‘The fire crackles and then my muse comes to visit’

Hans Christian Andersen, *hygge*, and the Victorian fireside

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Abstract

Precise descriptions of fireplaces and fire lighting are common in Hans Christian Andersen’s writing, often in the form of terse and realistic background details. There are, however, a few examples of a more figurative use of fire where Andersen employs the motif of ‘seeing figures in the flames’ and suggests that he considered this experience inspirational in his writing. The motif was a favorite in Britain, where an open fire in the household was still common in the 19th century. Unlike most continental Europeans at the time, the Victorians considered ‘the fire-side’ to be a sphere of special importance in domestic life. The suggestive qualities associated with the fireside in Britain at the time would not have been familiar to Andersen, but in many respects the cultural complex of the fireside served the same functions as Danish *hygge*. It is unlikely that Andersen was aware of it, but the figurative use that he made of fire as a force of inspiration both magical and *hyggelig* had special resonance for the Victorians.

Introduction

Hans Christian Andersen often returned to the subject of fire. His works, his diaries and his letters abound with descriptions of ovens and open fire and he paid constant attention to the precise minutiae of the fire lighting process as the techniques evolved in his lifetime. For the modern reader the details can sometimes appear obscure and it is easy to read both too much and too little into Andersen’s descriptions and oblique references. In the nineteenth century fire was an essential part of everyday life, without which there could be no heat and no light in the household, and there is nothing very mysterious about the fact that Andersen mentions it often. Fire, it might be said, was an invisible constant for everyone in his lifetime. Of fundamental importance, certainly, but universally familiar and therefore also of little account in most respects. However, a constant trait in Andersen’s writing was exactly his pronounced attention to the trivial, the seemingly insignificant details of everyday life, and many of his tales focus specifically on commonplace objects and activities that few people

considered worth a second thought. In most instances, it is from this practical perspective that fire is described in Andersen's writings. A few examples out of a great many scattered throughout his letters and diaries will be enough to demonstrate that Andersen's fire is mostly just that – heat and light as matters of practical, physical comfort. But there were marked cultural differences as regarded the idea of the particular importance of the domestic fire in the 19th century. As a Dane who spoke only a few words of English, Andersen was probably unaware of the British penchant for open fire in the household and he did not share the important Victorian conception of 'the fire-side' as an especially meaningful sphere in life. But as a poet, Andersen nevertheless employed the image and the idea of open fire artistically with some regularity, and the motif of 'seeing figures in the flames' appears to have held special meaning for him. Towards the end of this article, it is demonstrated that on at least two occasions Andersen went so far as to figuratively link the fireside experience of seeing figures or pictures in the flames with the very glimpses of inspiration by which his fairy tales first appeared to him.

The Fireside and *Hygge*

It is a curious fact that even within Europe, the specific technologies by which fire was used for heating and cooking in the household varied quite a lot in the 19th century. In the late medieval and early modern world, the first closed masonry ovens started to appear and by the start of the 19th century this fuel-efficient heating device was in common use in all of Germany, Scandinavia and much of France and Central Europe. Because it was cheaper and somewhat portable, the version of this type of closed oven made of cast iron gradually became common, but as a general rule in continental Europe open fire in the household belonged in the kitchen only. In the British Isles, however, the closed oven remained an unusual fixture and throughout the 19th century the open fireplace continued to be the most common method of heating the home. However, in the early years of the century, two new inventions which made both the open fireplace and the kitchen fire much more efficient were quickly and widely accepted in Britain. The American Count Rumford invented both the kitchen range and the Rumford fireplace. Count Rumford's real name was Benjamin Thompson and since he sided with the English in the American Revolution he had to make his escape to Europe, where his many inventions were very welcome indeed.[i] Count Rumford's kitchen range was a closed oven with a flat surface where openings of varying sizes could accommodate several different cooking pots at the same time, and its modern and fuel-efficient design revolutionized the kitchen and may even be said to have paved the way for all "modern cooking." (Knox, 1997) The

