

# **Hans Christian Andersen between a culture of meaning and a culture of presence**

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## **Abstract**

The article opens with questioning what kind of “community” Hans Christian Andersen as an artist can be said to have been a part of, considering that the community of Andersen’s upbringing was radically different from the one he was socialized into through his literary career. With the point of departure in Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht’s distinction between literature displaying “presence *in* language” and “presence achieved *against* language”, the article suggests that part of Andersen’s work (with Søren Kierkegaard’s critique of the novel *Only a Fiddler* in focus) can be seen as examples of presence achieved *against* language. With the two presence categories which Gumbrecht typologically distinguishes as a “presence culture” and a “meaning culture” in mind, the presence categories are ascribed to an oral culture of Andersen’s social background, and the elitist intellectual culture of the Danish Golden Age. Inspired by Kierkegaard’s characterization of Andersen’s novel in musical terms, the article further presents a possible understanding of presence, the implications of which reaches far beyond the harmonic paradigm of the Golden Age and into the musical modernism of Arnold Schönberg in the twentieth century.

## **Introduction**

What kind of community can Hans Christian Andersen rightly be said to have been a part of, if such a community also has to be detectible in his work as formal or thematic aspects of his literature? This is not an altogether easy question to answer, taken into consideration that Andersen came from the very poorest part of society and was socialized into the cultural and artistic norms of the elitist circles of the Danish Golden Age of the late absolute monarchy. Danish scholars in particular have characterized Andersen as a “mould breaker” because he succeeds in breaking with his poor social background and makes it into fame and fortune. Although there are a few other examples of cultural personalities of The Golden Age who worked their way up in society – the sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen and the theatre diva Johanne Luise Heiberg are some – it was very unusual to succeed with upwards social mobility in the first half of nineteenth century Denmark. So Andersen was indeed very special, but it is fair to ask if not his very background with fundamentally different ways of

experiencing the world and different ways of presenting the world is responsible for the appeal of his work, and thereby laying the foundation for his fame and the reach of his work. In order to investigate the character of the schismatic communities, or cultures, in question, it can be useful to consult the literary scholar Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht.

### **Presence in language and presence achieved *against* language**

In his book from 2014, *Our Broad Present*, the Stanford Professor Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht states that he in his good forty years of research and writing has followed and developed one predominant idea. This idea is a “hardheaded” insistence that the things-of-the-world possess a dimension of presence, the appeal of which is very different from the understanding of the world man gets from interpretation and adscription of meaning to the world:

By “presence” I have meant – and still mean – that things inevitably stand at a distance from or in proximity to our bodies; whether they “touch” us directly or not, they have substance. [...] It is my impression that the dimension of presence might deserve a position of priority relative to the praxis of interpretation, which ascribes meaning to an object. This is not the case because presence is “more important” than the operations of consciousness and intention, but rather because, perhaps, it is “more elementary”. (Gumbrecht, 2014, pp. ix-x)

In order to separate the different ways of world perception, Gumbrecht distinguishes between “presence *in* language” and “presence achieved *against* language”. The two presence categories are traced to what Gumbrecht typologically distinguishes as a “presence culture” and a “meaning culture” respectively:

In a meaning culture, firstly, the dominant form of human self-reference will always correspond to the basic outline of what Western culture calls subject and subjectivity, i.e., it will refer to a bodyless observer who, from a position of eccentricity vis-à-vis the world of things, will attribute meanings to those things. A presence culture, in contrast, will integrate both spiritual and physical existence into its human self-reference [...]. It follows from this initial distinction that, secondly, in a presence culture humans consider themselves to be part of the world of objects instead of being ontologically separated from it (this may have been the view Heidegger wanted to recover with “being-in-the world” as one of his key concepts in *Being and Time*).

