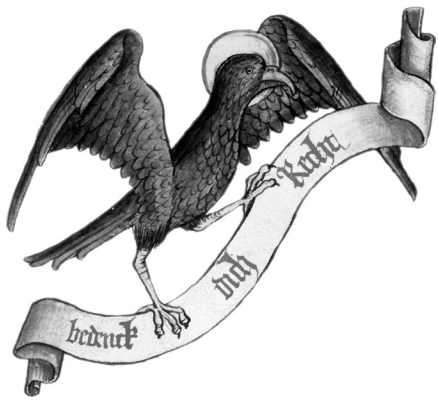
Særtryk af

FUND OG FORSKNING

I DET KONGELIGE BIBLIOTEKS SAMLINGER

Bind 50
2011



With summaries

KØBENHAVN 2011
UDGIVET AF DET KONGELIGE BIBLIOTEK

Om billedet på papiromslaget se s. 169.

Det kronede monogram på kartonomslaget er tegnet af

Erik Ellegaard Frederiksen efter et bind fra Frederik III's bibliotek

Om titelvignetten se s. 178.

Redaktion: John T. Lauridsen
med tak til Ivan Boserup

Fund og Forskning er et peer-reviewed tidsskrift.

Papir: Lessebo Design Smooth Ivory 115 gr.
Dette papir overholder de i ISO 9706:1994
fastsatte krav til langtidsholdbart papir.

Grafisk tilrettelæggelse: Jakob Kyril Meile
Nodesats: Niels Bo Foltmann
Tryk og indbinding: SpecialTrykkeriet, Viborg

ISSN 0060-9896
ISBN 978-87-7023-085-8

SPEAKING OF IRONY:

Bournonville, Kierkegaard, H.C. Andersen and the Heibergs[1]

BY

COLIN ROTH

It must have been exciting for the ballet historian, Knud Arne Jürgensen, to discover a Bournonville manuscript in the Royal Library's collection which opens with what is clearly a reference to Søren Kierkegaard.[2] Though not mentioned by name, Kierkegaard is readily identifiable because his Master's degree dissertation on 'The Concept of Irony' is explicitly referred to in the first sentence. It was right that the discovery was quickly shared with researchers at the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre at Copenhagen's University. This article is a study of the document, its context and especially of the references concealed within it. A complete transcription of the Danish original and a new English translation appear as appendices, one of which should, ideally, be read first.

[1] Thanks for assistance with this paper are due to Peter Hauge, Niels Krabbe and Lisbeth Ahlgren Jensen. All three, members of the Carl Nielsen Edition team and now colleagues in the Danish Centre for Music Editions of the Royal Library, Copenhagen, helped me at a time when they were under enormous pressure and I am extremely grateful for their selfless support. I am also grateful to Svend Ravnkilde, to Lone Kristensen who has been generous with her time and expertise in helping to refine the new English translation of Bournonville's speech, to Gitte Steffensen for her kind help with the translation of quotations, to Peter Tudvad for his invaluable help and especially to Eskil Irminger, August Bournonville's great-great-great grandson, who has helped in so many ways. This article was read to the conference of the UK Kierkegaard Society held at the University of Sheffield, 6–8 May 2011.

[2] The first page of August Bournonville's speech is reproduced in facsimile and transcribed-translated by Knud Arne Jürgensen, *The Bournonville Tradition, the first 50 years, 1829–1879*, London 1997, vol. 1, pp. 66–67, 79. The MS autograph is preserved in the Royal Library, Copenhagen: brown ink, 4 pp (22.8 × 18 cm). Unsigned and undated, it was written and given, according to Bournonville's diary, on 2 October 1861, The Royal Library, NKS 3285 4º, 9, III (læg 'Taler'). Unfortunately the dates given by Dr. Jürgensen do not accord with the manuscript sources, and are incorrect.

