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On your feet!

H. C. Andersen's maiden trip into literary space

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Tab for Alt ikke Lysten til at gaae: jeg gaaer mig hver Dag
det daglige Velbefindende til og gaaer fra enhver Sygdom;
jeg har gaaet mig mine bedste Tanker til, og jeg kjender
ingen Tanke saa tung, at man jo ikke [kan] gaae fra den.

Søren Kierkegaard i et brev til sin svigerinde

Henriette Kierkegaard (1847/1953, 168)

[J]eg troer, at man paa en Vandring kanforvinde ethvert Tab!

H.C. Andersen, Kun en Spillemand, (1837, 68)

Abstract

Keywords:

Hans Christian Andersen; walking, vagabondism, urban narrative, chronotope of the road; irony.

Already during his lifetime, H. C. Andersen was an international literary celebrity and a well-known author through the vast proliferation of his work. Through his travels, Andersen was able to cross and transgress spatial, temporal and social borders and expand his international social network far beyond his home country. While travelling Andersen became profoundly aware of the fact that he represented two fundamentally different modalities of travel, as he on the one hand embodied the quintessential nineteenth century bourgeois traveler, while he on the other hand, as part of his personal background, inescapably was connected to its opposite: the underlying social image of the tramp. This article takes a closer look at Hans Christian Andersen's first book-length literary work, *Fodreise fra Holmens Canal til Østpynten af Amager i Aarene 1828 og 1829* (1829), offering special attention to the meaning of the theme of travel – notably travel on foot – understanding *Fodreise* as a liminal work in the evolution of Andersen's oeuvre.

Hans Christian Andersen was an international literary celebrity and a well-known author through the vast proliferation of his work. A crucial factor which enhanced and secured Andersen's international fame, was his eagerness for lengthy sojourns both at home and abroad. Through his frequent and extensive travels, Andersen was able to cross and

transgress spatial, temporal and social borders and expand his international social network far beyond his home country. Maybe even more important is the fact that Andersen thereby experienced the profound dynamics of spatial and temporal change, which made him aware of the two fundamentally opposed approaches to travel he himself embodied: on the one hand he represented the quintessential nineteenth century bourgeois traveler, conducting his educational Grand Tour, while he on the other hand, as a result of his personal life journey so to say, was inescapably connected to its opposite: the underlying social image of the tramp, the social misfit who rejects everything a contemporary upper-class traveler in those days wanted to be (Cresswell, 2001, p. 108). The gentleman traveler Andersen was doomed to be accompanied by his crude lower-class shadow, although he finally not only became a celebrity, but even a prestigious national literary icon of exceptional proportions (Dović & Helgason, 2017, p. 194-198).

More importantly, also in his literary work Andersen's notion of mobility oscillates between these two extreme positions, one emanating from his motivation to climb the social ladder, while the other is fueled by his assiduous awareness of his modest social background. For Andersen, his humble origin was a lifelong touchstone for everything he undertook, a fundamental point of reference in his travels into the unknown, both geographically as well as socially speaking. In short: Andersen's mobility was clearly motivated by his longing for social advancement, with a clear awareness of the distance already covered.

In this article, I will take a closer look at Hans Christian Andersen's first book, *Fodreise fra Holmens Canal til Østpynten af Amager i Aarene 1828 og 1829* (1829), (in English: *A Journey on Foot from Holmen's Canal to the Eastern Point of Amager in the Years 1828 and 1829*), hereafter referred to as *Fodreise*. One of the reasons to engage with this particular work, is the fact that it contains some of the earliest examples of what later was to become the essence of Andersen's oeuvre: the juxtaposition of the real and the imaginary. Another reason why I am scholarly interested in *Fodreise*, is the fact that it draws attention to one particular – historically defined – form of locomotion, i.e. travel on foot. Unlike what one might expect, walking – especially in the early 1800s – is not merely an expression of the natural human ability to move on foot but walking rather is a culturally and historically determined signifier, both in Andersen, as in more general terms (Tveito, 2010, p. 14; Mayer, 2013, p. 12).

