences, often dubbed home, abroad, and at home. The name of the last phase may be a slightly misleading because the protagonists most often do not return to the home of their parents, but rather establish their own home with a spouse. "Sneedronningen" is a significant departure from this pattern in the literal return to the parental home. Read in conjunction with Andersen's claim that Kai and Gerda are simultaneously children and adults, it indicates that the concept of time is central to this fairy tale.

Before discussing this point, however, let us turn to "lisjomfruen," in the plot of which realism and fantasy are intertwined. A traditional realistic story, it presents a young man's maturation and efforts to qualify himself as a provider for his family, his falling in love, his overcoming of the resistance of the young woman's father, and the young couple's happiness after quarrels and misunderstandings. The end of Andersen's story is less traditional in
that the protagonist drowns the day before his wedding. He, however, had become an excellent hunter and guide with the help of a talking cat that taught him to climb without becoming dizzy and afraid of heights. Hence, his upbringing had included the supernatural.

Simultaneously, the tale is about the malignant and beneficent forces of nature represented by the Ice Maiden and the daughters of the sun. The story presents a cosmic dualism juxtaposing destructive and restorative powers wherein death—in the story the Ice Maiden—takes the body but the human soul is saved by the heavenly powers. However, already as an infant Rudy had been consecrated to the Ice Maiden because she kissed him when as a mere baby he barely escaped the death on the glacier that killed his mother. Throughout the story, she longs for her son, but recovers him only when his sexuality awakens. Thus Andersen here as in "Snedronningen" merges the cosmic struggle and human sexuality. Nevertheless, there are important differences between the fairy tale and the story: Kai and Rudy are different ages. Whereas Kai has just reached puberty, Rudy is an adult. Kai's imprisonment in the Snow Queen's castle occurs when he as a boy is just on the verge of becoming a young adult and adoring a highly ambiguous female whom he perceives as half mother and half beloved. Rudy, however, had already experienced sexual feelings before he met Babette, and he knows that sexuality is something that has a disturbing autonomy and that it is not inextricably bound to the beloved. Babette, moreover, is not like Gerda, she is not giving up sexuality: on the contrary, she is flirtatious, she enjoys the advances of her rich cousin, and she delights in Rudy's jealousy. Whereas Kai falls and is immediately immobilized by the destructive forces and Gerda's quest means the overcoming of various hazards by virtue of her almost angelic nature Rudy and Babette's road to union and final separation is filled with temptations that they must resist, which begin, though, before they meet. Although Rudy is in love with Babette, he kisses Annette (even the names indicate that the great leveler—lust—to a certain extent makes them interchangeable). In addition to this initial mistake, Rudy is further tempted by the Ice Maiden's maids. It is difficult not to read the second scene in which he thinks he is with the schoolmaster's Annette—which he, by "mistake" kissed earlier—as a fall where he succumbs to the spell of the maid and to his own desire.

Der strømmede Livsens Glade ind i hans Blod, den hele Verden var hans, syntes han, hvorfor plage sig! Alt er til for at nyde og lyksaliggiøre os! Livsens Strøm er Gladens Strøm, rives med af den, lade sig bare af den, det er Lyksalighed. Han saae paa den unge Pige, det var Annette og dog ikke Annette, endnu mindre Trolphantomet, som han havde kaldt hende, han mødte ved Grindelwald; Pigen her paa Bjerget var frisk som den nysfaldne Snee, svulmende som Alperosen og let som et Kid; dog altid skabt af Adams Ribbeen, Menneske som Rudy. Og han slyngede sine Arme om hende, saae ind i hendes forunderlige klare Øine, kun et Secund var det og i dette, ja forklar, fortal, giv os det i Ord—var det Aandens eller Dødens Liv der fyldte ham, blev han løftet eller sank han ned i det dybe, drabende Isvælg, dybere, altid dybere; han saae lissvæggen som et blaaegrønt Glas; uendelige Kløfter gabede rundt om, og Vandet dryppede klingende som et Klokkespil og dertil saa perleklart, lysende i blaahvilde Flammer, lisjomfruen gav ham et Kys, der iiisnede ham igjennem hans Ryghvirvler ind i hans Pande, han gav et Smertens Skrig, rev sig løs, tumlede og faldt, det blev Nat for hans Øine, men han aabnedte dem igjen. Onde Magter havde øvet deres Spil.(4:154-5)(A living joy streamed through every vein."The whole world is mine, why therefore should I grieve?” thought he. "Everything is created for our enjoyment and happiness. The stream of life is a stream of happiness; let us flow on with it to joy and felicity."Rudy gazed on the young maiden; it was Annette, and yet it was not Annette; still less did he suppose it was the spectral phantom, whom he had met near Grindelwald. The maiden up here on the mountain was fresh as the new fallen snow, blooming as an Alpine rose, and as nimble-footed as a young kid. Still, she was one of Adam's race, like Rudy. He flung his arms round the beautiful being, and gazed into her wonderfully clear eyes,—only for a moment; but in that moment words cannot express the effect of his gaze. Was it the spirit of life or of death that overpowered him? Was he rising higher, or sinking lower and lower into the deep, deadly abyss? He knew not; but the walls of ice shone like blue-green glass; innumerable clefts yawned around him, and the water-drops tinkled like the chiming of church bells, and shone clearly as pearls in the light of a pale-blue flame. The Ice Maiden, for she it was, kissed him, and her kiss sent a chill
as of ice through his whole frame. A cry of agony escaped from him; he struggled to get free, and tottered from her. For a moment all was dark before his eyes, but when he opened them again it was light, and the Alpine maiden had vanished. The powers of evil had played their game.[407-8]