Bournonville drafted the document on 2 October 1861.[3] It was a speech, to be given that day to a small gathering including colleagues from the Royal Theatre, who wanted to say *'farvel'* before his departure for a new post in Stockholm. They met at Skydebanen, a smart restaurant in Vesterbro, at 4:30 pm; five speeches were made by his friends, besides Bournonville's own to them.[4]

Bournonville begins his speech with a reference to irony to cover the jokes and jibes he wants to make at the expense of his former employers, the Royal Theatre, Copenhagen, and its management. He uses the dissertation's shortened name, perhaps not even knowing that the work's full title is, 'The Concept of Irony with continual reference to Socrates',[5] or that it is not about irony in the general sense. As Bournonville makes a light-hearted joke about not having read the book he's naming or virtually anything else by Kierkegaard, the warning bells should have been sounding. But both Bruce Kirmmse[6] and Joakim Garff[7] treat the 1861 document as though it were first hand evidence relating to Kierkegaard's perambulatory practice in the 1840s, missing its author's intended irony and failing to recognise that after Kierkegaard's scandalous burial in 1855, if not after the 'Corsair' affair of 1846, his name and reputation became public property, so that 'memories' of him needed handling with care.

Great caution is required when considering the behaviour and motivation of 'characters' in the past, so that the filtration inevitably caused by the passage of time, which makes some names familiar and others seem less important, does not lead to a distortion of life as it was lived. We think all too easily of the 'great' names of the Danish Golden Age

[3] Bournonville's diaries are held by the Royal Library, Copenhagen. The extracts in this article, relating to late September and early October 1861, are kept under the shelf mark NKS 747 8º, kapsel 4, bind 20. I am grateful to Bruno Svindborg for his prompt assistance in providing electronic copies of them.

[4] The transcriptions from Bournonville's diaries are by Eskil Irminger, who also provided this link about 'Skydebanen' (literally, 'the shooting gallery'): <http://www.b.dk/kultur/skydebanen-paa-vesterbro>.

[5] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony with continual reference to Socrates* (Copenhagen, 1841), ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton 1989.

[6] *Encounters with Kierkegaard: a life as seen by his contemporaries*, Princeton 1996, p. 90.

[7] *Søren Kierkegaard, a biography*, Princeton, 2005, p. 310; first published as *SAK. Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, En biografi*, Copenhagen 2000. See also Nathaniel Kramer, 'Kierkegaard's Leap of Faith and the "Noble Art of Terpsichore"' in *Kierkegaard and His Danish Contemporaries, Tome III: Literature, Drama and Aesthetics*, ed. Jon Stewart, Copenhagen 2009, pp. 67–82.

as living in mutually creative congress, for the most part friends with each other and actively sharing ideas, and neglect the reality, that each of them lived in social circles which were filled with people and activities we don't know about, and that they all did ordinary things as well as extraordinary ones, without seeing each other or corresponding as much as we would like. What the document we are studying here tells us about Kierkegaard is not that he was friendly with Bournonville in the 1840s, but that his notoriety in the years after his death was such that he could be the basis of a joke shared between a group of ballet dancers at a social gathering in a restaurant.

In a long diary entry on 1 October 1861, Bournonville writes, 'From today I no longer belong to the Royal Danish Theatre. My decision to resign is grounded in mature consideration and a careful search in my own conscience'.[8] He goes on, recording *Afskeedsvisitter* (farewell visits) and *Middag* (dinner) with Geheimeraad Tillisch, Director of the Royal Theatre.

October 2 begins *'Op Kl. 7'*, and then he records, 'I was fetched at 4:30 pm … to the Shooting Gallery, where a circle of fellow artists had organised a farewell celebration for me. Høedt, Holst, Phister, Hartmann, Wiehe, Liebe, Rosenkilde, Eckardt, Edv. Helsted – Gade, Füssel, Hoppe, Brodersen, Fredstrup, Scharff, Stendrup, [Reinhard C.A.] Andersen.[9] The atmosphere was particularly lively and five outstanding speeches were given. I felt myself moved to a high degree'.[10]

[8] 'Fra i dag af tilhører jeg ikke mere det kgl. danske Theater. Min Beslutning at trække mig tilbage er grundet paa moden Eftertanke og Randsagelse af mit eget Indre.'

[9] Some of these names appear in the list of dancers and theatre personnel participating in an 1858 performance of the *saltarello* from *Blomsterfesten i Genzano* [The Flower Festival in Genzano] in Knud-Arne Jürgensen, *The Bournonville Tradition*, vol. 2, p. 226. Three of those listed, Gade, Helsted and Hartmann, were composers. Correspondence between Bournonville and Hartmann was published in 1999 [*J.P.E. Hartmann og hans kreds*, 3 vols, ed. Inger Sørensen, Copenhagen] and between Bournonville and Gade in 2008 [*Niels W. Gade og hans europæiske kreds*, 3 vols, ed. Inger Sørensen, Copenhagen] but neither composer refers directly to Bournonville's farewell *middag*.

