

THE BROTHERS GRIMM AND HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

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Abstract

In broad terms the genre we usually term ‘fairytales’ first appeared in France, whose culture and language are central to in European history, when Charles Perrault published *Les Contes de ma Mère l’Oye* (or *Contes*) in 1697. The genre was invigorated in Germany, notably by the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812) of the brothers Grimm. Both France and Germany were large nations and dominant in European cultural life, but small Denmark also stands out in the history of the European fairytales in the 19th century. The reason is that the Dane Hans Christian Andersen wrote *Eventyr* (1835) that have also become well-known internationally. Andersen never credited the brothers Grimm as a source inspiration about his inspiration for writing fairytales. In this paper I shall discuss the history of the *Grimm Tales*, the Danish response to them, the way the German *Tales* were edited, the story of Andersen’s life and the reasons why he never credited the brothers Grimm for inspiring him to write fairytales. His narratives were not the creations of his fertile imagination only. But the story behind this, with the brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen as the towering figures, is complex.

The brothers Grimm and Napoleonic Europe

The brothers Grimm began collecting tales in the kingdom of Westphalia.¹

Unlike today’s unified Germany, Napoleonic ‘Germany’ consisted of numerous more or less autonomous fiefs, principalities, and kingdoms. One of these was the landgravedom of Hesse with less than 10,000 square kilometres and half a million inhabitants. As a boy, the ruler of Hesse, Wilhelm IX, had stayed at the Danish court during the Seven-Year War and he was married to a Danish princess.

Philipp Grimm held public office in Hesse. He and his wife Dorothea had five children, Jacob (born 1785), Wilhelm (1786), a daughter and two more sons. Philipp Grimm died prematurely in 1796. The two eldest boys were fortunate: an aunt provided them with a good overall education and with private tuition in French in Kassel, the capital of the landgrave’s lands. She was ‘maid of the chamber’ to the landgrave’s wife, the Danish princess.



The court of Hesse resided in a splendid palace which, inspired by a magnificent rococo castle in Copenhagen, Landgrave Wilhelm built between 1787 and 1798 and – with the modesty so becoming of absolute rulers – named after himself, ‘Wilhelmshöhe’. The two Grimm brothers entered the



Johann Erdmann Hummel: Wilhelmshöhe c. 1820

University of Marburg. Here a learned law professor, Karl von Savigny, instilled a love of old Germanic lore in them. In 1805, Savigny

called in Jacob to assist him. Jacob went to Paris where he copied old manuscripts at La Bibliothèque Nationale for Savigny and observed life in the metropolitan capital of the Napoleonic Empire. Wilhelm graduated in 1806 and – like Jacob, who never officially graduated – joined their mother, their sister and younger brothers who had moved to Kassel. Jacob was the breadwinner as Wilhelm was frail of health, but from now on and until Wilhelm’s death in 1859, they shared the same study (Jacob died in 1863). In 1806, Jacob joined the Hesse administration in a minor clerical post.



On its way towards Prussia in 1806, Napoleon’s war machine rolled over the principality of Hesse. The landgrave had been appointed a prince (‘Kurfürst’) by Napoleon and therefore the attack came as a complete surprise. The Kurfürst and his wife fled.

The French dissolved Hesse and integrated its territories in Westphalia, a kingdom of c. 40,000 square kilometres with c. 2 million inhabitants. Napoleon made his younger brother, Jérôme, the king of the new realm. Kassel was the only town in Westphalia to boast of a residence worthy of a king, and the Kurfürst’s residence was thus transformed into a royal castle aptly renamed ‘Napoleonshöhe’.

The Westphalian court soon became one of the most glamorous ones in Europe. The king and his government ruled the country as a model of the French administrative and judicial systems. King Jérôme hired Jacob Grimm, first as his private librarian and subsequently as his private secretary i.e. as his personal interpreter.² As the king’s interpreter-secretary, Jacob was only obliged to participate in councils of state when the king was pre-

sent, and on these occasions international affairs were touched upon since Westphalia was allied to France. Jacob Grimm had a comprehensive and first-hand overview of how all Europe was ravaged by the Napoleonic Wars.

Prompted by friends among German romantic writers, Jacob and Wilhelm started to scour German literature in search of tales and by 1807 they had found a few in old books.³ Fairly dusty work, though. However, their sister frequented a circle of girls and unmarried young women, who met, chatted, sang ballads, and told one another stories. Their sister told her friends that her brothers knew about ancient Germanic lore and were interested in tales. The brothers were admitted to the circle and told about Norse mythology that they knew well from Icelandic and Danish, which they mastered at the latest by 1810 although they may have learnt it as boys thanks to their association with the Danish princess.

It did not take the brothers long to find that girl's tales were



Jacob (1815)

also went for an independent narrator, Dorothea Viehmann. The inclusion of some French-oriented stories, such as 'Puss-in-Boots', attests to a fusion of French and German narrative traditions.

Wilhelm's poor health obliged him to go to the health resort of Halle in another part of Westphalia in 1809-1810. In Halle he stayed in the same lodgings as Henrik Steffens, a Dano-German professor, who helped him translate Danish ballads.⁴ Steffens saw to it that Wilhelm got in contact with Danish academics, notably the linguist Rasmus Rask, who was still a student, and Professor Rasmus Nyerup who, as the head of the Copenhagen University Library, could procure copies of Icelandic manuscripts which described Norse mythology.³ Wilhelm brought



Jaques-Louis David: Napoleon (1812)

re livelier – and more accessible – than those in old books. So the brothers began to take down the narratives the girls told, not, of course, by scribbling them down during the entertaining and pleasant get-togethers but by committing them to paper when they were at home after the event.

An elderly relative or two probably chaperoned the girls on such occasions, although we may assume that the atmosphere was suffused with benevolence, for the attention that two well-educated and good-looking bachelors paid to their daughters cannot have been completely unwelcome. Some of the girls were of French descent and accordingly familiar with French stories, and this



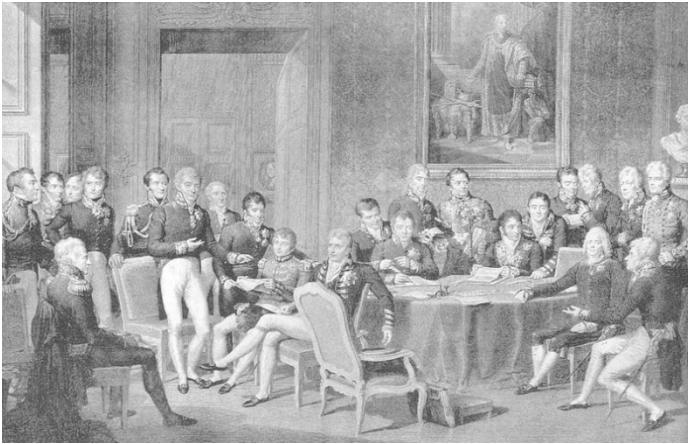
Wilhelm (1815)

out his translation of *Danish ballads* (*Altdänischen Heldenlieder, Balladen und Märchen*) in 1811.