Rumford fireplace, first introduced in the 1790s, was an equally significant, technological improvement of the open fireplace and it quickly became the standard in 19th century Britain. (Rowlinson, 2002) In its simplest form the Rumford fireplace is in fact almost identical with the kinds of open fireplaces still in use today.[ii] Where previously the open fire was placed on the hearth at the bottom of a rather large chimney – completely open and so big that a little boy could climb up the flue to sweep it – Rumford's invention was to brick up the back of the fireplace to make it much more reflective and at the same time leave only a narrow opening to the chimney flue itself at the top. This separation between the fireplace and the chimney meant that much less heat escaped directly up the chimney, and at the same time the strong draw of the new design meant less smoke in the room and much more reflected heat from the open fire. The actual fire itself no longer needed to be anywhere as big as it used to and although many Victorian fireplaces were equipped with reflective brass sides and elaborately framed, there were those who felt that the effect was not quite the same as before. The new design was not nearly as well suited for a kettle as the old hearth, but as a source of heat it was much more efficient and the ornate fittings served to amplify and intensify the decorative effect of the fire. But even though the Victorians clearly loved their state-of-the-art fireplaces to the point where these ostentatious centerpieces of the home might be said to have incorporated an element of ritual significance largely unknown in the rest of the world, the Rumford fireplace was, technically speaking, a solution to a problem which had in fact long been solved on the European continent by other means. In the United States, where open fireplaces were the rule until the cast-iron Franklin stove became widely available at the beginning of the 19th century, many people experienced the rapid technological change as a painful loss. Sitting in front of the open fire in the home quite clearly had special meaning and value for Americans as well, and the disappearance of open fire in the household was felt by many to be a tragic deprivation. (Hawthorne, 1846) There are no indications that the various technological changes that robbed the domestic sphere of open fire led to reactions of this sort anywhere else in the world, but if open fire had suddenly disappeared from the home in Britain there can be no doubt that the reaction would have been similar. The English, however, held on to their domestic firesides in spite of all the efficient and convenient alternatives that existed.

The fireside represented a special zone of domestic intimacy and it was highly valued and often celebrated by the English. Open fire in the home represented much more than simply a source of heat and the Victorians did not want to do without it. The open fireplace remained a cultural mainstay tinged with nostalgia and sentimentality for the successful Victorians, even while a great many of their other inventions and revolutionary technologies changed the world so radically and so

quickly between the 1830s and the 1850s that it is enough to make anyone dizzy even by today's standards. But to the Victorian Britons, from aristocrats to the poorest city dwellers, the fire-side represented a comfortable private space where one could relax, put on less formal clothes, have a hot cup of tea or gin-and-water from the kettle on the trivet, perhaps, and read for entertainment rather than profit. The fireside was a conventional domestic refuge for the whole family – and a perfect context for reading aloud. Throughout the century, many popular periodicals, miscellanies and annuals were specifically meant to be read 'by the fire-side,'[iii] collections of fireside verse and fireside tales were common,[iv] and the 'fire-side book' – short enough to be read in one sitting and small enough not to get in the way in a cozy armchair – was a popular format. Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* from 1843 was a fireside book, for instance, as was Hans Christian Andersen's *A Christmas Greeting to my English Friends* from 1847. The Victorian fireside was, in short, a rich culture complex[v] which, much like the Danish idea of *hygge*, was immediately understood and appreciated by everyone in spite of the fact that a precise definition and exact demarcation of its cultural meaning was, and remains, a tricky undertaking. In a general sense, however, the Victorian fireside shared at least one very important function with *hygge*. In Jeppe Trolle Linnet's words, "one can regard Scandinavian *hygge* as one particular manifestation of the widespread tendency to turn the home into a sheltered sphere that resists the alienation of modernity in large-scale societies, focusing on the spatial dynamics and interpersonal structures that facilitate this experience." (Linnet, 2011, p. 35) It would not be beside the point to characterize the Victorian conception of 'the fireside' as a slightly different manifestation of this same "widespread tendency," and perhaps it might even be said that open fire in the household still carries more complex connotations in Britain than elsewhere.