[10] 'Kl 4½ blev jeg hentet … til Skydebanen, hvor en Kreds af Kunstfæller havde foranstaltet et Afskeedsgilde for mig. Høedt, Holst, Phister, Hartmann, Wiehe, Liebe, Rosenkilde, Eckardt, Edv. Helsted – Gade, Füssel, Hoppe, Brodersen, Fredstrup, Scharff, Stendrup, [Reinhard C.A.] Andersen. Stemningen var særdeles livlig og fem udmærkede Taler bleve holdte. Jeg følte mig i høi Grad bevæget'.

Bournonville's friend of some forty years, Hans Christian Andersen, made an entry in his diary for 9 October 1861,[11] noting that Bournonville left for Sweden that day; the detailed record of the journey which Bournonville made in his own diary confirms that he set out that morning. Bournonville's 2 October speech includes reminiscences and jokes that might have been shared between the two men, and the warmth and openness as well as the length of their friendship might lead us to expect Andersen at an occasion of this kind. But Andersen does not mention the gathering on 2 October in his assiduously kept diary, and seems not to have known about it. In fact, as the language in Bournonville's diary makes clear, the gathering was organised by his friends, not by him, and he was 'fetched', though he had enough time to write a draft of his speech. This 'circle of artists' were Bournonville's professional colleagues, taking him for a farewell meal; it would have been inappropriate for a different sort of friend to have joined this particular party.

So far as the jokes in his speech go, it is clear that Bournonville was speaking within a friendship-circle that shared a cultural heritage and memories: all his colleagues, even the younger ones, would have heard stories about the memorably dreadful *Armide*, a four act heroic ballet produced at the Royal Theatre in 1821, even if they weren't old enough to have been in it or seen it themselves.[12]

I now explore the context in which Bournonville delivered his speech, the issues that he would have wanted to address and the personalities impinging on his professional and social world, aiming to clarify the way in which his audience would have 'heard' the content of what he said.

After a period in which Bournonville had become increasingly frustrated by the attitude of the new political establishment and the Royal Theatre's managers to his work, he was leaving Copenhagen to take up a new contract as Intendant for the Stage with responsibility for all

[11] 'Bournonville reist til Sverrig hvor han er Engageret', part of the entry named as Wednesday 8 October. In fact Andersen had, as he did from time to time, confused the date, and he was actually writing on 9 October. From H.C. Andersens Dagbøger V, 1861–1863 (Sider: I–XX, 1–455) on-line, p. 121, consulted 1 and 17.1.11. (<http://base.kb.dk/hca_pub/cv/main/Page.xsql?nnoc=hca_pub&p_VolNo=5&p_PageNo=122&p_mode=text>)

[12] *Armide* was choreographed by solo dancer Carl Dahlén, left in charge during the absence of Antoine Bournonville who had taken his son, August, on a first visit to Paris recorded in the second volume of Svend Kragh-Jacobsen and Nils Schiørring's edition of Bournonville's *Breve til Barndomshjemmet*, 3 vols., 1969–78.

productions, not just ballet, at the Royal Theatre in Stockholm, where he was to stay for three years before returning to Copenhagen.[13]

Bournonville had been an excited and vocal supporter of the reforms which brought representative democracy to the Danish body politic in 1849, but the unanticipated consequences for the funding of his ballet company presented him with a steady challenge through the 1850s.[14] The shift in political perspective from capital city towards the empowerment of previously almost unheard voices from the countryside contributed to the change, and there seems to have been a reluctance amongst the new democratically elected representatives to allow what they saw as continued excessive spending on the personal pleasures of the Royal household. In terms that will be familiar to the modern reader, the performing arts were now required to have demonstrable economic value to the state.[15]

In his *Vort Theatervæsen* of 1851 Bournonville expressed his dismay at the proposals of the first theatre bill of 1851, saying that they 'make the artist an exception from those rights to which the Constitution entitles every Danish citizen'.[16] The bill's financial threat was to the pensions and promotion patterns of the Royal Theatre's personnel, 'among other things, preventing permanent employment with pension rights for the corps de ballet and pupils and … removing pensions from salary increases following promotion'.[17] Despite repeated protests in discussions with the Theatre Director, J.L. Heiberg, and the Minister of Culture, C.C. Hall[18], Bournonville was only able to obtain informal, verbal promises that something would be done to improve employment conditions for the ballet, but in 1859, by which time the Theatre Director

[13] That Bournonville regarded the political and administrative obstacles he faced as important may be judged from the title he gave to the first section of his memoirs' third volume, published in in three parts in 1877–78: 'The Theatre Crisis and the Ballet'. His stern comments, his criticism of people still in office, mean that this part of *Mit Theaterliv* is more a political polemic than a memoir, and the same is also true of the many contributions he made to the press from the 1850s.