The First Edition of the *Tales* and its dual orientation

Just before Christmas in 1812, at the same time that Napoleon's troops were beating a chaotic retreat from Russia, the *first volume of Tales* by the brothers Grimm, *Kinder u. Hausmärchen*, was published in Berlin. Since the French still had the upper hand in Berlin, the brothers' reference to the ravages of the Napoleonic Wars was oblique and couched in the figurative language typical of suppressed nations: "When a storm or some other mishap sent by heaven destroys an entire crop, it is reassuring to find that a small spot on a path lined by low hedges or bushes has been spared and that a few stalks remain standing." (Tatar's tr., 204)

In the title of the book the brothers made it clear that the tales were for *children* and thus set the stage for the *Tales* to be interpreted as (early) children's literature. However, in the preface to the *first volume* of 1812, they also spoke of the narratives as having been passed on "from one generation to the next" and "everything has been collected ... from oral traditions in Hesse and in the Main and Kinzig regions of the duchy of Hanau, from where we hail" (Tatar's tr., 205). By stressing that the stories derived from the oral tradition of the folk, they made the publication an important milestone in international folklore scholarship, indeed the first major collection of folk narratives worldwide. Thus the Grimm anthology had a dual – and ambiguous – orientation towards (a) children who liked to hear fairytales and (b) a scholarly audience interested in folklore and which preferred traditional folktales as (weak) reflections of ancient narratives. In addition, the Grimms also had a patriot German agenda which is irrelevant to the international history of the *Tales*.



The *second volume of Tales* was published in 1815. At this stage, Wilhelm was already in charge of the *Tales*, for Jacob was busy. Jacob had lost his librarianship in 1813 when King Jérôme fled before the French retreat, but he soon obtained a post with the reinstated Hesse administration in Kassel, went to Paris to recover Hesse treasures which the French had

confiscated, and attended the glittering Congress of Vienna at which European politicians and heads of state divided the spoils after the Napoleonic Wars. Jacob was part of the Hesse delegation (probably as an interpreter) and found time to send out an *Appeal* ('*Circular*') to collect folkloristic material to more than a hundred scholars and antiquarians in all Germanic lands, including Denmark and Norway.

Germany and Denmark

The intellectual relations between Germany and Denmark – whose king was also the sovereign of Holstein that was part of the Holy German-Roman Empire – had been close ever since the middle of the 18th century: the poet Heinrich Wilhelm Gerstenberg had introduced Norse mythology in German letters. King Frederik V of Denmark was a patron of the philosopher Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock who stayed in Denmark from 1751 to 1770. The German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte fled to Copenhagen when Napoleon's troops invaded Prussia. And Danish poets like Jens Baggesen and Adam Oehlenschläger would publish their works in both Danish and German.

Given the political and intellectual proximity between Germany and Denmark (in which about one third of the population, namely the inhabitants of Schleswig-Holstein were native speakers of German), it is small wonder that the Grimm volumes were soon circulating in Copenhagen.



In 1818 a scholarly study written in Danish by the linguist Rasmus Rask was sent to the brothers Grimm: they were about the only people outside the Danish realm who could appreciate the contents because they could read Danish. In his study, Rasmus Rask convincingly proved that many contemporary European tongues derived from the same language or cluster of languages spoken sometime in the dim past. Today we term it Indo-European. Rask's book had an electrifying effect in the brothers' common study in Kassel:

Jacob was writing a German grammar. In the introduction to this grammar, he made flattering comments on Rask's book. Later on, he elaborated on Rask's findings and developed them to form the so-called 'Grimm's law' that is well-known in historical linguistics.

To Wilhelm, Rask's findings proved that the 'same tales' were found with peoples in widely different parts of the world because, once upon a time, there had been a large and complex narrative mythology that had been common to all cultures: the tales the brothers had saved from the ravages in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars were but the sorry remnants of that glorious and all-encompassing canvas. He wrote a long 'Introduction' on this view for the 'improved' *Second Edition of Tales* and exclusively cited examples from Norse mythology to prove his point.

The Danish reaction and the dual orientation in Denmark

From the first contacts in 1810 until the 1850ies, the brothers corresponded with prominent Danish academics. The Grimms wrote in German and the Danes answered in Danish.⁵

Wilhelm sent the *Tales* (1812 and 1815) to Professor Nyerup who did not respond right away. Nor did he rise to the *Appeal* to collect folklore that Jacob sent to him from Vienna (1815). But he was interested, very much so. Folklore was one of his favourite fields of interest.

In 1816, there was, all of a sudden, a major response in Denmark to the Grimm *Tales*:



1. Printing Wilhelm Grimm's name on the front page, terming him one of Germany's foremost literary historians, and readily admitting that his own book had been influenced by Wilhelm's work, Professor Rasmus Nyerup dedicated a study of folkloristic material, *Morskabslæsning*, to Wilhelm and two other German scholars. He probably left out Jacob because, being a Danish patriot, he did not sympathise with Jacob's facile switching sides during the Napoleonic Wars. In the notes, the professor also hailed the *Tales* as a major scholarly work.

2. The foremost Danish romantic poet, Adam Oehlenschläger, published *Tales by various poets* (*Eventyr af forkiellige Digtere*), including six from the Grimm collection, and

3. An old 'chamberlain' (an exalted title in Denmark) named Johan Lindencrone translated some Grimm narratives from the *first volume*, in all likelihood in order to read them aloud to his grandchildren. He would, of course, leave out the cruellest stories. The translation was known only to his family as it was never published.



Johan Frederik Lindencrone
1746-1817

The next year, in 1817, a young student in Copenhagen, Mathias Thiele, became an assistant to Professor Nyerup. Thiele admired the Grimm collection and acquired a copy of it in return for writing poems for a calendar. Thiele thought that by collecting local legends in Denmark, he would complement the German work, which - in his own and Nyerup's view - comprised all fairytales in the Germanic area (including Denmark and Norway). So the next four summers, Thiele walked around in Denmark, collecting approximately 600 local legends (*Danske Folkesagn*), a self-assigned task which he found somewhat repetitive: towards

the end, he could interrupt the peasants who began to report legends and surprise them by recounting the rest of the story. He also published legends sent to him by other collectors. One of these, Mathias Winther, a librarian and a paramedic attached to the cavalry regiment in Odense, provided him with much material for the second of his four volumes. Thiele duly credited Winther's contribution in the preface and in return sent him a copy of the booklet in which he published the annual harvest of legends. Thiele's own work was noted abroad: Walter Scott sent Thiele his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* and the brothers Grimm sent him their *Deutsche Sagen*.