With the recent spate of interest in *hygge* in the English-speaking world – the word has been included in the *Oxford English Dictionary* – it is significant that open fire in one form or another is often brought up as an important ingredient in the various popular definitions of *hygge*. But even in the 19th century, Danes, like most other continental Europeans, in fact relied on closed ovens for heat as they had done for hundreds of years, and no one seems to have missed the open fire very much. *Hygge* was certainly very much possible without it.

Evidence of this is obviously not very easy to find, for such everyday truths and patterns of behaviour are rarely recorded and described in detail. In 1836, *The Penny Magazine* noted in passing that "stoves, though not so common as in Germany, are … in extensive use in Paris; but an Englishman misses the agreeable sight of blazing fire." (Anonymous, 1836) A few decades later, in 1864, the English journalist J.E.H. Skinner described a *hyggelig* evening with some Danish officers

in a Sønderborg hotel. The overall mood of the gathering was certainly amiable, genial, informal, hearty, convivial and cozy enough, but Skinner clearly felt that something was missing without "the cheerful blaze" of the open fire: "We warmed with our subject, and in the dimly-lighted parlour, where its great stove threw out no cheerful blaze, and whence could be seen snowflakes falling thick in the deserted street, I heard of the glorious victory which saved Fredericia from capture." (Skinner, 1865, p. 36)

Hans Christian Andersen and Fire

This, then, is the cultural landscape we are dealing with in Andersen's lifetime. It should not surprise us to find that the fireside plays a constant and special role in Charles Dickens's writing, for instance,[vi] but we might, on the other hand, very well expect that for a Danish writer of this era fire would be a rather more mundane subject. Popular 19th century texts in English are full of scenes and situations which rely on the reader's familiarity with the complex associations connected with the fireside. The idea that the open fire in the household could play an active role as inspiration for, and even sometimes as the main source of the stories and tales meant to be read or enacted by the fireside, was not uncommon. See, for instance, the illustrated title pages of the two fireside books by 'Redgap' (1846) and 'M. A. Titmarsh' (1855) in which 'figures in the fire' play a central and visually obvious role.

THE

ROSE AND THE RING;

OR, THE

HISTORY OF PRINCE GIGLIO AND PRINCE BULBO.

A Fire-Side Pantomime for Great and Small Children.

BY MR. M. A. TITMARSH,

Author of "The Kickleburys on the Rhine," "Mrs. Perkins's Ball," &c. &c.

LONDON:

SMITH, ELDER, AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

1855.

The motif of 'seeing figures in the flames of the fire,' was by no means uncommon in Victorian Britain. For most continental Europeans, however, who were unacquainted with the complex cultural functions of open fire in Britain, the connection between family activities in the home, light entertainment such as the reading and telling of tales, and the fire as a constant, relaxing focus of attention was not necessarily obvious. In Hans Christian Andersen's work such domestic scenes and storytelling sessions are not described, even if his stories were popularly accepted in Britain as being especially well suited for the fireside. The social complexities of the British fireside played no part in Andersen's world. And yet Hans Christian Andersen's relationship with fire was an unusually complex one. It might be said that in his works we find all the typical elements associated with the Victorian fireside except the social, family aspect. In his tales, his letters and his diaries, Andersen is

typically focused on the physical heat of the (closed) oven and the bodily comfort experienced by himself, and usually all alone. Even when the 'old poet' receives a rare visitor in his private sphere, as in the early tale "The naughty boy," the focus is not on 'the fireside' as such, so much as it is on the practical need to warm the poor boy on the poet's lap, wringing the water out of his hair and restoring him with hot, sweet wine and roasted apples. (Andersen, 1879b, pp. 42-44) The same focus on domestic fire from an individual rather than a family or otherwise collective perspective is characteristic in almost everything that Andersen wrote. Most of the time Andersen tended to be quite practical and unsentimental about fire. He never failed to get the trivial details of fire lighting, oven designs and so on right,[vii] but fire and heat were obviously daily necessities for Andersen just as they were for everyone else at the time. Also, as a constant traveler he experienced firsthand the differences between the various preferred technologies in the places where he stayed, and, as was his wont, he left copious comments on the pros and cons in his letters and diaries. Even sometimes in his fiction.