This situation, so similar to and yet so different from the passage in which Kai is kissed by the Snow Queen, describes Rudy's temptation and fall. The narrator—and Andersen I presume—are giving two reasons for this fall. First, it is, according to the norms of the story, a grave sin to presume that "alt er til for at nyde og lyksaliggjøre os!" ["everything is created for our enjoyment and happiness"]. Second, the woman is first and foremost defined by her sex and her sexual nature. He is uncertain of her identity: she may be the woman he once kissed "by mistake," but she is definitely not Babette.

Likewise, her cousin's advances first tempt Babette although she resists them. Two days before her wedding, though, she has the ghastly dream of her own future adultery and of losing Rudy. In the dream, she even prays to God that she will die on her wedding day. However, it is not she who dies, but Rudy. In the attempt to seize the boat, Rudy dives into the lake—the element of the Ice Maiden—where she finally kills him.

A twofold explanation of Rudy's death and the final separation of the young couple suggests itself. First, Rudy's death is fated because he somehow already belongs to the Ice Maiden, i.e. he is swayed by a sexuality that is linked not only to mortality, but also to active destruction. Second, however, death and the resulting sexual abstinence are explicitly conceived as a gift sent from God. There are two reasons for this interpretation: first, death is a blessing because it prevents future sins. Second, the narrator deems it a blessing to die at the verge of fulfillment, i.e. in the enjoyment of expectation in the moment when lasting happiness seems assured. Their virginal love not yet consummated is untouched by experience. Sudden death in the bloom of youth is, thus, constructed as a blessing because of its disruption of human erotic happiness: it both prevents future sinning, and the ensuing sorrow purifies Babette and leads to a quiet life in God instead of a life spent in the tribulations of desire.

In addition to ideological trends of the Danish Golden Age that might support this line of thinking, Andersen's configuration of the plot emerges from personal psychological considerations that precluded his portraying an authentic union between men and woman in erotic happiness. However, this is not the subject of this article. Here attention must remain focused on the literary reasons why Kai and Gerda both survive while Rudy and Babette are separated by his death. In order to attempt an answer, let us return to the time-space relations of the two texts and to their understanding of causality.

The question of genre—whether there is a difference between eventyr (fairytale) and historie (story)—is complicated. In one of his own observations from 1874 regarding the tales, Andersen comments on the change in their title that took place in 1852. Prior to that year, the titles of the collections of tales had been either Eventyr fortalt for Born (Fairy Tales told for Children) or Nye Eventyr (New Fairy Tales), as in the case of the 1849 deluxe edition with 125 illustrations of his collected fairy tales published by C. A. Reitzel. Concerning this edition, Andersen goes on to say:

Med dette Pragtbind var Eventyr-Samlingen afsluttet, men ikke min Virksomhed i denne Digtart; et nyt betegnende Navn maatte derfor tages til den nye Samling, og den kaldtes "Historier"—det Navn, jeg i vort Sprog anseer at vare det bedst valgte for mine Eventyr i alt deres Udstrenkning og Natur. Folkesproget stiller den simple Fortalling og den meest dristige Phantasie-Skildring ind under denne Benavnelse; Ammestuehistorien, Fabelen og Fortallingen, betegnes af Barnet, Bonden og Almuen, ved det forte Navn "Historier". (SS [H. C. Andersens samlede Skrifter] 1880:15:302-3) (This edition de luxe concluded the collection of fairy tales, but not my work within this kind of literature. Consequently, a new name had to be given to the new collection, and it was called Stories [Historier] in our language, the name that I find most fitting for the nature and size of my tales. Vernacular language reduces the simple story and the most daring representation of fantasy to this common denominator; the child, the peasant, and common people call the cock-and-bull story the fable, and the tale "stories.")
It is difficult to see the logic of Andersen's distinction other than perhaps the wish to separate works imitating the simple folk tale from other kinds of writing. Furthermore, Andersen himself was not very consistent in applying these labels. For instance, Flemming Hovmann's commentary to the critical edition of the tales, *H. C. Andersen Eventyr I-VII 1963-1990*, shows that Andersen referred to "lisjomfruen" both as a story and as a fairy tale. The reception of the collection, *Nye Eventyr og Historier* (1862) was favorable, and one of the dailies, *Fadrelandet*, calls "lisjomfruen" "a kind of fantastic novelle," but, like Andersen, the critics were not consistent in their use of generic labels. Nevertheless, at that time, it seems that few critics and colleagues perceived a difference between a psychological and in some respects "realistic" work such as "lisjomfruen" (which in spite of Andersen's own vacillation should be called a story) and tales modeled on the folk tale. Andersen, however, frequently altered the genre framework within which he was working. In our context, his shifting perspective is illustrated by the subtitle of "Sneedronningen" which is "Et Eventyr i syv Historier" (2:49) [A fairy tale told in seven stories]. And, with regard to "Sneedronningen," the difficulty is not only a question of the added complexity occasioned by the sequence of stories, but also involves a radical change of theme. The folk tale has little concern for the salvation of the protagonists' souls, but is preoccupied with the obstructions to achieving maturity--including sexual maturity--with making illegitimate relations between the sexes legitimate, and with social advancement. These themes are found throughout Andersen's work but always with a twist and very often turned upside down as in "Sneedronningen" itself. Hence, this fairy tale is very far from the folk tale. What, though, is the difference between "Sneedronningen" and "lisjomfruen," and is the difference responsible for the very different solution to the problem of development and maturation? My answer is that the decisive difference has to do with the different handling of time and space in the two texts.

In "Sneedronningen" geographic references are not totally absent; there are references to Finland, Italy, and Lapland. However, this part of the world is basically treated as a mythic location of the Snow Queen's castle. As for time, it is not represented as chronology, as calendar time. It is, rather, presented cyclically, i.e. the changing and returning of the seasons and with summer and winter absolutely dominant. These two contrary seasons are strongly thematized in the fairy tale: summer is linked not only to the regenerative forces of nature, but also to innocence, faith, piety, and the love and redeeming power of Jesus and God. Winter is linked with sexuality, intellectual pride, and calculation and with destruction, the demonic powers, and damnation.

Cyclical time is, of course, a basic way of conceiving of the changes and recurrences of outward nature. Furthermore, fundamental differences between the cyclical time of outward nature and the linear time of human existence arise. Whereas nature's cyclical time is conceived as repetition, human time is seen as transitory with every moment unique and unrepeatable. The consequence of this deplorable fact is that the past cannot be changed; the most we can do is to edit its narration.

In "Sneedronningen," however, the time of outward nature is molded to serve the protagonists, while human time is made flexible to the extent that not only prior states of mind but even prior relationships can be restored. The basic paradox of he fairy tale is, of course, contained in the last paragraphs. As Kai and Gerda walk homewards it is spring; as they arrive in grandmother's drawing room, they realize that they have grown up. Nevertheless, they sit down hand in hand on the small chairs remaining from their childhood. In the warmth of summer, the grandmother reads the passage from Matthew 18:3, "except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." In "Sneedronningen" Andersen offers a literalist reading and exemplification of this passage. Hence, the formative influence of physical growth on the mind is both recognized and denied. Kai's physical and intellectual growth and the advent of puberty occasion the end of the infantile paradise. The point of Gerda's entire quest, however, has been to rescue Kai by lifting the spell of the Snow Queen and, thus, to restore him to what he was before his abduction. The flexibility of the time-space coordinates of the fairy tale universe and the necessary suspension of causal relationships render the retroaction and the consequent literalist exemplification of the sacred text, i.e. Matthew, possible.

In "lisjomfruen" things are different. Despite the fourfold presence of the supernatural (as fairy tale lore, as folklore, as reminiscences of gothic tales, and as a more or less Christian allegory of opposed cosmic forces), this story has
less narrative latitude to determine the level upon which the denouement will take place. The reason is its precision with regard to the space-time coordinates. It takes place in various Swiss cantons in the years before and after 1856. And according to the narrator, what is narrated ends up in the guidebooks. In fact, his reading the Baedecker for Switzerland inspired the part of the story about the drowning of the groom. He made one significant change though: in the Baedecker, the couple had just been married whereas Rudy and Babette are going to be married the next day.