In contemporary scholarship, *Fodreise* – Andersen's debut – is increasingly perceived as a liminal work in the evolution of his oeuvre and therefore, in itself, worthy of closer inspection and interpretation (Andersen, 2003, p. 108). It is an extremely playful, arabesque and grotesque quasi-travel account of a surprisingly short walk during the last hours of New Year's Eve 1828 and the initial hours of New Year's Day 1829.¹ Thus, the extensive title,

¹ In his autobiography *Mit Livs Eventyr* (1855), Andersen himself characterized *Fodreise* as: "en humoristisk, underlig Bog, en Slags phantastisk Arabesk, [...] der viste sig især i Lyst til at lege med Alt, spotte i Taarer over mine egne Følelser, broget

feigning that the text deals with some sort of lengthy expedition on foot into some kind of uncharted territory, plays an ironic and entertaining game with the reader's expectation, because anyone who is just faintly familiar with the geography of Copenhagen knows that the distance between Holmen's Canal and the East point of the island of Amager can be covered in less than an hour – even on foot. As the Danish literary scholar Lars Handesten has pointed out in a book on the city of Copenhagen as a literary motif, Andersen does not really make use of the cityscape as a motif, but rather utilizes the city as a realist launchpad for his otherwise unbridled fantasy. Although various localities in the urban topography are easily recognizable in *Fodreise*, they are functioning as a mere backdrop for Andersen's unrestrained fantasies (Handesten, 1996, p. 30; Mortensen, 2005, p. 20-21).

Andersen's self-ironic position is augmented even more when he, already in the second chapter of the text, is confronted with the book itself although it is – in fact – not written yet. The main difference between the copy of *Fodreise* the reader is holding in his/her hands and the one referred to in the text is the title, which seems to have transmuted from *Fodreise* into *Vaas*, or in English, *Nonsense* (Andersen, 2003, p. 11). Furthermore, the fact that Andersen's book – judging from its actual title – is about a walk or journey on foot seems to downplay or degrade its importance. The inconspicuous activity of walking sends a warning signal to readers not to expect too much from it, because isn't walking a bit nutty and an utterly ordinary and totally unspectacular activity, that tends to be overlooked? This negative framing of walking does not only pertain to Andersen's contemporary readership, but also to later generations and even today pedestrians are often marginalized by city planners, motorists and traffic analysts (Tveito, 2010, p. 211).

Instead of a voyage or a Grand Tour of some kind, *Fodreise* deals with a *detour*, merely a stroll, a short, nonsensical walk, and one may well ask what it is that makes this miniature 'enterprise' so special, that an entire book length travelogue was devoted to it.

The chronotope of the road and the art of walking

Literary scholars Peer E. Sørensen and Ib Johansen have separately pointed at the critical potential of the Russian literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin's work (Sørensen, 1973, p. 116; Johansen, 1993, p. 455f.) in response to *Fodreise*. While Sørensen focusses his analysis on the Bakhtinian notion of the chronotope, Johansen generically understands *Fodreise* as an example of Menippean satire. Here I would like to follow Sørensen and propose a Bakhtinian frame of reference in dealing with this complex narrative and limit my analysis to the concept of the chronotope, as this critical tool in my view offers an effective theoretical framework

vexlende, et heelt Tapet, var denne digteriske Improvisation". Here cited from Johan de Mylius' commentary to *Fodreise*, Andersen, 2003, p. 124.

and gains interesting analytical results, owing to the interplay and interdependency in *Fodreise* of time and space.

In the beginning of his essay 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope', Bakhtin acknowledges the crucial importance of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) when he defines time and space as the two prime categories – or rather the two *a priori* circumstances – that pave the way for and facilitate any form of human cognition. By employing the notion of chronotope, which literally means 'time-space', Bakhtin tries to come to a better understanding of those instances in narrative "where space and time are intertwined – where time and space touch each other, so to speak, and permeate each other".² These space-time formations can become topoi, recognizable textual features such as: the railway, the doorway, the threshold, the dungeon, the staircase. Furthermore, in literature the chronotope has also "an intrinsic generic significance. It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84-85). How then, can we apply the notion of chronotope in a reading of Andersen's *Fodreise*?

The spatial (*from Holmen's Canal to the Eastern Point of Amager*) and temporal (*the Years 1828-1829*) demarcations of the text are a *fait accompli* fixed by the title but at the same time they are questioned by the text itself. During the process of reading, the book's initial appearance is adjusted and finally the signifier and the signified turn out to be worlds apart. At the same time, the temporal and spatial fixation captured by the title, ties in perfectly with Bakhtin's considerations about the chronotope, notably the chronotope of the road, which means that the road can be understood as: "both a point of new departures and a place for events to find their denouement. Time, as it were, fuses together with space and flows in it (forming the road); this is the source of the rich metaphorical expansion on the image of the road as a course" (Bakhtin, 2006, p. 243-244). In *Fodreise* this is presented by the numerous unexpected encounters with other people, animals, apparitions and ghostlike creatures the narrator is confronted with during his walk, and the many radical temporals and spatial shifts that happen during the journey. Sometimes so-called "100 Mile Støvler" (hundred league boots) are used to cross unfathomable distances (Andersen, 2003, p. 75), in chapter 11 we are offered a glimpse of the underworld (p. 78f.), and in the third chapter a flash forward of three centuries happens in an instant (p. 22f.). Other scholars who have considered the relationship between space and time in literature have reached conclusions that come close to Bakhtin's observations,³ and this approach seems to be productive for my own reading of *Fodreise* – i.e.: that *Fodreise* as a text is emphatically dealing with the interrelatedness and

² Bakhtin had already circled around issues of spatiality and temporality in his book on Dostoevsky (1994 [1929]), but in the late 1930's he introduced the notion of the chronotope. Cf.: Van der Liet, 1999, p. 208; Sørensen, 1973, p. 16-142, and Johansen, 1993, p. 455f.