From the earliest days, fire and the lack of it was necessarily a central concern for Hans Christian Andersen. In his school days, his headmaster, Simon Meisling, would skimp on the firewood so that the young man had trouble staying warm enough to do his homework, and upon Andersen's first visit with the Wulff family, who lived in fancy quarters with windows facing the royal castle, Amalienborg, the fact that a servant would come in to make up the fire in Andersen's room was a source of great joy for him (Andersen, 1926, p. 126). As an educated man and, later on, as a famous author, Andersen soon got used to servants making up the fire whenever he would get cold, and in his diaries and letters the comfort of a fire in his room at the end of long day's journey is frequently emphasized. Andersen often applies the adjective '*hyggelig*' to such situations. But there are exceptions. The traditional open fireplace, well-loved as it certainly was by the English, did not hold very many charms for Andersen. When he was in Rome in 1841 the weather was awful and a cholera epidemic was raging, and Andersen found himself living all alone in a cold house. In such a situation a nice masonry oven would have been much more effective than the open, Roman fireplace, which he describes as '*uhyggelig.*' Which is to say, the very opposite of *hyggelig* and more than just unpleasant. Spooky and scary, possibly, but certainly uncanny:

> I stay here all alone in a big house for there are very few travelers because of the epidemic. Every night I have to close up the shutters on both windows and doors. The floor is made of uneven bricks and between the two windows there is a huge, black fireplace which gapes uncannily. However much firewood I put in it the only result is that one side of my body is roasted and the other is cold. So I sit

> here in my fur-lined travel boots with a cape over the freezing side of my body and wearing a hat in the living room. And that's just to be comfortable. (Andersen, 1841)[viii]

To Hans Christian Andersen, the fireside was not necessarily meaningful in itself. But heat and domestic comfort were certainly important factors in his life, not least when he was travelling. Andersen was not always satisfied with the level of comfort in the various hotels where he spent so many nights of his life, but when the quality of the establishment was up to his standards he would typically use the word '*hyggelig*' to indicate this.[ix] Very often a comfortable fire would play a part in such situations. Andersen's diary and letters especially are full of details about fire and fireplaces. When Andersen visited England and Scotland in the scorching summer of 1847 the constant social engagements left little opportunity for experiencing private life in London and he does not appear to have taken particular notice of the importance of open fire. He did, however, indirectly point to the welcoming and informal mood effected by the open fire in connection with his visit to Lord Jeffrey in Edinburgh in the middle of August, when he noted in his diary that, "his house was quite like a castle …. Fire in the fireplace, all the grandchildren came and I had to sign my fairy tales and *True Story of my Life.*" (Andersen, 1974a, p. 250)[x] Eight years later, when Andersen described the same visit in his autobiography, *The Fairy Tale of my Life*, the link between the blazing fire and the warm and hospitable familiarity of the occasion – with Andersen himself as the absolute centre of attention – was much more clearly expressed: "A huge fire was burning in the fireplace in the great hall where the family soon assembled, and where both the young and the old gathered affectionately around me. Children and grandchildren came and I had to write my name in every one of all the different books of mine that they owned." (Andersen, 1855, p. 440)[xi] Ten years later, when Andersen visited Britain for the second time in the summer of 1857, the mood was less affectionate. In a shrewd attempt to get rid of Andersen's taxing presence at Gad's Hill Place, Charles Dickens arranged for him to stay with Baroness Burdett-Coutts in her stately home in Piccadilly instead. Andersen certainly appreciated the extreme luxury of his suite, complete with a private bathroom and with a fire burning in the fireplace in mid-June (Andersen, 1857)[xii]. That night, as he lay in his bed happy and thankful to God, he noted with great satisfaction that the fire was still "burning lustily in the fireplace". (Andersen, 1974b, p. 246)[xiii] Nevertheless, Andersen returned to Gad's Hill Place the very next day. Piccadilly was too noisy for comfort. By the time Andersen's stay was nearing its end, the Dickens family had apparently grown so tired of putting up with him that they tended to avoid him altogether.