[14] Birthe Johansen, 'Dans og politik: Bournonville og Fjernt fra Danmark i 1850'ernes nationale spændingsfelt' in *Dansen er en Kunst*, ed. Ole Nørlyng, 2005, pp. 145–173.

[15] Johansen, *op.cit.,* pp. 148–149/165–166. The first page number given refers to the Danish text of the article, the second to its English translation. See also Richard Jenkins, *Being Danish: Paradoxes of Identity in Everyday Life*, Copenhagen 2011, p. 56.

[16] Johansen, *op.cit.,* pp. 149/165.

[17] Johansen, *op.cit.,* pp. 149/166.

[18] C.C. Hall (1812–88).

was F. von Tillisch,[19] Bournonville's protests were rudely dismissed by the Ministry: 'it is not considered appropriate that an official subordinate to the Ministry disputes decisions taken by the Ministry' – this to a man who only eleven years earlier had been a trusted advisor of the King and a member of his privy council.[20]

In introducing the third and final volume of his memoirs, *Mit Theaterliv*, published in three parts between 1877–78, Bournonville wrote, 'I was convinced that the conditions with which the Royal Theatre, and the ballet in particular, were confronted during 1860–61 must shortly lead to an upheaval which would hit hardest the branch of art that I had cultivated and encouraged through such toil and trouble. The cold calculation that greeted every one of my undertakings in the interests of art was at last bound to paralyse my powers of invention and destroy my efficacy. Therefore I did not wish to renew my contract but accepted a three year appointment as Intendant for the Stage at the Royal Theatre in Stockholm.'[21]

It should be noted that during this period, Heiberg had done his best to support Bournonville's arguments for better treatment of his staff, for example informing his ministerial superiors that, 'his claims as regards the ballet personnel's salaries etc. are in themselves by no means excessive'.[22] J.L. Heiberg stepped down from his post as Director of the Royal Theatre on 26 April 1856. An important presence in the 'Golden Age', Heiberg had begun his career as a writer of poems and plays, following in the steps of his mother, Thomasine Gyllembourg, whose 'noveller' were enormously popular in their time.[23] The dinners he hosted at home with his wife, Johanne Luise, were an important medium through which the culturally active members of Copenhagen's society interacted with each other, and their carefully maintained tone of bourgeois respectability played a part in setting the tone of the Golden Age itself, as did the articles published in the aesthetic journal, *Flyveposten*,

[19] F. von Tillisch (1801–89), Director of the Royal Theatre 1859–64.

[20] Johansen, *op.cit.*, pp. 149/166.

[21] Bournonville's frustrations with the management of the Royal Theatre are considered at length in *My Theatre Life*, trans. Patricia McAndrew, Wesleyan University, US and London, 1979, pp. 264–266, 276–278.

[22] Johansen, *op.cit.*, pp. 149/166.

[23] *Noveller, gamle og nye, af Forfatteren til 'En Hverdags-Historie', Udgivne af Johan Ludvig Heiberg*, (Vol. 1–3, Copenhagen 1833–34), one of the books remaining from Bournonville's collection. See below, note 48.

which Heiberg edited.[24] Kierkegaard was a guest at these gatherings in 1836 and maybe later on too, though not welcome after his critique of Heiberg in 1843.[25] Heiberg established a reputation as a leading philosopher too, leading the Hegelian school from which Kierkegaard gradually became alienated. Bournonville criticised Heiberg for stepping beyond his competence: 'For myself, I was a sincere admirer of Heiberg as a poet and, upon the whole, as a writer. I felt irresistibly attracted by his intellectual discourse in the days when he had not yet exchanged a first-class standing among the *beaux-esprits* for a third-class place in the social register. However, I considered him unsuitable as a Director, first, because he himself was an artist (an author) and, as such, biased; secondly, because he always looked out for his own comfort; and, finally, because he was married to a prima donna.'[26]