Chamberlain Lindencrone died in 1817. His daughter acquired the *Second Edition of Tales* that Wilhelm published in Berlin in 1819. She revised her father's translations to align them with the textual changes in the 'improved' German edition and included all tales, including the weird ones, such as *Herr Korbes*, *The Godfather*, *Mother Trude*, and *Godfather Death* (KHM 41-44). She also translated Wilhelm's new preface about Norse

mythology – so flattering to Danish sensibilities after a national bankruptcy, a prolonged crisis in agriculture, and other disasters in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars. Her translation was published in 1821 and listed her titled father as the translator.

Chamberlain Lindencrone's translation was the most prestigious collection in Denmark for almost eighty years. Wilhelm's 'Introduction' with its wealth of references to Norse mythology was reprinted in all Lindencrone editions until 1853. The book opened with a poem dedicated to the readers, in particular to her deceased father's "dearest friend", Johan Bülow, who indirectly came to play a prominent role in the Grimm and Andersen relationship.



Johan Bülow (1751-1828) was born of penniless but noble parents. His father died before he was born and his mother shortly after. He was taken care of by relatives, became an officer at the age of nine and rose to become the supervisor and advisor of the Danish prince regent. Suddenly and unjustly disgraced in 1793, he withdrew from public life and dedicated his efforts to the creation of the park on his estate, Sanderumgaard on the island of Funen, which he had acquired thanks to his wife's fortune. He was a prominent and highly respected patron of the arts and, for instance, sponsored the linguist Rasmus Rask's expedition to Persia and India in search of ancient languages. He also regained the grace of the king. He was most hospitable: 300-400 visitors wrote in his guest book, all of them impressed with the park which - although not large by international standards - was enormous for impoverished Denmark (25 hectares). The names of "benefactors and friends", including Lindencrone's, were inscribed on an obelisk set up in memory of them. Lindencrone's daughter emphasises that the park is a bird sanctuary in her dedicatory poem.

The interest generated by Oehlen-schläger led to a translation of Charles Perrault's *Fairytales* (Da. *Fee-eventyr*; Fr. *Contes*) in 1820.

In 1823 Mathias Winther who had assisted Thiele, published *Danish folktales* (*Danske Folkeeventyr*), a compilation he acknowledged was inspired by the Grimms' *German legends* (*Deutsche Sagen*) (1816-1818). The volume was dedicated to "Johan von Bülow" who was gratified.



Let us examine the orientation of the Danish books.

Both Professor Rasmus Nyerup and Mathias Thiele considered the Grimm *Tales* as folkloristic narratives. They were material from the oral tradition that represented the trea-

tures of the past and the common folk, although Rasmus Nyerup briefly refers to the Grimms' classification of the tales as children's stories ("nursery stories").

The emphasis in Oehlenschläger's anthology is on stories from a variety of cultures and provided with scholarly and poetic annotations. He does not make a case for their special appeal to children.

The translator of Charles Perrault's *Contes* was forthright that the book was meant for "for children and old people".

The Lindencrone translation leaves us in no doubt that the stories are told for children: "So enter now, ye little children, the garden of flowers [tales] that he has made with loving care!" (My tr.) as his daughter puts it in her poetic dedication.

Being partially recorded from the oral tradition, Winther's volume follows in the footsteps of the Grimms' collection work although he refers darkly to recent reforms of the Danish educational system "that bode ill for folktales".

In other words, the dual orientation of the Grimm *Tales* was also evident in Danish renditions: the folkloristic aspect was stressed in Nyerup's attitude and the inspiration to Mathias Thiele to collect local legends whereas the narrative side loomed large with Oehlenschläger. Mathias Winther was in between: eleven of his twenty narratives derived directly from the oral tradition among the folk and thus satisfy scholarly demands while fifteen classify as 'fairytales' in the modern sense and are consequently 'children's literature'.



The *Small Edition*: the end of the dual orientation of the German *Tales*

When the *first volume of Tales* was published, parents responded with criticism and anguish to the contents of some of the stories. When Wilhelm prepared the *Second Edition* for the press (1819), he heeded the criticism, omitted some tales and censored others. This was not enough, for he still stuck to the principle that the *Tales* were both folklore and for children. And since they were all printed in the same book, parents had to sift folktales, including some pretty awful ones, from stories that suited children. The *Second Edition* was no smashing success.

By contrast the English translation of a selection of tales from the *German Second Edition* by Edgar Taylor (1823-1826) sold well. This prompted Wilhelm to issue a selection of fifty tales for children. They came out in the *Small Edition* (*Die kleine Ausgabe*) in 1825 and were reissued in 1833, 1836, 1839, 1841, 1844, 1847, 1850, 1853, and 1858. The *Small Edition* was illustrated and it was more popular than the scholarly *Large Edition* (*Die grosse Ausgabe*) which continued to grow in number to 200 tales as Wilhelm threw out some inferior stories and added others from informants from all over the German-speaking lands.

Wilhelm was explicit that the *Small Edition* was for children: "The selection ... is also intended for those who do not think all the tales in the *Complete Edition* are suitable for children" (My translation). He had actively selected the stories in the *Small Edition* from

the *Large Edition* – and the “stories were the same” in so far as only two stories were exchanged for others between the first and the last *Small Editions*.⁶

In selecting the tales for a child audience, Wilhelm Grimm also did something momentous: whereas only 1/3rd of the tales in the *Large Edition* qualify as tales of wonder and magic, *Zaubermärchen*, as listed in the Aarne-Thompson categories 300-749, no less than 2/3^{rds} of the stories in the *Small Edition* are *Zaubermärchen*. In other words: in his conscious selection of tales for children, Wilhelm Grimm gave preference to the fairytale genre.

The importance of the *Small Edition* cannot be underestimated since most translations of the *Tales* into other languages than Danish have been based on the *Small Edition*. It biases international research of the Grimm *Tales* no end that real-life translations are usually based on tales from the *Small Edition* as it is easily available to translators, while scholarly discussions of the German narratives are based on the (German) *Large Edition* that primarily addresses an academic audience. I have come across scholars who believe that the *Small Edition* comprises the entire Grimm Canon of 200 tales.

Denmark is an exception. The reason is that the *first volume of Tales* which also contains most of the popular stories, was translated before Wilhelm Grimm published the *Small Edition*. This has also biased the choice of tales that are translated from German into Danish to this very day.

The Grimm *Tales* and Andersen

The relationship between the Grimms and Andersen is indeed convoluted and complicated, and it involves many people.