³ E.g. Joseph Frank, who in his pioneering *The Widening Gyre*, explains his view on space and time in modern literature in comparable terms: "Modern literature has been engaged in transmuting the time world of history into the timeless world of myth" (1963, p. 60).

interdependency of time and space, in particular as part or reflection of the peripatetic activity of the narrator.

An aspect of *Fodreise* that has drawn little attention in most interpretations of the text that have been produced so far is the seemingly unimportant fact that it is in fact about a walking narrator. Of course, travel and especially walking are crucial themes and topoi in Andersen's oeuvre (and biography) as a whole, and in that sense, *Fodreise* offers us a first indication of the thematic importance of travel in his later work, especially in his fairytales, autobiographies and travelogues. Walking is omnipresent and a recurring means of transportation in Andersen's fairytales, such as: *Reisekammeraten*, *Den lille Havfrue*, *Lykkens Galosker*, *De røde Skoe*, *Skyggen*, *Klods-Hans* and in the rest of his oeuvre, e.g.: *Kun en Spillemand*, *I Spanien*, *I Sverrig*, etc. (Andersen, 2003, p. 127-128).

Sympathy for the Devil?

Looking at the text itself it is obvious that *Fodreise* by no means is a traditional travelogue, nor a modernist flânerie because the gaze of the anonymous Other is completely missing in the text, instead *Fodreise* rather is a fantasy journey, an almost boundless, mind-blowing and mesmerizing literary trip. At the same time Andersen constantly refers to a whole range of other literary sources, abundantly demonstrating his recently acquired cultural knowledge and literary skills, and showing off his ability to use them in accordance to the norms of the literary establishment of his day.⁴ Right from the beginning of his novel, Andersen discloses the origins of his main inspiration, the multi-talented German author E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776-1822), paying tribute to the most important source of *Fodreise*, i.e. Hoffmann's *Die Elixiere des Teufels* (1815-16). While *Die Elixiere des Teufels* is one of Hoffmann's mature works, *Fodreise* on the other hand is clearly the work of a beginning author who is still looking for his own distinct niche, and in this respect, *Fodreise* is a trial, a test for his literary competence and abilities. In the light of the omnipresence of relativism and lots of self-ironic remarks, *Fodreise* may also be understood as a (controlled) literary revolt against the suffocating lifestyle and morals of the upper-class that finally, when push comes to shove, had educated and encapsulated him in a Pygmalionesque way (Andersen, 2003, p. 113; Mortensen, 2005, p. 21). The education and training that he received at a quite advanced age undoubtedly initiated many new possibilities and perspectives for his talent, but, at the same time, this generated an awareness in Andersen of social alienation and estrangement vis a vis his humble origins.

⁴ Besides the omnipresent E. T. A. Hoffmann, other literati Andersen explicitly refers to are, among others: his compatriots Ludvig Holberg, Johan Ludvig Heiberg and Jens Baggesen, but also Xenophon, William Shakespeare, Miguel de Cervantes, Carl Maria von Weber and many others. Cf.: Andersen, 2003, p. 11; Auken, 1996, p. 50. The abundance of explicit references to canonical literary models and predecessors may remind us of e.g. Robert Walser's short novel *Der Spaziergang* (2001 [1917]).

Andersen's adventurous peripatetic advance into literary space is above all an unbridled, imaginative potpourri in which everyday logic – in a temporal as well as a spatial sense – is turned upside down and ultimately leads to the complete derailment of the text, as the book ends with a chapter without words, consisting exclusively of punctuation. Finally, the narrator and the author fall short of words and can only offer the frame of the text, not the narrative substance itself. At the end of the story – and the journey – it is now the task of the reader to fill the blanks or maybe just let the textual emptiness speak for itself. (See: illustration 1).