Thirdly, and on a higher level of complexity, human existence, in a meaning culture, unfolds and realizes itself in constant and ongoing attempts at transforming the world (“actions”) that are based on

the interpretation of things and on the projection of human desires into the future. (Gumbrecht, 2014, 3)

Gumbrecht's considerations on the two kinds of culture and their ontological implications are highly relevant in the case of Hans Christian Andersen. The writer's background in the lowest social strata of society is mentioned above and is well known, as is his aspiration to enter the elitist culture of the Golden Age of Danish late absolute monarchy. This dualism in the ontology of Andersen's experience places him in an interesting intermediate position between a meaning culture and a presence culture in Gumbrecht's terms, and in between two different "communities". The oral culture of Andersen's background obviously displays the characteristics of spoken language. Gumbrecht states in this connection:

Language, above all spoken language, [has] a physical reality, and it highlights the aspect to which Hans-Georg Gadamer spoke of the "volume" of language, in distinction to its propositional or apophantic content. "As a physical reality, spoken language not only touches and affects our acoustic sense, but our bodies in their entirety." We thus perceive language, in the least invasive way, i.e., quite literally, as the light touch of sound on our skin, even if we cannot understand what the words are supposed to mean. Such perceptions can well be pleasant and even desirable – and in this sense we all know how one can grasp certain qualities of poetry in a reading without knowing the language that is being used. (Gumbrecht 2014, 4)

The aspect of language as a physical reality before it is perceived as "meaning" is interesting in connection with Gumbrecht's statement of how "in a present culture humans consider themselves to be a part of the world of objects", in that it points at a special solidarity with the world of things – at eye level with it rather than from a superior position – because it could explain the ontological background of Andersen's pitch for the world in his work in general, but in his fairytales of things ("tingseventyr") in particular. Gumbrecht continues:

As soon as the physical reality of language has a form, a form that needs to be achieved against its status of being a time object, in the sense proper ("ein Zeitobjekt im eigentlichen Sinn", according to Husserl's terminology), we will say that it has a "rhythm" – a rhythm that we can feel and identify independently of the meaning language "carries". Language has a physical reality that has a form, i.e., rhythmic language, will fulfill a number of specific functions. It can coordinate the movements of individual bodies; it can support the performance of our memory [...]; and, by supposedly lowering

the level of our alertness, it can have (as Nietzsche said) an “intoxicating” effect. Certain presence cultures even attribute an incantatory function to rhythmic language, i.e., the capacity of making absent things present and present thing absent. (Gumbrecht 2014, 4)

All of the above-mentioned characteristics of the physical nature of spoken language may well have served as a sort of guidance to manoeuvre expediently in the world as well as a token of reality as such in the oral culture of Andersen’s social background of superstition, myth and immediate bodily response to the stimuli of reality.

The elitist culture of the arts in the Golden Age, in contrast, displays altogether different features, all of which are consistent with a culture of *meaning*. It may best be exemplified by the most prominent developer of visual art in Denmark, Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg, and his idealistic approach to nature and art. Eckersberg mentions the importance of a *basic image* and the *idea* in his “Forsøg til en Veiledning” (“Attempts at a Guidance”), aimed at young artists. The appearance of the basic image and the idea in Eckersberg’s writing have often been used as decisive evidence of his naturalistic attitude towards painting, probably because such an attitude fits well with an overall narration of Danish art developing towards an ever increasing state of realism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

However, in connection with Eckersberg, a “basic image” is very different from an expression of “the total sum of observable natural phenomena” (which is a common – and misleading – interpretation of Eckersberg’s understanding of the basic image). Eckersberg uses the term *basic image* in the contemporary translation of Plato’s idea concept of his time: the universal concepts that are independent of the human mind, and of which the sensual world is only a reflection. It is the belief that perfection and truth are only found in the idea, while all earthly matters are only faint reflections of the *basic image*.<sup>i</sup>

With the norms of the idealistic culture of meaning of the Golden Age in mind, it seems obvious that any artistic expression of Hans Christian Andersen may well have clashed with the expectations of the cultivated reading public in his time, if this artistic expression would have contained any feature of the presence culture of Andersen’s background. Søren Kierkegaard’s book long critique of Andersen’s third novel *Only a Fiddler* from 1837 can be seen as an actualization of such a clash.