The most striking feature is that Andersen never acknowledged any debt to the brothers Grimm. Gradually Andersen’s fame spread like that of the brothers’, Jacob’s as a linguist and Wilhelm’s – but less known to the public – as the curator of the *Tales*. In 1841 the brothers Grimm moved to Berlin where they were appointed professors and members of the German Academy of Sciences. In 1844, Hans Christian Andersen was in Berlin, the capital of the Prussia. He went to the brothers’ home looking forward to a meeting of kindred souls. The maid who opened the door asked him which brother he wished to see, and he answered: “The one who has written most”. But this turned out to be Jacob, the linguist, who had no idea who Andersen was. Andersen declined the offer to see Wilhelm and went home, extremely mortified.⁷ A couple of weeks later, Jacob went on his only trip to Scandinavia that had fascinated him all through his scholarly career. In Copenhagen he read a paper to scholars of Nordic Studies. Apart from a lecture in Latin, this is the only address Jacob Grimm is



The brothers Grimm (1855)

known to have delivered in another language than German. By then Jacob had also read some of Andersen's fairytales, so he went to see Andersen to apologize.

Andersen's history

Let us return to the island of Funen, to the town of Odense, which, with 6,000 inhabitants, was the third largest city in Denmark. Many of the noblemen that spent summer at their manor houses on their estates on Funen, moved to mansions in Odense in wintertime. The town had a theatre and a cavalry regiment.

Hans Christian Andersen was born in Odense in 1805 as the son of a maid and a cobbler.⁸ The boy stood apart as a lanky and lonely child, lost in reading, and absorbed in the theatre from an early age. It was a tumultuous epoch. After a British bombardment of Copenhagen in 1807, Denmark became a French ally. Napoleon sent Spanish troops



Andersen's childhood home

to support a Danish invasion of Sweden. The Spaniards arrived in Odense in 1808, and Andersen saw and heard of them as a child. Since the British blockaded the crossing of the Great Belt, the Spaniards had to stay on Funen where they were quartered with civilians, including at Sanderumgaard. Many of the Spanish officers were delighted with Johan Bülow's park. They stayed only some months before British men-of-war took them back to Spain where they joined the troops that fought the Napoleonic invaders.

Hans Christian Andersen's parents were poor. In 1812, his father enlisted in the army to try and make his fortune. He got no further than southern Denmark. He returned in 1814, destitute and in poor health, to die two years later. Hans Christian's mother could barely support herself as a washerwoman and therefore sent her son (unsuccessfully) in service and later to a charity. After his confirmation in 1819, at the age of fourteen, he had a meagre sum of money and decided to go and conquer the world. He went to Copenhagen by coach, alighted outside the city gate and walked into the Danish capital.

Poor as he was, possibly in desperation as well as in search of protection, he immediately began to call on prominent people and families in Copenhagen. He would knock on the door, enter, often without introducing himself, and do a performance, declaim a poem or two, recite a passage from a drama, and top it with a ballet. Soon influential people knew who Andersen was and they made collections for him. He would then show his gratitude by doing his act. One benefactor whom he thanked in this way was Mathias Thiele who later took pride in being Andersen's friend before he became famous.

Andersen was given singing lessons but lost his voice. He tried his luck as a ballet dancer but was too clumsy to make it, although he did once appear on stage in the Royal Theatre as an extra. At long last his benefactors realised that he needed formal education. Therefore, he was awarded public money to be sent to a boarding school. Here the sensiti-

ve boy was living with the head of the school, a stern man whom Andersen disliked (1822-1827). He finally graduated thanks to private tuition so that he was, in principle, a student at the University of Copenhagen (1829).

The location of Andersen's lodgings when he began to write fairytales

Andersen wrote some poetry and drama, had moderate success and continued to receive assistance from people who saw his extraordinary talent. He began touring Denmark, mentioning every family he met and every manor he visited as part of the then normal diary-cum-letter-writing. He went on a brief trip to Germany and befriended German authors (1831). In 1833 he was awarded a state grant for a prolonged tour that brought him to Germany, France, Switzerland, and Italy. Italy fascinated him, he loved it beyond measure.

In August 1834, he returned to Copenhagen and soon settled in a small flat by the canal of 'Nyhavn'. His flat was situated less than two hundred metres from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts with the Botanical Garden in between.⁹ The Academy was housed in an old city mansion in which the Academy's secretary had a comfortable flat. The secretary was Andersen's friend Mathias Thiele, the folklore collector. Thiele had been appointed professor, he had married and had two little daughters, Ida and Hanne, who were the darlings of the artists frequenting the home: they were depicted by well-known painters and sculptors.¹⁰

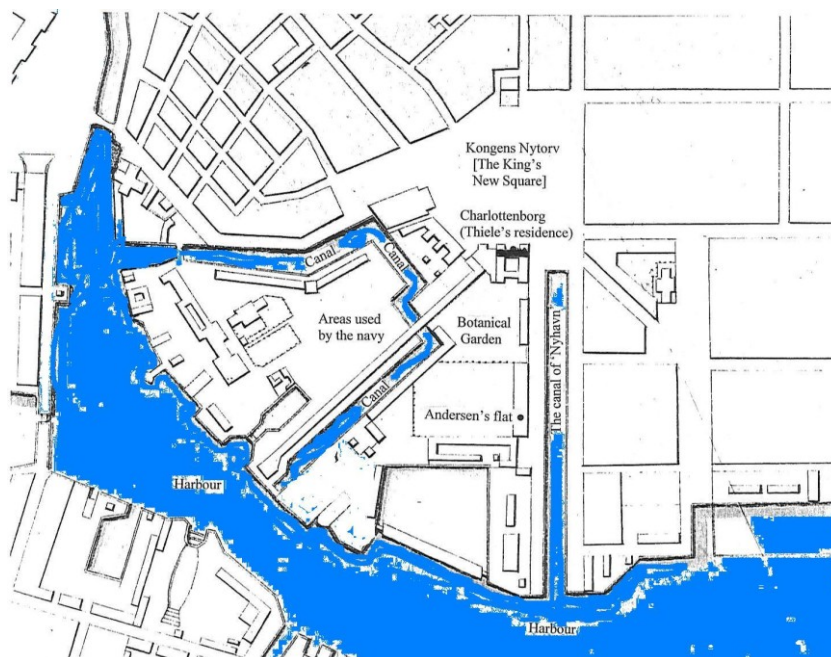


Hans Christian Andersen set to work intensely on his first full-length novel, *The Improvisatore*, which was inspired by his trip to Italy, and which he finished in early 1835. He was alone – he never married but was frequently infatuated. He started doing his usual rounds to prominent families, having dinner with them on a regular basis. He favoured some families, such as that of the famous Danish physicist, Hans Christian Ørsted (1777-1851), by then in his late fifties and well-known as the physicist who discovered electromagnetism.