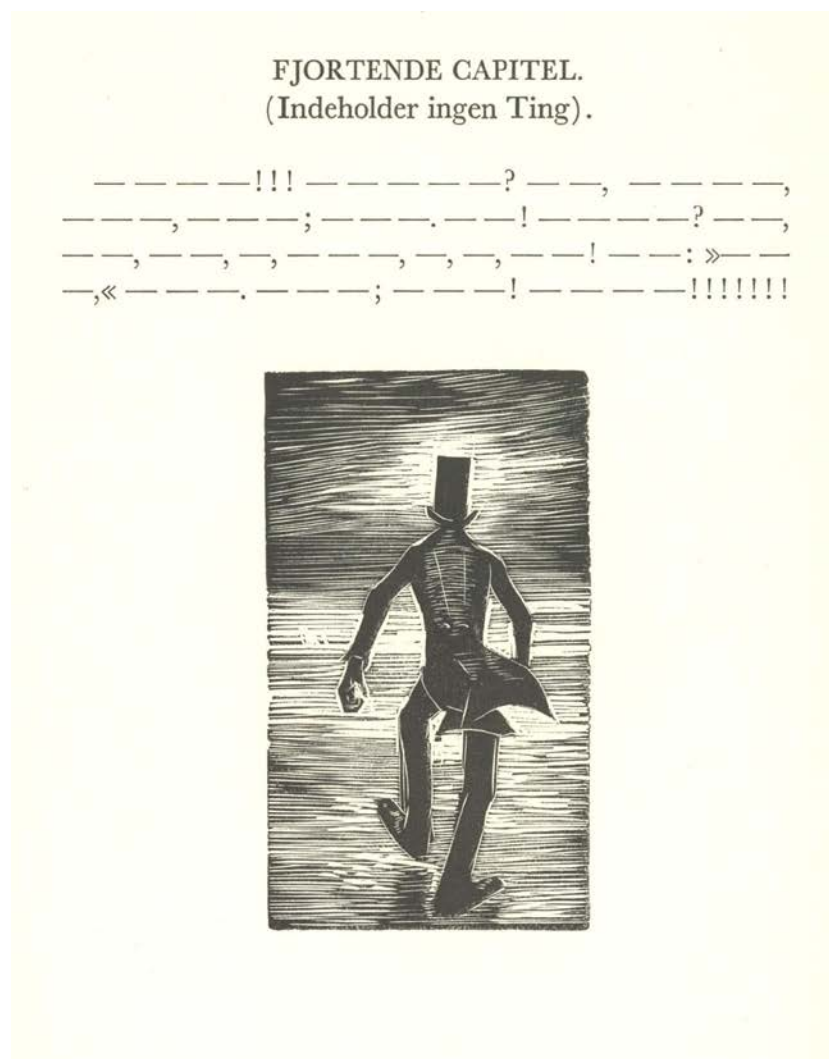


Illustration 1: The final chapter of *Fodreise* with a woodcut by Povl Christensen (1940).

In a recent article on *Fodreise*, the American literary scholar Nate Kramer summarizes Andersen's revolutionary approach to both his subject matter as well as how he deals with his intended readership as follows: "The poet thus becomes figured as a transgressor, one who *oversteps* the limits that confine him, and *Fodreise* becomes a calculated resistance to these

imagined interdicted spaces in order to literally create a new space for him as an author” (2013, p. 45-46, my emphasis). Had *Fodreise* not been published in 1829 but instead today, one might be tempted to believe that it was written by a postmodern experimental author who finally makes his text dissolve as it were, eventually leaving the reader not with a coherent image, but rather with a frame without an image, or with a text written in an invisible language. But *Fodreise* is not written by a contemporary experimentalist – who has littered his text with a series of untraditional narrative positions and hallucinatory, labyrinthine structures – no, it is written by the novice Andersen, nearly two centuries ago, taking his first probing steps into the seemingly boundless world of literature (Johansen, 1993, p. 453; Kramer, 2013, p. 40).

Fodreise commences on New Year’s Eve 1828 with a Faustian scene in which the first-person narrator is visited by the Devil himself, who conveys the ‘sinful’ idea of becoming an author to him. Satan’s underlying purpose with this strategy is that the world, in the end, will be flooded with bad literati, who ultimately will corrupt and undermine the world with their crappy work (Kramer, 2013, p. 45). Bad literature, whatever that may be, would ultimately eradicate humanity and enslave people under the rule of evil. But instead of rejecting the Devil’s encouragement, Andersen’s protagonist cannot resist the temptation, leaves his cozy room, rushes down the stairs and is out in the street in a jiffy. After a few steps (!), he meets a couple of ladies who force him to choose between the two of them. One is an attractive, down-to-earth woman offering him carnal love, while the other is a melodramatic apparition of a languishing girl, representing literature or “den lyriske Muse” (the Muse of poetry) as she calls herself (Andersen, 2003, p. 12). And from then on, the story is a roller coaster of supernatural, grotesque events, a fantastic mixture of improbable and impossible actions and encounters. Instead of walking straight towards a clearly defined goal, the narrator, as soon as he has left his home, is tossed around, thrown out of orbit, slowed down by a series of Kafkaesque encounters and random choices turning the road into a chaotic spatial and temporal labyrinth.