### **Andersen, Kierkegaard and *From the Papers of One Still Living*<sup>ii</sup>**

It should be apparent from the previous paragraphs that if a writer values the appeal of reality higher than that of idealistic norm and a persuading story, we may well expect him or her to violate the rules

of narrative fiction. This could at least be the conclusion drawn upon reading Søren Kierkegaard's *From the Papers of One Still Living*, originally published in 1838. In Kierkegaard's book, with this strange title, he deprives Hans Christian Andersen of any capacity as a writer of novels, whatsoever, primarily because Andersen lacks what Kierkegaard calls a "fixed life-view," in contrast to that which the author observes in the works of Thomasine Gyllembourg and St. St. Blicher; two prominent writers of Danish literature in the Golden Age in Denmark.

Kierkegaard primarily treats Andersen's novel *Only a Fiddler*, from 1837, and in particular, with respect to what is poetically "true" in the novel, as Kierkegaard states it. The central axis of Kierkegaard's analysis is an understanding of what he terms "life-view," as a precondition for, as well as the personal development of, the writer, as for the structure of the novel. Firstly, Kierkegaard deals with the psychological and social premises for the development of the writer of novels. Secondly, he discusses – as he finds is the case of Andersen – the consequences of a lacking view of life, which manifests itself as a lack of epic development within the epic; a *contradictio in adjecto*, if you like. Kierkegaard rejects Andersen's own theory of forfeiture (the musical protagonist Christian fails as an artist and dies in *Only a Fiddler*) as a valid view of life, partly because of the thus expected distrust in life, partly because of the claim of "poetic truth" in epic development and the correlative claim of an immortal spirit surviving it. Kierkegaard then investigates the "technique of it all," and lists a number of methods in Andersen's mode of expression that share in common the manifestation of accidental occurrence and, hence, the lack of any organic relation to the totality. Finally, we get a special discussion of *Only a Fiddler*, seeking answers to the questions if the protagonist of the novel, Christian, is depicted as a genius and – if he actually is a genius – we are presented with sufficient moments explaining the forfeiture of the genius in question. This search is made under the claim of poetic truth, and thus as a verification of Kierkegaard's own view.

Initially, Kierkegaard looks for a focal point in the development of the main character, from which the character's entire progression can be embraced. He finds a scene in the novel that could resemble such a focal point, a point that presents the protagonist Christian's life-dilemma. It starts with the beginning of chapter seven in the novel (which Kierkegaard quotes):

Common superstition affirms that the pollen of the barberry is a poison for grain; the heavy ears become spotted by the bidding sap. The noble poppy of the most dazzling white changes its hue, if it grow[s] among coloured ones. Environment is the invisible hand which is enabled to mould the material in its development.

When the sculptor commences modelling the clay, we do not yet understand the work of art which he will create. Time and labour are necessary before the plaster-cast exists, and the chisel after the model animates the marble. How much more difficult is it, then, to discover in the child, the worth and fate of a man! We here see the poor boy in Svendborg; the instinct within him, and the influence without, shew, like the magnetic needle, only two opposite directions. He must either become a distinguished artist or a miserable, confused being. The pollen of environment already begins to work upon him. (Andersen 1845, 1, 62-63)

Kierkegaard continues to quote more from the chapter (to the extent where he in a note remarks that Andersen could rightly accuse him of plagiarism) ending with the pungent phrase: “A rare artist must he become, or a miserable bungler – a sparrow-hawk with yellow wings, which for his superiority is pecked to death for his superiority.” (Andersen 1845, 1, 64)

Kierkegaard arrives at the conclusion that Christian ends up as a “miserable bungler”, because that is what he has always been. To Andersen’s pointing at the environment’s importance for the fruitful development of a genius, Kierkegaard states that Christian has had all the inspiration and moulding he could ask for in his father, granted with the natural poetic inclination found among common people, and in his godfather, who was indeed a musical genius. So, according to Kierkegaard, Christian’s real tragedy is that he is “all vanity”, only interested in being admired and in drawing attention to himself - even if that attention is mixed with mockery. So Andersen’s alleged focal point does not fulfill Kierkegaard’s quest for an explanation of Andersen’s assertion that Christian is a genius in lack of sufficient nursing, and hence goes under.