The Thieles were an artistic family and Andersen also enjoyed visiting them. Andersen's flat was surrounded by canals and military areas that were off-limits to civilians. Accordingly, he would have to pass the city mansion in which the Thiele family lived, every time he went to other parts of Copenhagen.

Thiele had attractions beyond a dinner table and a social life. He was taking care of the enormous national collection of copper-plate engravings. Andersen admired copper-plate etchings and during the Christmas season he notes that “it was most charming in Professor Thiele’s home where one can see beautiful copper-plate etchings and objects of art.”¹¹

Like Andersen, Thiele was delighted with Italy: early in 1835, he helped organise the first celebration in Copenhagen of the ‘Roman birthday’ of the well-known Danish sculptor, Bertel Thorvaldsen (1768-1844), who was a central figure in Rome for Danish artists, including Andersen. Furthermore, Thiele would sometimes set up a ‘natural theatre’ in which he and his friends would recreate sceneries with mountains, water, light, and colour and which were ‘Italianate’.

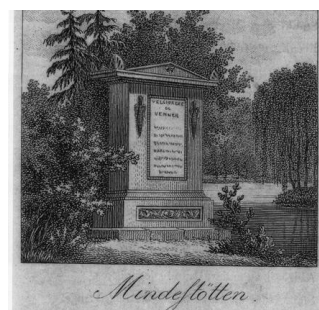


The books in Mathias Thiele’s library

Thiele also had books.¹² Hans Christian Andersen was an avid reader. Among the books was the *First Edition* of the *Grimm Tales* (1812-1815) in German which, it will be remembered, Thiele had acquired thanks to his poetic efforts. Hans Christian Andersen knew German. He may, however have preferred the Lindencrone translation from 1821.

In addition, there were four or five other works that would catch Andersen’s eye. I have already discussed most of them, namely Oehlenschläger’s anthology of stories (1816), Charles Perrault’s *Fee-eventyr*, Thiele’s own Danish local legends (1817-1821), and Mathias Winther’s collection from Funen (1823). In addition he would, as an admirer of copper-plate engravings, have noted a book about the park of Sanderumgaard with illustrations made by the best copper engraver in Denmark, Professor Johan Frederik Clemens.

Let us have a close look at Winther’s *Danish Tales* (1823). They leave something to be desired in terms of literary style as well as contents in so far as two tales deal with incest, but they are eminently suited for reading aloud. It may be that in the summers of 1821 and 1822 Bülow invited Winther to come to Sanderumgaard and entertain children whenever he had one of his dinner-parties (8-20 guests).¹³ This would offer



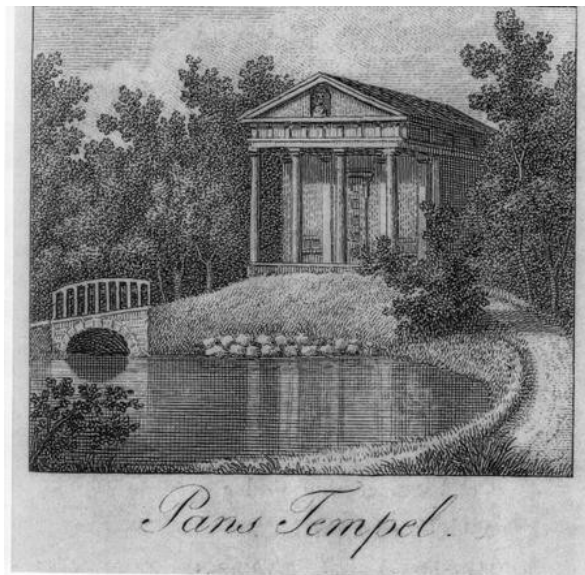
Clemens' etching of the memorial tablet for Bülow's friends

Winther a chance of testing the tales with a live child audience in the park while the parents were at table. We shall, however, never know for although Bülow kept a diary, the records for these years have been lost.

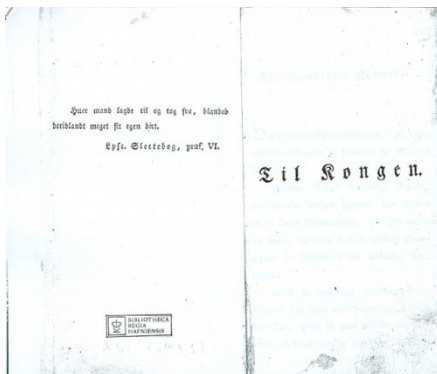
However this may be, Winther's collection was also dedicated to Johan Bülow. In his dedication Winther refers to Bülow's high rank ("Geheimeconferentsraad") and that he had been awarded the highest Danish orders, the "Order of the Elephant" and the "Order of the Danish Flag".

Bülow took note of it. The next year he approached Mathias Winther and asked him to write some poems for a book about the sights in the romantic park of Sanderumgaard. Bülow took great pride in his park. He had personally constructed it out of swamplands. Winther spent much of spring 1824 at the estate to compose the verses. The book came out in December 1824 as *The Park of Sanderumgaard. Poems (Sanderumgaards Have. Digtninge)*. It was distributed to admirers of the garden.

Thanks to Professor Clemens engravings, Clemens and Winther thus escort readers on a tour of the park that was dotted with about a dozen monuments, gazebos, and pavilions, each with a purpose or concept of its own ('Thoughtful', 'the Norwegian cottage', etc.), surrounded by appropriate vegetation (e.g. respectively, dense wood, and larch and spruce). They were connected by winding canals and paths, and there was an abundance of flowers and twittering birds everywhere.



Winther expresses the hope that "future generations may long find cheer in viewing this paradise on Funen!" Furthermore he dedicates the book to Johan Bülow, listing his exalted title and the prominent orders bestowed on him.



If Andersen still had any lingering doubt about the esteem in which fairytales and folkloristic material was held among the highest ranks and the aristocracy in Denmark, he only had to pick down Thiele's *Danish Legends*. These had been dedicated:

"TO THE KING.

Most gracious King! It is the legend of the Danish peasantry which I most humbly dare convey to Your Majesty."

When Thiele had been received in audience by the King and handed him a specially bound edition in 1823, it turned out that his Majesty had had the grace of reading Thiele's *Legends* in preparation for the meeting.

Andersen's response to Thiele's books

I suggest that these discoveries in late 1834 made Andersen's mind wander back to Odense, despite his intense absorption with the *The Improvisatore*.

He had occasionally visited his mother in Odense. She died while he was in Italy on his first European tour. Yet he thought of his native town. I believe that the collections of tales that he found in Thiele's home reminded him of his childhood or at least contributed to do so: in November 1834, Andersen began to recall the Spanish troops in Odense in 1808 and intended to write about them.¹⁴ On 1 January 1835, he told a friend that he was beginning to write "children's tales". By February he was sufficiently surefooted to tell a colleague that he was committing to paper "fairytales for children which I do not believe are known." His fairytales were "based on some that I have known as a child and which made me happy. I have written them the way, I myself would tell them to a child." He had clearly read all books that contained stories along the lines of his proposed fairytales for in a letter written in March he is sure that his fairytales are "original".