In the end, the narrator does reach a kind of destination, but when he finally wishes to step on board a boat that will ferry him across the Sound to Sweden, and thus beyond the frame defied by the title, he is denied access, because this would be a subversion of the meaning of the title, *Fodreise*, which is still a journey conducted on foot, and not a seaborne ‘voyage’ to another country (Mortensen, 2005, p. 21). So, when he is finally standing on the shore of Amager, the narrator has no other option than to stick to his word, stay in Denmark and try to settle his debt to Satan and write a lousy book. The question then is whether he has become one of the many inferior authors who flood the world with their insignificant or at best mediocre works that ultimately will corrupt and undermine humanity, or is he able to make it to the top and produce canonical works of lasting value and thereby save humankind?

In any event, once he has reached the shore of Amager, his final destination, the narrator is drained for words and imagination and, as the final wordless chapter clearly shows, now it is up to the readers and critics to give their verdict.⁵ *Fodreise* was – as the prominent Andersen scholar and biographer Johan de Mylius puts it in his postscript to the critical edition – ultimately Andersen’s application for full membership of the Republic of Letters and, in this way, the book was a test of his literary aptitude and maybe even his ticket to fame (Andersen, 2003, p. 119). *Fodreise* in any event marks Andersen’s first steps in the right direction.

Just walk away

Walking is by most people perceived as a fundamentally natural or intrinsic expression of human behavior, instead of being the result of processes of socialization and cultural appropriation. But, as a matter of fact, walking is not primarily motivated by the human physical anatomy or the result of any natural state of affairs.⁶ On the contrary; walking is a matter of cultural adaptation and appropriation, and especially since the late 1700s, various forms and techniques of walking, have been the subject of intense scientific scrutiny (Mayer, 2013, p. 12; König, 2013, p. 144-155). (See: illustration 2).

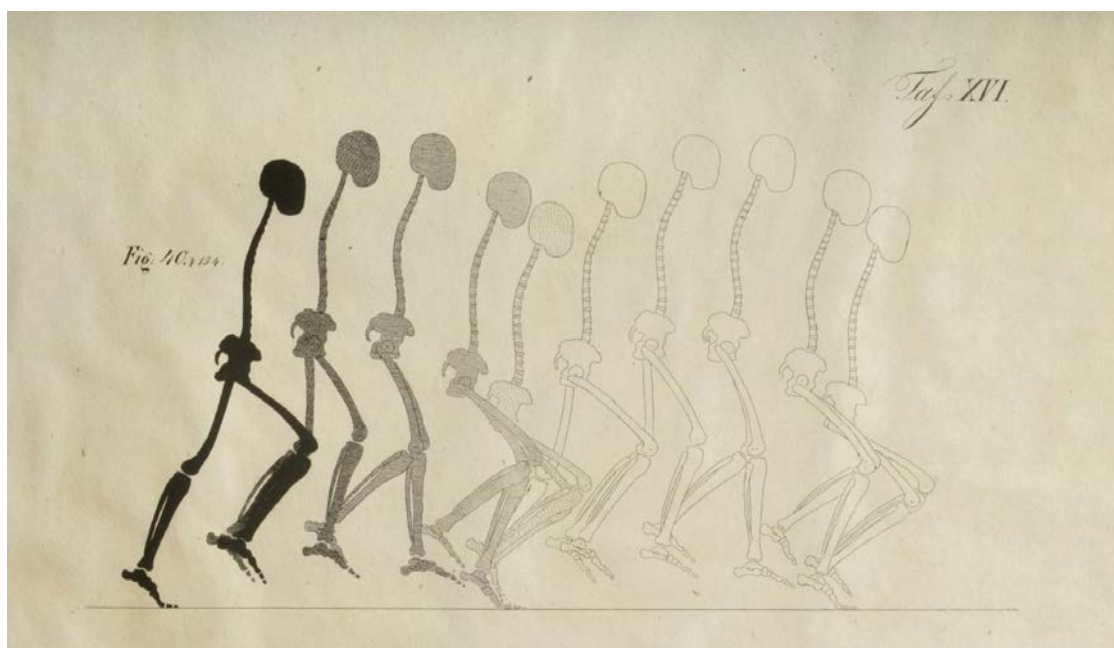


Illustration 2: Wilhelm & Eduard Weber: *Mechanik der menschlichen Gehwerkzeuge* (1836).