The textual circumstance that he cannot find a key point of interpretation for the protagonist of the novel, Kierkegaard projects onto Andersen himself, seeing him as a person who lacks an Archimedean point in his view of life.

In the background of Kierkegaard’s characterization of Andersen as a writer of novels, he states “the surely undeniable fact that any observant reader of Andersen’s short novels will feel strangely disturbed by the double lighting (Zwielicht [twilight]) that prevails in all Andersen’s novels as it does in the summer performances at our theatre” (Kierkegaard 1999, 74). This “double lighting” is then traced back to Andersen’s inability to segregate the poetic from himself. The same joyless struggle Andersen is fighting in life, his depressing considerations on life, are repeated in his poetry. His work weighs heavy as reality at the same time as his own reality evaporates into poetry. Furthermore, Kierkegaard makes the “general observation” that Andersen, in his poetry, must be regarded as “a possibility of a personality wrapped up in such a web of arbitrary moods and moving

through an elegiac duodecimo-scale of almost echoless, dying tones just as easily roused as subdued, who, in order to become a personality, needs a strong life-development.” (Kierkegaard 1999, 70)

### **Hans Christian Andersen’s twelve-tone scale**

Here we have good reason to stop and think. Kierkegaard talks of a “duodecimo-scale” (in Danish, “Duodez-Scala”) as characteristic of Andersen’s text. What can this mean? Well, in the latest Danish version of Kierkegaard’s works,<sup>iii</sup> it is explained as a little book format, wherein the folio sheet is divided into twelve pages. Thus, we can deduce, it is used figuratively, as “small” or “insignificant.” While it can indeed be seen as referring to a small book format, why, then, does Kierkegaard talk of “tones”? In which case it is a very bad metaphor, not to mention a stylistic *faux pas* to talk of tones in relation to the book format – to which one could only add: Kierkegaard does not (as in “never”) make a stylistic *faux pas*! The explanation must be that Kierkegaard is actually talking about tones, and of a musical scale, and more precisely, then, of the twelve-tone scale (“duodez” = 12).

Many would argue that we do not really know the twelve-tone scale before Schönberg, but we do. As it could be said that Wagner emancipates dissonance with his prelude to *Tristan und Isolde* (1865), it is fair to say that Schönberg emancipates the twelve-tone scale by liberating it from an overall framework of tonal harmonics so his music (from *Waltzer* 1923) is endowed with a character, the appeal of which is in contrast to what the “literary” mind finds pleasing: the scale has an alienating or uncanny effect. But the twelve-tone scale is known long before Schönberg, as suggested, it is also used by Mozart, for instance, in his symphony no. 40, fourth movement. It is very easy to hear in the symphony, as it is equally easy to hear how the jarring and bizarre course of tones is resolved in the overall harmony. Kierkegaard’s love of Mozart’s music is well known – one need only think of his constant inspiration from the opera *Don Giovanni* (1787). It is likely, then, that Kierkegaard would have known Mozart’s symphony no. 40, and have “heard” the twelve-tone intension in Andersen’s novel, and in that, Kierkegaard will have been confronted with an artistic ambition in diametric opposition to the contemporary “view of life” espoused through prose and the writing of novels.

The rationale of Andersen’s novel, when compared to the appeal of the twelve-tone scale, makes it fruitful to bring back into focus Gumbrecht’s considerations of presence in language as opposed to presence achieved against language. The grating or jarring character of the disharmonic sound in the twelve-tone scale touches the listener as a “physical reality” just as Gumbrecht develops in connection with spoken language. Hence Andersen’s pitch for this effect testifies to his belonging to a culture of presence. However, in order to place the disharmonic appeal in a category of presence,

it also requires one to desist from ascribing meaning to that appeal. In particular Marxist praxis has proven itself to be a grave culture of meaning in doing so, as it has interpreted dissonance in music as a sign of the individual's alienation in modernity and the work of art as a metaphor of collapse and disruption of the individual. In connection with Andersen it makes much more sense to consult the field of neuro aesthetics and the understanding of the appeal of dissonance's address in the primitive brain – in the encephalon and the limbic system which is also the site of the amygdala and the production of anxiety.<sup>iv</sup> The feeling of fear is always linked to a feeling of presence.