But as Andersen noted in his diary after a whole day of lounging about on his own, "when Dickens came home late at night, everything was *hyggeligt.*" (Andersen, 1974b, p. 266)[xiv]

In his travels, Andersen never ceased to take note of the different approaches to indoor heating he encountered. When the weather got cold in Spain, for instance, instead of a real fireplace that might make it *hyggeligt* for him, the shivering traveler had to make do with a 'Brasero' – a large iron dish of burning coal. This device almost killed Andersen and his traveling companion, Jonas Collin, one night when they closed both doors and windows in their room a little too well (Andersen, 1863)[xv]. After such a close call, it was a relief to arrive in France where there was a real fireplace with a proper fire "at full blast in there." (Andersen, 1862)[xvi].

Fire and fireplaces were constants throughout Andersen's life, he never ceased documenting their presence and importance to him and it is perhaps appropriate that the very last line that he ever wrote in his life was the following shaky entry in his diary on the 19th of June, 1875: "What a weak fellow I am. The sun is shining, yet I am cold and have a fire in the oven." (Andersen, 1975, p. 466)[xvii]

Figures in the Fire

But fire as a practical, mundane source of heat is one thing. The figurative dimensions of fire were not, of course, lost on Hans Christian Andersen. He returned a number of times to the poetic motif of seeing figures in the flames of the fire. One of the earliest examples of this is in a poem entitled, "Fancy and Insanity (Behind the Blackberry Bushes, yonder at the Edge of the Abyss)." This poem was first published in 1829, and it has a clear autobiographical element. The 'I' of the poem is Phantasus, the god of surreal dreams about inanimate objects – including reveries centered on the beauty of nature, which is the general subject of the poem. Andersen's Phantasus is a childish and romantic innocent, and towards the end of the poem he appears to address the poet directly. The sensation of looking into the fire as a small child is evoked. Reality and imagination merge in the child's mind, angels flicker in the fire and there is a vision of God himself in his heaven. Thus fairy tales appear entirely real to the childish mind absorbed in the fiery visions while life itself, paradoxically, seems to be a fairy tale:

> When you were small and we would play our games,
> And sit upon the footstool by the fire,
> Where living figures flickered in the flames,
> With joyful bliss the soul would never tire.
> The fairy tales had every mark of truth,

While life itself seemed wondrous in our youth;
We would see flocks of Cherubim in there,
And God himself, up in his Heaven rare. (Andersen, 1879a, p. 142)[xviii]

Despite the fact that Hans Christian Andersen had not yet produced a single fairy tale at the time when he wrote this poem, the central poetic vision and the, perhaps somewhat unusual, artistic values described here seem to sum up his lifetime achievement with striking precision.

In “The Little Match Girl,” first published in 1845, the poor, dying girl finds comfort in the visions she sees in the flames every time she strikes a new match. With the first match she finds herself in front of a hot oven, the second brings her into the parlour where a roast goose walks right up to her with a knife and fork stuck into its back, and the third puts her in front of a wonderful Christmas tree. All the splendid comforts of well-to-do family life appear to her, but sadly devoid of the feeling of communal belonging shared with other people. Only with the fourth match does her departed grandmother appear to her in the flame and when the little girl finally strikes all the remaining matches so that she can stay connected with the only person in her life who was ever good to her, it is as if the glorious refulgence of the fire itself embraces her and carries her to heaven in the shape of her beloved, Saviour-like grandmother. (Andersen, 1879b, pp. 333-335)[xix]

The motif of ‘seeing figures in the fire’ and Andersen’s poetic interpretation of it is repeated in one of the ‘late’ tales, "What the Whole Family Said" from 1870. Little Marie and her old, story-telling Godfather sit in front of the open oven in the winter time for it is really very enjoyable to stare into the fire and to listen to it crackle and pop. The old Godfather, who knows “all stories, all the fairy tales” explains to little Marie that the crackling fire is reading old memories to him and the child understands what he is saying. Except to her, “there seemed to appear many pictures in the fire.” But “it is wonderful to be alive,” the whole family agree, and the old, Andersen-like Godfather concludes that “life is the most wonderful fairy tale of all!” (Andersen, 1880, p. 224)[xx].