By the middle of March 1835, Andersen informed a friend that Professor Hans Christian Ørsted had told him that while *The Improvisatore* would make him famous, his fairytales would make him immortal. It goes without saying that an eminent physicist like Ørsted (who also held a high rank, a fact not escaping Andersen's notice) did not read Hans Christian Andersen's manuscripts. He must have listened to the tales when Andersen told them to children, possibly his own, for some years later Andersen tells us that Ørsted's daughter, Sophie, used to listen to his fairytales.

By the end of March 1835, Andersen listed the four stories he intended to publish in his first *Booklet of fairytales*, namely 'The Tinder Box', 'Little Claus and Big Claus', 'The



Princess on the Pea', and 'The Little Ida's Flowers'. The first two are from Andersen's childhood, and in all likelihood, the proud soldier returning from the war in 'The Tinder Box' reflects his father's high expectations about making his fortune as a soldier.¹⁵ 'The Princess on the Pea' is more complex. But the last tale, 'The Little Ida's Flowers', is an intimate, personal story told to Thiele's eldest daughter, Ida, who was now four and a half years old.

Anybody who has read out a story to children will recognise a child's fascination with a story involving a character, perhaps even the protagonist, with its own name. This is exactly what we meet with in this story: it involves a student who is good at paper cutting and who tells fairytales. This is a self-portrait of Andersen who was a 'student', was good at paper



Regimentsoldater med musikinstrumenter og karabiner fra Det frivillige catalanske Regiment. De bærer chakot efter fransk forbillede og har fået nye uniformer efter reglementet af 1805. Instrumenterne er tamburin og blæseinstrumentet serpent. Brødrene Suhr.

cutting, and who liked to tell stories to a little girl, Ida. The story describes the life and doings of little Ida. We are told about her doll, her toy cradle, and how she sees swans at the King's summer palace outside Copenhagen proper. Ida says that she and her mother were there "the day before". Andersen tells Ida how the flowers dance and have balls at night in the royal palace and this is why they look tired and need rest.



The flowers in the story are spring flowers that do not blossom at the same time (snowdrops, hyacinths, tulips). We may presume that Ida has seen these flowers in the Botanical Garden of Copenhagen which was situated between her and Andersen's flats. Andersen must have told the story to Ida many times in the course of spring and adding new flowers which they had both seen. The story developed as the flowers started to bloom and then withered in late winter and early spring. It is – I believe – intended to be an optimistic story: when they "are tired", wither and seem to die, the flowers have actually stored energy in their bulbs. The bulbs may be dug down, or be 'buried' in earth, but they will sprout the next year. Their nightly dances reflect this cycle of life. The story is meant to have a pleasant and surprising ending that would gladden Ida's heart. It was meant to make her happy.

By the end of April, Hans Christian Andersen had handed in two slim booklets, a total of seven fairytales, to the printer's. *The second booklet*, however, did not come out right away because the cautious publisher was not convinced *The Improvisatore* and the fairytales would sell.

The Improvisatore came out on 8 April 1835. Andersen was delighted. Easter was approaching.

Then little Ida's mother fell ill and unexpectedly died in the night between 15 and 16 April 1835, Maundy Thursday. Death cast its shadow over Ida's life. I believe that death was also, somewhat awkwardly, introduced in 'The Little Ida's Flowers'. The published

story is discordant, it is not optimistic; the flowers in the story are cut and promise to bloom “this summer”. Unlike most good fairytales, it is difficult to interpret the story at different levels. It is not popular in the Hans Christian Andersen canon, and at least one critic has described it as “weak”. Did Andersen make last minute corrections, or did he go to the printer’s to introduce changes in the proofs? We shall never know, but the touches of death are not at all deftly applied. It smacks of haste.¹⁶

If my reading is correct, ‘The Little Ida’s Flowers’ is a final tribute to the mother of a little bereaved daughter and placed on her grave by Little Ida and her friend, Hans Christian Andersen.

The first four *Fairytales told for children* by Andersen appeared on 8 May 1835.

Grimm and Andersen fairytales on national and international scenes

Let us remain in Copenhagen: the second booklet of Andersen’s *Fairytales* came out at Christmas 1835, at the same time that Professor Christian Molbech published nine tales as *A Christmas Gift for Children* from the second Grimm volume which Lindencrone had not



attempted to render. Molbech had already published six translations from this volume in a *Reader* for school in 1832, so he was no newcomer to the field. Andersen did not like Molbech who constantly rejected the plays he submitted to the Royal Theatre. In the same way that Andersen continued to publish new fairytales, Molbech put out new *Christmas Gifts* until 1839. So since 1835 Danish readers, above all children, have had access to both Grimm and Andersen fairytales. Both parties benefited from the competition and so did a third party when the second edition of Chamberlain Lindencrone’s compilation was issued in 1839.

The interplay between the Grimm and Andersen fairytales in Denmark is evident from the below listing:

- 1816: Grimm (tr. Oehlenschläger: 6 tales).
- 1822 Grimm (tr. Fausting: 4 tales).
- 1821/23 Grimm (tr. Lindencrone; 86 tales (volume 1 of 1812)).¹⁷
- 1832: Grimm (*Reader*; tr. Christian Molbech: 6 tales).
- 1835: Andersen (*First booklet*: 4 fairytales).
- 1835: Grimm (*Christmas Gift*; tr. Christian Molbech: 9 tales).
- 1835: Andersen (*Second booklet*: 3 fairytales).
- 1836: Grimm (*Christmas Gift*; tr. Christian Molbech: 5 tales).
- 1837: Grimm (*Reader*; tr. Christian Molbech: 6 tales).
- 1837: Andersen (*Third booklet*: 2 fairytales).
- 1838: Grimm (*Christmas Gift*; tr. Christian Molbech: 4 tales).
- 1838: Andersen (*New Collection, first booklet*: 3 fairytales).
- 1839: Grimm (*Tales*; tr. Lindencrone, 2nd edition: 86 tales).

1839: Andersen (*New Collection, second booklet*: 3 fairytales).
1839: Grimm (*Christmas Gift*; tr. Christian Molbech: 1 tale).
1842: Grimm (*Reader*; tr. Christian Molbech: 6 tales).
1842: Andersen (*First Collection, third booklet*: 4 fairytales).