### **The view of life**

The age of Andersen and Kierkegaard laid claim to a prose that unfolded a "life view" in accord with an overall paradigm of Bildung. The most important critic of the time, Johan Ludvig Heiberg, was the principal promulgator of this "life view," and also the reason why Kierkegaard opposes Andersen's novel to Thomasine Gyllembourg's (the mother-in-law of Heiberg) *Hverdagshistorier* ("everyday life" stories), which he regards as exemplary of an epic well displayed view of life. For Kierkegaard, life itself yields such a view as a result of confidence in the world, a confidence it has caused fight to win; hence, the "everyday life" stories gain an evangelical touch, which makes the reading of them an edifying study.

For Kierkegaard, a life-view is the "transubstantiation of experience," it is a conquered, unshakeable certainty, a backwards understanding of life through the idea. Concerning Andersen, Kierkegaard believes he has not managed to "transubstantiate" his experiences. They stick out as single sentences, singular phenomena, through which one might be able to produce, but not fulfill the task of writing a novel. And Andersen's theory of forfeiture cannot rightly be characterized as a life view in itself, because skepticism, as such, is not a theory of knowledge, and as Kierkegaard states: "such a mistrust of life [...] at the same moment as it ends up as a final decision on life's question it contains an untruth." (Kierkegaard 1999, 80) Or to state it somewhat differently, in the Hegelian dialect Kierkegaard employs in *From the Papers...*: the reflection has ended in negation. However, should one admit the writer the right to call such considerations a life-view and let him produce novels, one would have to claim that in his novels he was able to unfold a number of consequences, all aiming at the decline of the hero. Then, the course of the novel would be "poetically true," and display an organic coherence. Yet, this is not the case with Andersen. Thus Kierkegaard concludes "that Andersen himself has not lived to the first power with poetic clarity since the poetic to the second power has not achieved greater consolidation in the whole." (Kierkegaard 1999, 84)

In connection with the matter of life view, Gumbrecht becomes relevant again. The production of a fixed life view is basically the production of a narration which displays a sane semantic following of events, a production of meaning *in* language. In this connection the aspect of presence produces a "now" in a temporal sequence, whereas the violation of the norms and rules of the established framework of narration that Andersen becomes guilty of, produces a "now" which is not a moment of a temporal sequence, but a "now" of the discourse. A "now" with a direct address refers to the "now" of the spoken word which disappears as soon as it is spoken. In oral cultures words are powerful, because they are performed in a direct human context; they are not separated from life to a flat page, they resonate through things, which may well be what Gumbrecht means by the "rhythm" of the physical reality of spoken language, "a rhythm that we can feel and identify independently of the meaning language "carries"." (Gumbrecht 2014, 4)<sup>v</sup>

If we should characterize Andersen's violation of the narrative norm through Kierkegaard, he points out that Andersen's novels are characterized by coincidences. The entire mode of description and argumentation is accidental, because Andersen makes a number of insignificant comparisons that do not lead to deeper understanding of the matter for which the comparison was made. Furthermore, Andersen ascribes too much importance to individual, accidental incidents or gives external guarantees for the correctness of a presumption. Moreover, Kierkegaard points out another type of coincidence: the "[w]hole undergrowth of disturbing comments, which, for any tolerable attentive reader of Andersen's novels, makes the way in them impassable, I repeat impassable." (Kierkegaard 1999, 88)

Of Andersen's protagonist, Christian, Kierkegaard says the following:

Now, when the actual principal character appears before us in all his development, it would be desirable if somewhere there could be found a point of rest, a resting place, where we could collect ourselves and look back. But in this respect his path of development is by no means perspective. On the one hand, Andersen himself at time stops at some insignificant event, as if we were now at a turning point (a circumstance by which we must not let ourselves be led astray); on the other hand, the path is full of will-o'-the-wisps, which sometimes induce one to believe that now the genius is awake, now he is matured, and which at other times are superseded by events that seem to witness to the contrary, until we again hear assurances that now the genius is matured etc. (Kierkegaard 1999, 95)