Johanne Luise Heiberg had good cause to remember the 'unforgettable *Armide*' to which Bournonville refers in his speech: she had made her debut in the same 1821 performance as H.C. Andersen. Andersen and Fru Heiberg had a strained relationship throughout their lives despite, or perhaps because, they had much in common: she had been born Johanne Luise Pätges in 1812, the daughter of an alcoholic tinker and a Jewish mother, growing up at a fairground outside Copenhagen before her 'discovery' and rise to respectability.[27] Bournonville's references to her in his memoirs are as polite and reverential as they should be to one who became a public celebrity of high standing in her own right, as an actress as well as a dancing partner to Bournonville in the 1830s, but in her private letters, Johanne Luise Heiberg certainly writes some very disagreeable things about Bournonville and his wife. In a letter from 1865 Bournonville is called both 'rude' and 'conceited', and in 1872 Helene Bournonville is 'nauseating' and referred to as a 'cat'; both she and her husband are 'hypocritical'.[28]

Apart from the document at issue here, there seems to be no evidence at all that Bournonville and Kierkegaard ever met, though Kierkegaard

[24] J.L. Heiberg, 'On the Prevailing Tone in Public Life' (1828), quoted in Garff, pp. 63, 69. See also Garff's account of Heiberg's strictures on etiquette, *op.cit.*, pp. 71–74.
[25] Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard*, p.63. I am grateful to Peter Tudvad for clarifying the details of Kierkegaard's attendance at Heiberg's salons.
[26] *My Theatre Life*, pp. 207–208.
[27] Jackie Wullschlager, *Hans Christian Andersen: The Life of a Storyteller*, London 2000, p. 188.
[28] Private communication from Eskil Irminger.

attended ballet performances at the Royal Theatre in 1842–43[29] and made some references to Bournonville and the ballet in three works of his published in 1843–44 (see below). It is clear that Bournonville was 'on the other side', that of Kierkegaard's critics, in an argument which generated a great deal of heat and very little light in the years shortly before the philosopher's death, and which contributed to the scandal at his burial. Bournonville wrote, in his diary for 29 December, 1854: 'Evening party, *Høedt, Paulis,* S. Phiseldeck. We had a pleasant time, but Høedt displeases me by defending Søren Kjerkegaard's vile attack on Münster.'[30] As Bishop Mynster had married Bournonville in 1830, his loyalty is perhaps understandable, though any fondness there may have been is not apparent in the passage of *Mit Theaterliv* which describes the 1853 Copenhagen cholera outbreak. 'On the whole the Copenhageners displayed the same noble attributes they usually do in times of adversity. The doctors' zeal and self-sacrifice were beyond all praise; the priests, with a single exception, attended to their solemn business at the risk of their lives.' The exception was Mynster.[31]

H.C. Andersen had good reason to take note of Kierkegaard's activities; the younger man had written his first book, *From the Papers of One Still Living*,[32] in 1838, a pompous, vindictive and deeply unpleasant eighty page review of Andersen's third novel, *Only a Fiddler*.[33] In a detailed account of the interaction between the two men, Jens Andersen describes their first encounters with each other in 1834, 'at the Students' Association or the Music Association, in cafés, at the theater, on Østergade, or at the home of the Heibergs in Christianshavn',[34] and notes the small steps which Kierkegaard took to ameliorate the nastiness of his printed words before tracing their relationship and rivalry until Kierkegaard's death in 1855.[35] It is clear that both men eyed each other suspiciously at a distance, reading each other's work and watching

[29] Peter Tudvad, *Kierkegaards København*, Copenhagen, 2004, pp. 264, 266.
[30] Kirmmse, *op. cit.*, p. 101, quoting NKS 747 8°, Dagbøger, bind 13.
[31] *My Theatre Life*, p. 209. I am grateful to Peter Tudvad for drawing my attention to this passage and identifying the reference to Mynster in a private communication, 21.3.2011. See Tudvad, *Kierkegaards København*, p. 107.
[32] Søren Kierkegaard, *Early Polemical Writings*, ed. Julia Watkin, Princeton 1990. The dates of composition and the book's publication on 7.9.1838, are given on p. xxiv, n. 66.
[33] H.C. Andersen, *Kun en Spillemand*, *H.C. Andersens samlede værker*, Copenhagen 2004, vol. 5, pp. 11–295.
[34] Jens Andersen, *Hans Christian Andersen, a new life*, New York, Woodstock, London, translated Tiina Nunnally, 2005, pp. 249–250.
[35] *Ibid*, pp. 248–262.