My final example of Andersen’s use of the motif of seeing phantasms in the flames links the experience directly to his writing itself, and this in his most creative and productive years. After Andersen returned from his trip to Italy in 1834, he took a room in Nyhavn where, over the following four years, he wrote his first three novels, his first volume of fairy tales – and more. He worked hard and therefore had to keep to himself more than usual, which was a bit of a challenge for the highly sociable Andersen. At intervals he would write his closest friends and explain why they saw so little of him. As a result, we have the following offhand description of Hans Christian Andersen hard at

work on his most famous creations, quickly sketched, it appears, for his friend Henriette Wulff on the third of February, 1836:

I make it *hyggeligt* at home, the fire crackles and then my Muse comes to visit me and tells me strange *Eventyr*. She produces comic figures from everyday life for me, nobles as well as commoners, and she says: "Look at those people, you know them, now draw their likenesses and, – they will live!" Which is certainly saying quite a lot, but that's what she says all the same. And so I neglect my friends (Andersen, 1836)[xxi].

Artistic imagination and inspiration can be figuratively represented in many different ways, of course, but Andersen's 'muse of fire' which brought him weird and wonderful (fairy) tales when the fire crackled and everything was *hyggeligt*, clearly remained a favorite image all through his life. Unlike William Shakespeare's famous "muse of fire,"[xxii] – concerned only with royalty, with blood and honour and spectacular death on the battlefield – Andersen does not associate his charming muse of fire with epic heroes and the triumphs and tragedies of war. Nor does Andersen's idea of solitary *hygge* share the complex, domestic connotations characteristic of the Victorian fireside. Fire certainly brought Andersen both comfort and inspiration but only on very rare occasions in his life was he invited to partake in the warm community feeling of the fireside. All the same, Andersen's insistent fire muse is certainly a pleasant figure that manifests itself in a homely atmosphere and on a comfortably human scale, tongue-in-cheek or not. Agreeable company of a sort, even, in Andersen's most private, creative space, and an animating, everyday muse of the comic, of the pleasantly amusing, the touching and the well-known coming to life. The extent of the enchantment involved is perhaps a bit limited in that a somewhat mundane element of active crafting is clearly required of the hard-working artist. But above all, and more than anything it is safe to conclude that Andersen's muse of fire was a muse of *hygge*.

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[i] Count Rumford's extraordinary life has inspired quite a few biographies. See, for instance, Sanborn C. Brown's *Benjamin Thompson, Count Rumford*. (1981)

[ii] Even into the twentieth century, there was a tendency to focus on the culture connected with domestic fire rather than on the relatively straightforward technical details of Count Rumford's fireplace improvements. An example of this is G. Curtis Gillespie's 1906 introduction to Rumford's original essay on "Proper Fireplace Construction," which resonates with the common Victorian sentiments related to the fireside: "Poet and prose writers have sung and written not of a disappointment, but of an ideal fireplace, one that is a pleasure to behold, love and appreciate; to dream before and measure every distance through the gateways of the world around, one of good cheer, that extends an wholesome welcome; are you cold, warms you; hungry, feeds you, and makes the poorest shanty as pleasant as a palace. They write not of its smoking, chilly draughts, dust and noxious gases." (5)

[iii] Just to mention a few: *The Bee: Fireside Companion and Evening Tales, containing a Great Variety of Interesting Articles calculated to blend Instruction with Delight* (Liverpool: Henry Fisher, 1820). *The Tell-Tale, Fireside Companion, and Amusing Instructor* (London: Henry Fischer, 1824). *The Fire-side Journal, and Odd Fellow; a Miscellany of Literature, Amusement, and Romance,* also known as *Johnston's Penny Fire-side Journal* (London: W. Johnston, 1843 –). W.H. Harrison, *The Humourist, A Companion for the Christmas Fireside* (London: R. Ackerman, 1832). Leigh Hunt, *The Indicator, and The Companion; A Miscellany for the Fields and the Fireside* (London: Henry Colburn, 1835). Jacob Abbott, ed. *The Fire Side; or, The Duties and Enjoyments of Family Religion* (London: John Chidley, 1839). Anon., *Fireside Facts about The Great Exhibition* (London: Houlton & Stoneman, 1851).