According to Kierkegaard, Andersen administers what seem to be patterns of development "out of perspective"; a form of representation we find in modernistic representation, just as a course of events,

associatively and capriciously arranged, is found in modernistic prose. Kierkegaard also points out the long suite of epigraphs that open each chapter in *Only a Fiddler*:

Even if one does not share my view that an epigraph by its musical power, which to a certain extent it can well have without being verse, either ought to play a prelude, as it were, and thereby put the readers into a definite mood, into the rhythm in which the section is written [...] or ought to relate piquantly to the whole section and not form a pun on one particular expression occurring once in the chapter or be an insipid general statement about the contents of the chapter. Even if one does not share my view, one will, however, surely grant me that it requires a good deal of taste, a high degree of inwardness in one's subject and in the temperature of the mood, to choose an epigraph that becomes a little more than an exclamation mark saying nothing or a figure like those the physicians usually write above their prescriptions. Now, Andersen does not possess these qualities. Through his long busying himself with poetry-making there is naturally at his disposal a large quantity of loci communes [commonplace remarks], of little verses etc., which, guided by a totally loose and exterior association of ideas, he now applies as best he can... (Kierkegaard 1999, 93)

It is notable to observe how Kierkegaard describes the character of Andersen's epigraphs, while he dismisses them as unmotivated: "a pun on one particular expression occurring once in the chapter,"; "an exclamation mark saying nothing,"; "little verses etc. [...] guided by a totally loose and exterior association of ideas." (Kierkegaard 1999, 93) Without making Andersen too "modernistic" or depriving his novels of real epic momentum, it is striking how Kierkegaard's negative statements about the kinship between the epigraphs and the content of the chapters resemble the kind of relation between fragments of reality that the modernistic collage – to choose an example – depicts. Art and literature in the 20th century extensively use the breaking up and juxtaposing of elements, which outside the work of art are hierarchically organized and arranged in accordance with epic, political and religious norms. In the modernistic work, however, other rules of kinship reign, and it is a central point in the modernistic work that the synopses of the single parts or fragments correspond across habitual lines of connection. Thus, it could be lines of connection, "guided by a totally loose and exterior association of ideas," as Kierkegaard writes, or it could be a common "ring" to the words or a "pun," which relates parts of the text or picture, motivating a juxtaposition that from a normative point of view – or "life-view" – would seem absurd, either pure blather or mere mockery.

It often escapes the ethically rooted reader or beholder how it – always and also – is a central aim of the modernistic work to challenge a habitual perception of reality. But it does not escape Kierkegaard's attention.

### **Presence**

Kierkegaard ends his book of Andersen criticism in the following way:

With regard to what I have to say in conclusion – prompted by the misrelation, certainly on the whole conceded by the factual, between a reading and a criticizing world's judgement of Andersen, insofar as this misrelation has also repeated itself in my consciousness – I could wish that I might succeed in speaking about this just as personally as I have tried to keep the foregoing free of any oblique relation to my personality. That is, as I reproduce the first stage [reading the book], the recollection of a variety of poetical moods with which every poetic life, even the most obscure (and this, in a certain sense, perhaps most of all), must be interwoven. And as I once again seek to retain every single one, the one displaces the other so rapidly that the totality of them assembles in a present that nevertheless at the same moment feels in itself the necessity of becoming a past and thereby evokes from me a certain nostalgic smile as I consider them, a feeling of thankfulness as I recollect the man to whom I owe it all, a feeling that I would prefer to whisper in Andersen's ear rather than to confide to paper. Not that at any moment it has been anything but a joy for me to be able to give him what is his due [...] because such an utterance is on the whole very exposed to misunderstanding, something, however, I hope that I shall be able to put up with if only Andersen, in order to avoid it, will hold what I have written with sympathetic ink up to that clear light which alone makes the writing readable and the meaning clear. (Kierkegaard 1999, 101-2)

Of course, Kierkegaard's ear or pitch for the world is not inferior to that of Andersen! That is why he is anxious, towards the end of his criticism, to focus on the fact that his critique has strictly followed the valid and current rules for the genre. He has spoken in the public domain, hence he has couched his opinions accordingly: he has tended to the norms of the literary authorities; the norms of Bildung and "life-view." If he, however, should value the work of Andersen as an ordinary, private reader, it would be quite another matter.