Andersen and Grimm: the interplay on the international scene

In 1839 Andersen fairytales were translated into German. The picture is the same:

1839: Andersen (tr. von Jenssen).
1839: Grimm (*Small Edition*).
1840: Grimm (*Large Edition*).
1841: Grimm (*Small Edition*).
1843: Grimm (*Large Edition*).
1844: Grimm (*Small Edition*).
1844: Andersen (tr. Reuscher).
1845: Andersen (tr. Petit).
1845: Andersen (tr. von Jenssen (reprint)).
1846: Andersen (tr. von Jenssen (reprint)).
1846: Andersen (tr. Zeise).
1847: Grimm (*Small Edition*).
1848: Andersen (tr. anon. (Publisher: Lorck)).

The German translations of Andersen were hugely successful. In 1843, they were translated from German into English and the pattern was repeated:

1843: Andersen (tr. Peachy).
1843: Grimm (tr. anon. (Publisher: Burns)).
1845: Grimm (tr. anon. (Publisher: Burns)).
1846: Grimm (tr. Taylor).
1846: Andersen (tr. Boner).
1846: Andersen (tr. Howitt).
1847: Andersen (tr. Lohmeyer).
1847: Andersen (tr. Speckter).
1847: Andersen (tr. anon).
1847: Andersen (tr. Boner).
1849: Grimm (tr. anon).
1851: Grimm (tr. Chatelain).

In due time Grimm and Andersen came out in Spain. They did so in 1879. In other parts of the world, Andersen and Grimm also go hand in hand. In Japan the Grimms were published in 1887 and Andersen followed in 1888. In South Africa, they were published the same year: 1918.

Many critics and scholars insist that the Andersen and Grimm fairytales are worlds apart.

Whatever they are, the brothers Grimm and Andersen are not competitors – they never were. On the contrary, they promote one another. The explanation is simple: children do not listen to scholars. They listen to fairytales. The stories from one source make them ask their parents and family to procure more of the same stuff.

The fairytales are not all equally ‘good’ – it is only about ten to fifteen stories from each canon that are internationally famous. The stories deal with brutality: just think of Grimms’ ‘Hansel and Gretel’, in which there is potential cannibalism and downright murder, or of Andersen’s ‘The Tinder Box’ in which there is no mercy for the witch. Yet the overwhelming majority of the stories deals with problems of puberty, with breaking away from parents and becoming independent, with the magic of falling in love, and love everlasting, with cunning, with taking advice from old people, and with social mobility. They also conjure forth worlds where the king (a parent) will put things in order, in which magic works when brave heroes, spanning from oppressed servant girls to valiant knights can overcome insurmountable obstacles. These are marvellous worlds, worlds in which wickedness is punished, often very severely. Solidarity between children, humans and animals are held in high esteem, and good deeds and decent behaviour are rewarded, sometimes with riches beyond one’s wildest dreams but nearly always with a happy life.

The success of the European fairytales is a literary achievement that transcends narrow and nationalistic bonds. But at the same time, it should be pointed out that their success was also due to social factors. One of them was that at the time when they first appeared there was little ‘children’s literature’. The second one is found in their themes: they clearly promote middle-class or bourgeois values and the rewards that are handed out are material and physical ones that can be understood by everybody.¹⁸ Evil is punished and good is rewarded. The tales also imply that compliance with the middle-class norms and values will be rewarded with peace of mind and social advancement. Perhaps this is the true explanation of their success in more than 100 languages. They have been invited to cultures in which the middle classes – often as nuclear families - have stabilised society. It may be that to-day’s internationalised and globalised world will call for other literatures, without Charles Perrault, without the brothers Grimm, and without Andersen. But let us bow in reverence to what they did: their fairytales have unfolded marvels to untold millions of children for over two-hundred years.

The mystery of Andersen and the Grimms

I have left the comment on why Andersen never acknowledged any debt to the brothers Grimm until the end.

We must return to Odense and Andersen’s recollections of his childhood. In 1834, he remembered the Spanish soldiers and the stories told in his childhood when he followed his mother to the creek when she washed. We shall not know whether the washerwomen discussed Sanderumgaard and the fine Spanish officers who lodged there.

Mathias Winther

It will be remembered that Matthias Winther had dedicated his folktales (1823) and his book on the park of Sanderumgaard to Johan Bülow (1824). Johan Bülow had been so pleased with the latter book that he gave Winther a handsome sum and allowed him to keep the proceeds from the sales.



Winther was now a wealthy man. He disliked the commander of the regiment in Odense who treated him arrogantly. He was happy to set out for Copenhagen where he would now fulfill his life-long ambition of rising from being a paramedic to becoming a surgeon. At the University in Copenhagen, he was disgusted with his fellow students' irreverent and rude behaviour when they performed dissections and autopsies of dead bodies for their studies.

His approach was more sophisticated than the coarseness he met with. He had published booklets on the hunting and extermination of martens while he worked in Odense, and in Copenhagen he studied extensively and subsequently published *A Handbook of the literature of the natural sciences in Denmark, Norway, [Schleswig], and Holstein down to the year 1829 for the use of naturalist & physicians until the year of publication.*

Winther failed twice to pass his finals as a surgeon. Sheer coincidence and bad luck made him fail at the third and final try in 1830.

He was still a man of means and in 1832 he published a book on *Medical and related treatises in Denmark, Norway, [Schleswig] and Holstein down to the year of publication.*

He began to publish a newssheet typical of the age with assorted news, 'Raketten' (The Rocket). Sometime in early 1832, a soldier who had served in the regiment in Odense approached Winther and claimed that he had not received the money for his lodging at a time when the soldiers were quartered in town after a fire in the barracks in 1816.



approached Winther and claimed that he had not received the money for his lodging at a time when the soldiers were quartered in town after a fire in the barracks in 1816.

Feeling secure as a man of science and an editor, and with no small hatred of the commander of the regiment, Winther was delighted to help the soldier. He printed the soldier's complaint as well as his own advice that he should turn to his superiors.²³

Taking it that the regiment's honour was at stake, the commander in Odense was infuriated. He sued Winther. Winther had no idea of what he was up against. Colonel Christian Høegh-Guldberg was the son of a former prime minister in Denmark. His name figured prominently in Danish history and was inscribed on Johan Bülow's obelisk for 'friends and benefactors'. After the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Colonel Høegh-Guldberg and his siblings had cancelled an enormous debt the Danish king owed them.

Winther wrote derisory pamphlets, tried to ridicule the affair, and to have the suit thrown out of court. There were a couple of pamphlets by third parties, both of them fairly oblique in their respective defence of, and attack on Winther.