[iv] 'Fireside tales' was a popular title – albeit an indistinct category – from early in the nineteenth century, and the year before she became Hans Christian Andersen's first English translator, Mary Howitt published a volume entitled *Fire-Side Verses* (London: Darton and Clark, 1845). Her husband, William Howitt, had already written a novel in two volumes entitled, *Jack of the Mill, a Fireside Story* (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1844).

[v] A "culture complex" is a concept often used in the fields of sociology, anthropology and ethnography. E. Adamson Hoebel defines a culture complex as "an integrated system of culture traits organized about some nuclear interest." It is one step up from a mere "culture trait," which is defined as "a reputedly irreducible unit of learned behavior pattern or material product thereof." (1958, 647)

[vi] Descriptions of fire, fire lighting and fireplaces occur frequently in Charles Dickens's works, often with a depth of implied meaning that is easily lost on the modern reader. See, for example, the exchange between Esther Summerson and Miss Jellyby in *Bleak House,* chapter IV. (1853, 24-32). More specifically, Charles Dickens also made use of the motif of 'seeing figures in the fire' a number of times in his works – for instance in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841, 41-42), *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1846), and *Our Mutual Friend.* (1865, 21-22)

[vii] In *Ildens Historier* I trace the developments in fire lighting technology through the 19th century and compare Andersen's more or less incidental descriptions with the changing techniques. Andersen's attention to detail was a characteristic stylistic trait in his writing and he would get even the most insignificant detail right every time. When Andersen's precise descriptions of fire and fire lighting utensils are compared with the descriptions given in the much celebrated manuscript, "The Tallow Candle" – discovered in 2012 and attributed by some to a very young Andersen as his 'first fairy tale' – it is found that this text cannot possibly be the work of a 19th century writer, much less Andersen. "The Tallow Candle" is a modern fake. (Lassen 2015)

[viii] My translation. The original reads as follows:
Jeg lever ganske ene i et stort Huus, thi her er for Sygdommens Skyld ikke mange Reisende; hver Aften maa jeg stænge til Vinduer og Døre. Gulvet er med ujævne Muursteen; en stor sort Kamin gaber uhyggeligt midt imellem begge Vinduer; ihvormeget jeg fyrer i, opnaar jeg dog kun, at jeg kan faa min ene Side stegt,medens den anden fryser derfor sidder jeg med laadne Reisestøvler, Kappe over den forfrosne Side og Hat paa inde i Stuen; see det er naar jeg skal have det behageligt. (Andersen 1841)

[ix] In June, 1857, for instance, he characterizes the Hamburg hotel the "Prinz von Preus[s]en" as "a good hotel where, for the first time on this trip, I felt *hyggelig.*" ("et godt Hotel, hvor jeg første Gang paa hele Reisen følte mig hyggelig.")

Andersen's use of the word in this way is unusual bordering on the idiosyncratic in that his kind of *hygge* quite clearly is a matter of private comfort. *Hygge* is not something he engages in so much as a description of how he feels. (1974b, 240)

[x] My translation. The original passage reads: "Hans Huus var Ganske en Ridderborg …. Ild i Kaminen, alle Børnebørnene kom, jeg maatte skrive foran i mine Eventyr og i tru Storie." (Andersen 1974a, 250)

[xi] My translation. The original passage reads: "Der brændte en mægtig Ild paa Kaminen I den store Sal, hvor Familien snart samledes, hvor Unge og Gamle kjærligt sluttede sig om mig. Børn og Børnebørn kom; jeg maatte skrive mit Navn foran i hver af de forskjellige af mine Bøger, de eiede." (Andersen 1855, 440)

[xii] My translation. The original passage in the letter reads: "Aldrig … har jeg været saaledes inqvarteret, en Comfort, en Eleganse havde jeg; Ilden brændte lysteligt in min Kamin, fra mit Vindue saa jeg ud til Piccadilly og den store Gade." (Andersen 1857)