What does Kierkegaard mean by the statement that "the totality [...] assembles in a present...?" Could he mean that the novel – in all its ambiguous and capricious modes of orientation – leaves the reader with a feeling of *presence*?

I think it is fair to say that Kierkegaard indeed talks about presence, and hence he fully demonstrates how Andersen is caught between a culture of meaning; an elitist culture which sees language as – with Gumbrecht’s words – “something that requires ‘interpretation’, something that invites us to attribute well-circumscribed meanings to words” (Gumbrecht, 2014, 4); and a culture of presence, the rationale of which is a strong feeling of being in the present of here and now. The work of art in a culture of presence is not a symbol of the world or a depiction of the world; it becomes reality in itself, displaying qualities of reality on the quantitative conditions of language through the use of indeterminacy and potential and through encroachment on the mind’s expectance-horizon. Kierkegaard says as much in a note: “Andersen’s first power must rather be compared to the flowers with male and female on one stalk, which is most necessary as a transition stage, but not suitable for productions in the sphere of the novel and short novel, which demand a deeper unity and consequently also presuppose a marked cleavage.” (Kierkegaard 1999, 84) Kierkegaard does not write this to suggest something about Andersen’s sexual preferences. He writes it to characterize Andersen as representing a “transition stage,” a dynamic state that has not yet found its final form, a stage characterized by possibility or potentiality.

Once Kierkegaard has given up interpreting Andersen’s statements in the novel as symbolic or mimetic representations, he focuses on the mental movement that is generated in the reader by the break-up of normal hierarchies and linguistic or other expectations.

### **In conclusion**

With the departure in Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht’s work on the production of presence in literature, and with an analysis of Søren Kierkegaard’s critique of Hans Christian Andersen’s third novel *Only a Fiddler* as main inspiration, this article shows how Andersen’s novel displays features which produce a presence, achieved as a “now” in the discourse rather than as a temporal “now”, achieved through a narrative produced in accordance with the norms and rules of The Golden Age’s idea of a fixed life view. Furthermore, and with the headline of the Andersen conference: *Hans Christian Andersen and community*, in mind, the article also implies that Andersen is caught between to alternating “communities”, one belonging to a culture of meaning: the community of the Golden Age’s official approach to art (and not least to “reality” as such), and one belonging to a culture of presence: the body conscious and oral culture of Andersen’s poor background in the lowest part of society.

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<sup>i</sup> See also Erik Fisher: "Eckersbergs harmoniske univers" in *Tegninger af C.W. Eckersberg*, Den Kgl. Kobberstiksamling 1983.

<sup>ii</sup> I have published parts of the analysis of Kierkegaard's Andersen critique in the article "Childishness as Poetic Strategy" in *Hans Christian Andersen - Between Children's Literature and Adult Literature*, Papers from the Fourth International Hans Christian Andersen Conference, University Press of Southern Denmark 2007, 409-426. That article is, however, not addressing the experience of presence.

<sup>iii</sup> See Niels Jørgen Cappelørn et al., eds., *Søren Kierkegaards skrifter*, vol. 1 (Copenhagen: Gad Publishers, 1997).

<sup>iv</sup> See "Investigating Emotion With Music: An fMRI Study" in *Human Brain Mapping*, 2006, "Basomedial amygdala mediates top-down control of anxiety and fear", in the November issue of *Nature*, 2015 or "The Golden Beauty: Brain Response to Classical and Renaissance Sculptures" in *PLoS One*, 2007

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<sup>v</sup> In the book *Modernisme på tværs*, I develop a trans-aesthetic model of modernistic literature, music and pictorial art, where I introduce the notion of entropy as a way of understanding the work of art as a correlation of reality instead of a metaphoric or thematic representation of the world. According to this model Andersen's literature expresses a *low* entropic appeal, typical of art of presence *against* language.