This interest was in part motivated by the search for what the most ‘natural’ way of walking was, in part inspired by Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s plea for more ‘humane’ and ‘natural’ forms

⁵ See for a brief description of the first – successful – critical reception by Johan Ludvig Heiberg: Andersen, 2003, p. 108-110, and the text of the review itself: p. 131-141.

⁶ See Adolph (et al.) for a contemporary psychological study about this phenomenon.

of behavior and locomotion, but also in part a result of the military's desire to improve the performance of the infantry on – and off – the battle field (Cresswell, 2006, p. 82; König, 2013, p. 180-191; Mayer, 2013, p. 41-49).⁷ Despite the many and quite divergent social interests, walking became a crucial expression of the emancipated bourgeoisie and middle-classes, a development Foucault would describe as a subtle manifestation of forms of enhancing collective discipline.

Thus, walking became an important ingredient in the embodiment of the historical emancipation of the new middle class as an alternative to – or a reversion of – the ways the nobility and royals moved around, or rather, the ways in which they were transported. Instead of walking, transportation in a carriage or on horseback was perceived as the more appropriate forms of transport for the upper-classes. In the romantic era, walking, and especially walking in non-urban, rural surroundings (like Amager!), no longer signified lack of status or money, but was rather looked upon as a new way to express humane sensitivity, environmental awareness and class consciousness (Mayer, 2013, p. 17f.), turning the Sunday promenade in the 19th century into a regulated family activity (König, 2013, p. 149-155). Jean-Jacques Rousseau, of course, became the prime exponent of this new understanding of walking, which he praised in his *Les Confessions* (1782) and *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (1782), establishing a close connection between the activities of walking and thinking.

The dynamic movement of the human body carried by its legs, became the main condition for engaging with the world in the Romantic era, and as a result, the body was perceived as the most effective, general and authentic tool for humans to explore and understand the surrounding world (Bayertz, 2012, p. 261f.). In his *Minima Moralia* (1951), Theodor W. Adorno subscribes to this idea of walking as a specific form of social and historical expression of individual human dignity and liberty, which increasingly lost terrain during the 19th and 20th century, paradoxically as a result of the upswing of liberalism:

Human dignity insisted on the right to walk, a rhythm not extorted from the body by command or terror. The walk, the stroll, were private ways of passing time, the heritage of the feudal promenade in the nineteenth century. With the liberal era walking too is dying out [...]. But if someone is shouted at to 'run', [...] the archaic power makes itself heard that otherwise inaudibly guides our every step. (Adorno, 2005, p. 162)

Traveling on foot became a significant literary topos, and later the mobile, or transient lifestyle explored by Andersen in *Fodreise* became one of the main quintessential features of modernity. Although mobility in the modern world of today is concerned predominantly

⁷ Just as a mere footnote, this phenomenon ties in with Elisabeth Oxfeldt's key note presentation on Andersen and the role of the image of the military, especially the infantry, at the 2017 Andersen conference in Odense.

with high velocity and thoroughly regulated forms of transportation especially by automobile and airplane, walking has never completely lost its attraction. Of course, walking in the 21st century differs radically from walking in Andersen's time. Today's pedestrians – at least in urban surroundings and particularly in the minds of motorists and urban planners – tend to be seen as obstacles hampering traffic, rather than participants in it (cf. Solnit, 2014, p. 254). Nevertheless, the preconditions for walking are fundamentally still the same, with time and space as the necessary conceptual *sine qua non*. Walking takes time, requires energy and some kind of space to do it in.

Andersen the hobo

Andersen's walk in *Fodreise* does not have any explicit goal or objective other than to produce fantasies and literary imagery, but the book implicitly aims at the goal of finally engendering Andersen as a literary author. Or, as Sune Auken has described Andersen's enterprise: *Fodreise* is not merely describing an everyday walk to the eastern point of the island of Amager, it also is "a nocturnal walk in the realm of poetry. A walk which will turn the storyteller into an author" (1996, p. 46).⁸ *Fodreise* transgresses the limits of time and space, both in the traditional spatial sense of the word, as well as crossing over into the social space of the Republic of Letters. In that sense *Fodreise* has the clear objective of describing and demonstrating the text as a rite of passage into a socially and culturally defined class, with a specific vocation.

Although Andersen's narrator meets lots of people, animals and strange creatures during his nocturnal stroll from the Copenhagen city center to the East, he does not associate himself with any of them.⁹ He is – and remains – a solitary observer and wanderer, which might remind us of the iconic painting by Andersen's contemporaries, the painter Caspar David Friedrich, *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (1818), or the essay "On Going a Journey" published in 1822 by William Hazlitt¹⁰ who both – just a few years before *Fodreise* – drew attention to the combination of walking, thinking and solitude (Tveito, 2010, p. 33-34).