Its precise setting in the immediate past of a part of a Europe known to very many people, its reference to a past event, and the realistic psychology of the protagonists make a denouement like that of "Sneedronningen" impossible. It would be too implausible and offend against the logic of both characters and plot. Even though there are both supernatural helpers and a powerful supernatural enemy, undoing the protagonists' realistically conceived psychosexual development would be impossible because it has been the engine of the story. In "Sneedronningen," Kai suddenly falls and Gerda immediately sacrifices her own development into a maiden to save him. In "Iisjomfruen," both Rudy and Babette grow, and they experience repeatedly the tribulations and temptations of desire. Furthermore, in the central passage describing Rudy's temptation and fall, he has a vision, i.e. he is endowed with an inner life, whereas this is not the case in "Sneedronningen." Hence, despite the fantastic elements, "Iisjomfruen" is a story (historie) not a fairy tale.

Differences of genre, then, seem to determine the different endings of the two texts. In some important respects, however, they still tell the same story: the story of the impossibility of erotic love between adults, and the story about how God's ways may be mysterious to man but nevertheless lead to salvation and true happiness. The narrator of "Iisjomfruen" even becomes a little insistent, quarrelsome, and didactic at the end. He first challenges the reader with the question, "Kalder Du det en sorgelig Historie?" (4:161) ["Do you think this a sad story?" (412)]. And he ends with "'Gud lader det Bedste skee for os!' men det bliver os ikke altid aabenbaret, saaledes som det blev for Babette i hendes Drøm" (4:162) ["'God permits nothing to happen, which is not the best for us.' But this is not often revealed to all, as it is revealed to Babette in her wonderful dream" (413)]. In "Sneedronningen," we witness a miracle, the co-presence of child-like innocence and adulthood; in "Iisjomfruen," it is claimed and somehow demonstrated that the wages of sin is death, but we are told that such punishment is for our own good. In "Iisjomfruen" too, however, time is in a sense manipulated because even if the stern necessity of linear time and individual death is not denied, it is made unimportant, almost negligible. At the moment of Rudy's death, the narrator concludes:

"Min er Du!" klang det i det Dybe; "min er Du!" klang det i det Høie, fra det Uendelige.Deiligt at flyve fra Kjarlighed til Kjarlighed, fra Jorden ind i Himlen.Der brast en Strang, der klang en Sørgetone, Dødens liskys beseirede det Forkrankelige; Forspillet endte for at Livs-Dramaet kunde begynde, Misklangen opløses i Harmonie.(4:161)("Thou art mine," sounded from the depths below; but from the heights above, from the eternal world, also sounded the words, "Thou art mine!" Happy was he thus to pass from life to life, from earth to heaven. A chord was loosened, and tones of sorrow burst forth. The icy kiss of death had overcome the perishable body; it was but the prelude before life's real drama could begin, the discord which was quickly lost in harmony.[412])

There, in accordance with a central tenet of Christianity, the moment of death becomes a cosmic struggle for man's soul and in Andersen, the soul's homecoming. In his review of Andersen's collection of fairy tales and stories from 1858, the Danish author Meïr Goldschmidt wrote that Andersen revealed a bent to move from a piety of nature to ecclesiastic piety, and says: "Dette Sidste kan vare saare godt og gavnligt, men nappe i Langden for Eventyrpoesien. Thi det specifikt Religiøse vil vare Eneherre" (Eventyr 6:174) [This (i.e. ecclesiastic piety)--may be very good and beneficial, but just barely in the long run for fairy tales because the specifically religious wants to be autocratic].

Even if the end of "Sneedronningen" is in a sense flawed as well, it abides by the logic of the tale and the unity of its universe. The universe of "Iisjomfruen," however, does not possess any unity. It is fundamentally split, and its
parts seem to contradict each other. Andersen, thus, does not trust the force of his own story and he directly intervenes to set things straight. Accordingly, I think Goldschmidt is right. Andersen stops narrating and starts preaching, and the sermon he gives is outrageous because one might accuse him of curing the illness by killing the patient. This response is not just the reaction of a twenty-first century reader. Even Ingemann complained that Andersen had the heart kill off Rudy to prevent their union. However, the important question is not one of sympathizing with the detractors of the story or with the young couple; it is also a question of Andersen's inability to find a narrative form congenial to his message. And I should add that I find the denouement of the latter impossible anyway.

Works Cited


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