In July 1832 Hans Christian Andersen was invited to stay with the Høegh-Guldberg family in Odense. The colonel had been his very first patron in his youth; he had seen to it that Andersen, then a mere boy, was received in audience by the regional general, the future king of Denmark, and his attitude to Andersen was one of paternal love. Andersen tells about the family's anguish:

"It is a sad sight to see how, by his outrageous behaviour towards all Guldbergs, Mathias Winther has distressed the whole family. They take it to heart and cannot hide it. Today Winther has arrived in Odense all made up and in a fine dress in a travelling carriage. People are scared of him."



On one of the last days of his stay, 2 August 1832, Andersen was taken to the park of Sanderumgaard. At a guess, the colonel joined him – in order to make quite sure that there was no more support for Winther from Sanderumgaard.

He need not have worried. Johan Bülow had died in 1828, and a distant relative who concentrated on surviving the agricultural crisis had taken over. Winther could not expect any assistance from that quarter. The new owners hospitably offered Andersen to stay with them the next time he was around

and invited him inside. He reports

"Here I saw a copper-plate engraving which fascinated me. It showed a rock and the sea was barely discernible far below but rising in the grey and storm-torn horizon where a small speck, a ship, was sailing. In the foreground on the rock was Napoleon, his back turned to the spectator but one instantly recognised him. A large gull was flying past him."

The new owners had not bothered about keeping up the large and expensive park. It had fallen into decay and fell short of Andersen's expectations:

"I have been at Sanderumgaard. The garden is beautiful, but it is a laugh that people have talked so much about it! It is a swamp of alder trees with paths and inscriptions galore." "I wonder why Molbech and other poets (of his calibre) have been so fascinated and poetic about it."

On his return trip to Copenhagen, there was a surprise in store for him in the provincial town of Roskilde. He describes it in a letter:



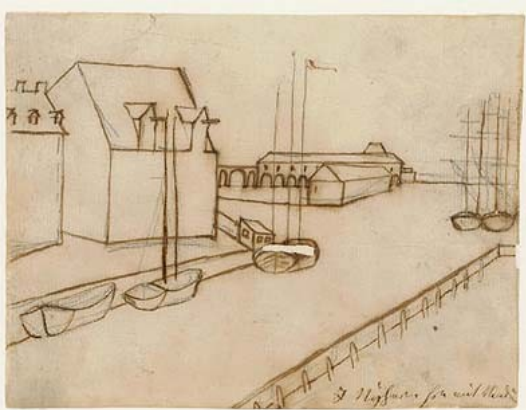
“The first newsletter that was handed over to me in Roskilde was *The Rocket*. Will you believe me – you must know me well enough by now – that I was very depressed. That awful character has drawn me into the mud because I have visited the Guldbergs. He asserts that I have an enormous nose or rather ‘a large snout’ so that I should by rights be called ‘the snotty poet’. Ida [a female friend] will laugh but it is really disgusting. He also writes that I shall never be kissed since my nose is so large that “the Lord has put up a barrier against it.” It is most intolerable that I am characterised as decadent and full of vices! He does not know anything about me! My friends here in Copenhagen tell me so and laugh at it, but, by God, I cannot. There are always people who believe slander, and he lies, he lies, except for my nose.”

Andersen, an innocent bystander, had been drawn into a combat that was not his and which was born out of hatred towards one of his beloved patrons. Andersen himself was understandably mortified and he despised Winther as an enemy of his friends.

Late in 1832, Colonel Christian Høegh-Guldberg won the law suit. Winther was fined heavily and lost his money. He died two years later in abject poverty. Still, it is suggestive that his verbatim publication in December of the entire verdict was passed by the censor and that a booklet that appeared after his death was largely sympathetic: in some quarters, Winther seems to have stood as the proponent of scholarly decency and, possibly, democracy, and Christian Høegh-Guldberg as a representative of the old autocratic higher classes.

Winther and Andersen: the aftermath

In the winter and spring of 1834-1835, Andersen had the run of his Thiele’s library. Since

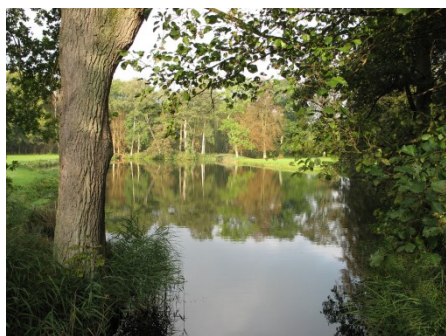


The view from Andersen's flat 1835

he claims that the fairytales he wishes to publish are not known but original and in particular because he cannot have been impervious to Clemens fine copper-plate etchings, there is to my mind no doubt that Andersen has admired the book about the park of Sanderumgaard as well as read or skimmed Winther’s *Folktales* at least to make sure that none of the stories were identical with his own.

He never breathed a word about Winther – understandably so. To admit that he had found anything worthwhile in Winther’s production would be tantamount to treachery to the prominent and influential Høegh-Guldberg family. Winther had been closely connected with Sanderumgaard and he had been inspired by the brothers Grimm. Apart from two references to Mathias Thiele’s *Danish Legends* in the novel *O.T.* (1836), Andersen shied away from alluding to anybody who had had anything to do with Sanderumgaard, such as Rasmus Nyerup, Adam Oehlenschläger, and Christian Molbech, who was a great admirer of the park of the estate and furnishes us with the most detailed description of it.

Christian Høegh-Guldberg died in 1867. Andersen's ban was lifted ever so little. In 1868 Andersen dedicated *The Dryad: A fairytale from the exhibition in Paris 1867* to Thiele. Andersen refers to the poet Adam Oehlenschläger in several places, the most relevant one in this context being from the 'fairytale' of 'God's picture book' (1868). Professor Christian Nyerup is referred to only once as an editor. Christian Molbech promoted the Grimm *Tales* in Denmark since 1832; his name crops up only once in the Andersen archives, namely in the notes to 'The Cripple' in *New Fairytales and Stories* (1872), although he makes several appearances in Hans Christian Andersen's fiction as a despicable and pedantic critic (*The Improvisatore*;



Only A Fiddler). It is true that Molbech was critical of Andersen's plays but he helped him as well by supplying the young Andersen with contacts from his own network. Andersen only refers openly to the Grimms' *Deutsche Sagen* (in *O.T.* 1836); their name also appears in the unpublished notes for 'The Cripple' (1872).

Posterity has been harsh on Mathias Winther whose journal was considered 'slandorous' and on Christian Molbech because he rejected the plays Andersen submitted to the Royal Theatre. But as an academic and a frequent visitor to Sanderumgaard, Christian Molbech also knew about Mathias Winther's life and demise. Perhaps this contributed to the chill between Molbech and Andersen. We shall never know.

Not all fairytales have happy endings.

This paper supplements the picture by showing there is sometimes a dark side to the telling of tales.

(This paper is an edited version of an article that appeared in a *Festschrift for Professor Ludmila Vedenina* at the Moscow University for International Studies, 2013 (pp. 126-142)