Right from the very beginning, *Fodreise* takes a critical stance vis-à-vis mainstream literature and the Copenhagen literary in-crowd of his day, and in that sense, Andersen's text is also a clear and bold metatextual statement: "it deals with a young author-to-be who produces the book *Fodreise fra Holmens Canal til Østpynten af Amager i Aarene 1828 og 29*" [sic]

⁸ All translations from Danish are by the author of this article. In Danish: "en nattevandring i poesiens rige. En vandring, som skal gøre fortælleren til forfatter".

⁹ In this sense, Andersen's itinerary does not meet the requirements of the definition of what the Norwegian philosopher Finn Tveito calls "an intransitive walk," i.e. walking without any other purpose than the walk itself, "Vandraren – det er han eller ho som forflyttar seg til fots over kortare eller lengre strekningar, med eller utan klare mål for det ein gjer. Fordelen med å gjera den mest trivielle spasereturen til ei vandring [...], er at me alt gjennom ordbruken signaliserer at gåaktiviteten har stor verdi, og er alt anna enn triviell." (Tveito, 2010, p. 9).

¹⁰ Hazlitt's essay "On Going a Journey" (1821) can be found in his *Table Talk: Essays on Men and Manners* (1822) and could have served as a model for Andersen, albeit that Hazlitt predominantly focusses on walking during daytime. (Cf.: Tveito, 2010, p. 33-36). Henry David Thoreau, *Walden. A Life in the Woods* (1854), and especially his debut *A Walk to Wachusett* (1842), come to mind.

(Auken, 1996, p. 49).¹¹ In *Fodreise*, walking is not only a dynamic way to relate to the world and human society at large, but it also offered Andersen an opportunity to become a real author, with a potential readership and enough cultural standing to be able to maintain this position for years ahead. The remarkable thing here is that he approaches the literary domain by *not* obeying the rules of the bourgeois literary establishment of his day, while he at the same time shows that he has gone through the same classical literary and intellectual training as his peers. In doing so, Andersen plays by the rules and breaks them at the same instance. While he takes himself and his future seriously, he also presents himself as an interloper and an anti-bourgeois vagabond and – in a way – as a clown or a jester who plays by his own rules (Fähnders, 2012, p. 164). In other words: Andersen adopts an ironic attitude (Sørensen, 1973, p. 120), not unlike his contemporary compatriot the philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). Thus, *Fodreise* becomes a textual hybrid and turns its narrator into a culturally and literary speaking intangible transgressor moving from one cultural domain and genre to the other, always away from home, uprooted and detached from his surroundings. In his book *The Tramp in America*, Tim Cresswell discusses among others the codes and meaning(s) attached to the (personae) of Charlie Chaplin, who, when he appears in his tramp attire, can be seen as “a master of appropriation and tactical transgression” (2001, p. 160), which is precisely what Andersen did many years earlier in *Fodreise*.¹²

In the case of Andersen’s *Fodreise* we can easily discern the conscious subversive artistic strategy which is clearly meant to distance himself from the well-established literary aesthetics of his day, though without producing a complete breach. In *Fodreise*, Andersen, geographically speaking, moves away from the Danish capital turning his back to the city, but once he has reached his destination, the shore of Amager, he is ordered to return. Thus, a complete schism between the narrator and his origins, i.e. Copenhagen and its cultural and literary élite, is avoided. To be a rebel is one thing, but to jeopardize one’s entire career, even before it has properly started, is a completely different issue.

¹¹ In Danish: “den handler om, hvordan en ung forfatterpire frembringer bogen *Fodreise fra Holmens Canal til Østpynten af Amager i Aarene 1828 og 29*” [sic].

¹² It offers some food for thought, that the image of Andersen as a tramp, has become iconic, mirroring representations of other vagabonds and hobo’s like Charlie Chaplin on the silver screen and thereby transforming Andersen into a commodity on today’s global popular cultural market too. Cresswell also establishes a clear link between the aforementioned subversive strategies and yet another Bakhtinian concept, i.e. the carnivalesque (Cresswell, 2001, p. 166). Tim Cresswell also offers a detailed account of the evolution of the words and phenomena ‘tramp’, ‘hobo’ and ‘bum’ (p. 48-86). Just as a mere footnote about the relationship between Andersen’s text and the visual arts: it is noteworthy that *Fodreise*, in contrast to the abundant amount of illustrations that over the years have been in response to most of Hans Christian Andersen’s works, did not produce any illustrations until a century after the first edition. The publication of the first illustrated printing happened in 1940, containing woodcuts by the renowned artist Povl Christensen (1909-1977). It took another 65 years before the next artist again dared to engage with *Fodreise*. This time the publication concurred with the occasion of the bicentenary of Andersen’s birth, when a deluxe edition, richly illustrated by the artist Cai-Ulrich von Platen (1955-), was published. Von Platen recycled some of the images he created for the Andersen-book in a work about travel and insularity (i.e. Iceland). Cf.: Cai-Ulrich von Platen, *Øreje*, 2013.