[xiii] My translation. The original passage reads: "Jeg fik det bedste Soveværelse jeg har endnu havdt med Badekammer og Retirade; Ild i Kaminen…. Jeg … gik tilsengs Klokken 12; glad og taknemmelig mod Gud; Ilden brændte endnu lysteligt paa Kaminen da jeg laae i Sengen." (Andersen 1974b, 246)

[xiv] My translation. The original passage reads: "… Jeg drev om …. Da seent Dickens kom hjem var Alt hyggeligt." (Andersen 1974b, 266)

[xv] As Andersen explained the situation in a letter to Theodor Reitzel:"It was too cold in Madrid. The climate was entirely uncomfortable for me and when I could not have a fireplace in the hotel so that I could make it a little *hyggeligt* for myself indoors I traveled to Burgos, but here I was almost snowed in. The snow was half a yard deep in the street and a dish of charcoal which had been left with Collin and myself almost took our lives. I felt it just in time and had just enough strength left to open the door." My translation. The original passage reads: "Der var for koldt i Madrid; Klimatet var mig aldeles ubehageligt og da jeg i Hotellet ikke kunde faae en Kamin og skaffe mig det lidt hyggeligt indendøre, reiste jeg til Burgos, men her var jeg ved at blive sneet inde, Sneen laa en halv Alen høi i Gaden og nær havde et Ildfad med Træ-Gløder, som i den bitterlige Kulde var sat ind til Collin og mig taget Livet af os, jeg mærkede det saa betids at jeg endnu havde Kræfter til at aabne Altandøren". (1863)

[xvi] Andersen and Collin stayed at Biarritz, and Andersen noted that,"here I have a fireplace, the fire is at full blast in there." My translation. The original reads: "Her har jeg Kamin, Ilden blæser lystigt derinde." (1862)

[xvii] My translation. The original passage reads: "Jeg har i Eftermiddag skrevet omtrent hele denne Uges Begivenheder for mig, men er dog en ynkelig Karl. Solen skinner, dog fryser jeg og har i Kakkelovnen. –" (Andersen 1975, 466).

[xviii] My translation. The original passage from the poem,"Phantasie og Vanvid (bag Brombærhækken hist ved Afgrundsranden)," first published in July, 1829, reads:

> Da Du var lille, tidt vi leged' sammen,
> På Skammelen vi ved Kaminen sad;
> Da saae vi Billeder i Glødild-Flammen,
> Og Sjælen følte sig så salig glad.
> Hvert Eventyr os Sandheds-Præget bar,
> Kun Livet her et Eventyr os var;
> Vi saae ei blot Cherubers skjønne Vrimmel,
> Nei, selv Gud Fader i sin høie Himmel. (Andersen 1879a, 142)

[xix] "The Little Match Girl" may well have been the most popular of Andersen's tales – at least in his own lifetime. For a further discussion of the extensive influence of this tale in the English-speaking world, see the article "'…from a Swedish tale by Andersen – ' 'The Little Match Girl' in America and the Topos of the Dying Child." (Lassen 2005)

[xx] The quoted passages are from "What the whole family said," translated by Jean Hersholt. H.C. Andersen Centret, Eventyr på engelsk. Accessed May 15, 2018.
http://www.andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/hersholt/WhatTheWholeFamilySaid.html

[xxi] My translation. The original passage reads:
"Jeg gjør det hyggeligt hjemme, Ilden knittrer og saa besøger min Musa mig, fortæller underlige Eventyr, henter mig komiske Figurer fra Hverdags Livet, Adelige og Borgerlige siger: "see paa de Folk, de kjende Du, tegn dem af og – 'de skulle leve!' Det er jo rigtignok meget sagt, men hun siger det. Derfor forsømmer jeg mine Venner." (Andersen 1836)

[xxii] Shakespeare appeals to this famous 'Muse of fire' at the very start of *Henry V*:

> O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend
> The brightest heaven of invention,
> A kingdom for a stage, princes to act
> And monarchs to behold the swelling scene! (2002, 1128)