The chronotope of adventure

In order to grasp the (near) mythical fusion of space and time and the intricate storytelling that happens in the *Fodreise*, I employ the Bakhtinian notion of the chronotope. First, the fact that the narrative frame merely covers a few hours of time, while the title – by mentioning “the years 1828 and 1829” – seems to profess a far more substantial temporal frame. In his work Bakhtin emphasizes a number of times, the representational and mimetic power of chronotopes:

Time becomes, in effect, palpable and visible; the chronotope makes narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins [...]. And this is so thanks precisely to the special increase in density and concreteness of time markers – the time of human life, of historical time – that occurs within well-delineated spatial areas. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 250)

This is exactly what happens in *Fodreise*. Narrative events, the chronological flow of narrated time, is reorganized and turns into a textual structure that produces spatial modes, rather than temporal ones.

When the narrator of *Fodreise* in the beginning of chapter five approaches the ramparts of the city, he not only spatially associates these manmade elevated structures with the Alps, but he is also temporarily flung back in time, relating them to the history of the Cimbrians, an ancient Germanic tribe that migrated to the south in the first century BC, challenging the Roman Empire:

Med raske Skridt nærmede jeg mig Volden. I de store Træ-Grene hang glimrende Iistappe, der dansede i Vinden for mig [...]. Den sneebedækte Vold syntes mig en stereotyp Udgave af Alperne; havde der nu kun været nogle Drengene der glæde ned paa deres Slæder, saa havde jeg havt et levende Malerie paa *Cimbriernes* Nedfart. (Andersen, 2003, p. 33, see also the notes on p. 152)

Here we see how walking a minor distance results in textual vistas of temporal and spatial fusion or, in Bakhtinian terminology, chronotopes of adventure time. And later in the same chapter, when the narrator is about to cross the bridge between Copenhagen and the island of Amager, a similar chronotopic instance occurs, as the narrator walks onto the bridge, he juxtaposes the spatial passing over the bridge with the passing of time, as the year 1828 runs out and 1829 is about to begin. By visualizing the passing of one year and the arrival of the next as a relocation, as if everything that happened during the previous year has to pass over the bridge to become history, Andersen uses the chronotope as an effective device:

Allerede var jeg nogle Skridt inde paa Broen, da det falder mig ind, at her var just Leiligheden til at tænke smukke Ting.

Hvad maatte der ikke kunne tænkes og føles paa Grændse-Skjællet af det gamle og det nye Aar, ved at staae midt imellem Kjøbenhavn og Amager?

[...]

Aaret er dog en af de rigeste Førster paa denne Jord, men kun i forbigaaende lære vi at kjende ham; hele 365 Dage bruger han til at bringe sit Flotte-Gods igjennem Livet ind i den store Evighed, og naar disse ere forbi, seer man kun Sporene han efterlod paa den store Landevei, og den lille Streg Tiden ridser paa sin Tavle, forat vise, nu gik der atter et Aar over Jorden. (p. 36)

Next the narrator not only has to wait half an hour to be able to cross the bridge into the new year(!), the entire following chapter seems to evaporate because the chronological thread of the narrative is first picked up again in the opening line of chapter seven: “Der var altsaa nu ikke andet for, end at spadsere over Broen” (p. 41). In other instances the narrator hastily proceeds and takes long strides, to increase the pace of the story and to get back on track.

Another manifestation of a clear chronotope occurs at the beginning of the chapter eleven, when the narrator steps into a barn and immediately enters a completely new world inhabited by speaking animals who also in other respects act as humans (p. 78).

The captions – or summaries – that precede each of the chapters function as a kind of vignettes preparing the reader for the content of the following pages, thus putting the reader each time in a privileged position of foresight. But these brief preludes, apart from at time playfully putting the reader on the wrong leg, also refer to spatial and temporal transitions and transgressions, while they, as a matter of fact, also establish concrete narrative thresholds and points of reference in the overall chaos of the story. One might even call them narrative hinges or life buoys on board of this roller coaster narrative.

The playful and self-ironic use of time and juggling with reader expectations, tie perfectly in with the Bakhtinian notion of chronotope, which helps us in understanding how *Fodreise* presents a nonsensical story demonstrating Andersen’s unusual ability to convert even the most unobtrusive nocturnal stroll from his home in Nyhavn into a funny, adventurous and timeless piece of deeply self-ironic and self-referential literature, successfully paving his way into the Republic of Letters!

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