for further unpleasantness while occasionally making polite gestures to each other, for example by sending each other copies of their books.[36] There has been a long debate about the identity of H.C. Andersen's satirical 'animal' caricatures. It has been suggested that he was poking fun at Kierkegaard in his *Eventyr*, 'The Galoshes of Fortune', in May 1838, but others have argued that the philosopher being satirised in the sketch was J.L. Heiberg.[37] In the section about 'the transformation of the copyist', 'the reader is introduced to an exotic bird who philosophically babbles on, constantly shaking his head and sending ripples through his birdlike coiffure and crooked nose … "making a quip, quip, quip" and lavishly scattering philosophical remarks, such as: "Now, let's be sensible people!" … the theology student's "dialectical" tongue never stopped wagging when he was among educated people … "Everything else it screeched was just as incomprehensible as the chirping of a canary".'[38] If his target was Kierkegaard, Andersen only had himself to blame for the nasty review of *Only a fiddler* published in September that year.

There was a considerable fuss at Kierkegaard's burial in the Assistens Cemetery on 18 November 1855. As H.C. Andersen wrote to Bournonville on 24 November, 'Søren Kierkegaard was buried last Sunday, following a service at the Church of Our Lady. The parties concerned had done very little. The church pews were closed, and the crowd in the aisles was unusually large. Ladies in red and blue hats were coming and going; item: a dog with a muzzle. At the gravesite itself there was a scandal: when the whole ceremony was over out there (that is, when Tryde had cast earth upon the casket), a son of a sister of the deceased stepped forward and denounced the fact that he had been buried in

[36] *Early Polemical Writings*, p. xxvi, n. 77.

[37] H.C. Andersen, *Lykkens Kalosker*, *H.C. Andersens samlede værker*, Copenhagen 2003, vol. 1, pp. 460–485. See also *ibid*, pp. 536, which confirms the publication date of the *eventyr* in *Tre Digtninger* on 19.5.1838. The identification of Kierkegaard as the subject of the sketch came first in Frithiof Brandt's book, *Soren Kierkegaards Ungdom* (1929), and Jens Andersen accepts that identification. But Hans Brix, in his 1907 Ph.D, *H.C. Andersen og hans Eventyr*, proposes that the philosopher in question is Heiberg, a view supported by Paul V. Rubow in his *H.C. Andersens Eventyr* (1927). Whoever Andersen intended to make fun of, it seems reasonable to suppose that Kierkegaard might have read the story and believed that it might be him, and have been annoyed – that the story was published just as he was embarking on the writing of *From the Papers* … seems to point towards the possibility of the link. I am grateful to Peter Tudvad and Eskil Irminger for this information, and for insisting that the connection's unproveability should be explained.

[38] J. Andersen, *op.cit.*, p. 251.

this fashion. He declared – this was the point, more or less – that Søren Kierkegaard had resigned from our society, and therefore we ought not bury him in accordance with our customs! I was not out there, but it was said to be unpleasant. The newspapers say a little about it. In *Fædrelandet's* issue of last Thursday this nephew has published his speech along with some concluding remarks. To me, the entire affair is a distorted picture of Søren K., I don't understand it!'[39]

Bournonville's acquaintance with H.C. Andersen had begun many years earlier, when both, as teenagers of precisely the same age, were employed (though with very different standing) on the stage of the Royal Theatre. August Bournonville[40] made his stage debut in 1813 at the age of only seven, and was employed as a Royal Dancer in 1823 when only 18; he was a very talented young dancer with a great theatrical future evidently before him. Andersen, by contrast, was a gawky boy with a striking (rather than attractive) personality who had arrived from Odense in 1819, and was set on a career – any career – without there yet being any evident talent for one, unless you counted his capacity for attracting attention and for persuading normally sensible people to take him seriously.

In April 1821, Andersen appeared in 'the unforgettable *Armide*' as a 'chorus extra' (to support people on stage to sing, and act, and dance, while being virtually untrained in any of these skills himself); the programme lists his name amongst the 'trolls', alongside that of Johanne Pätges amongst the 'cupids'.[41] While *Fr. Pätges* would later become the

[39] Translation by Bruce Kirmmse, *op. cit.,* p. 136. The original appears in *Digterens & Balletmesterens luner: H.C. Andersens og August Bournonvilles brevveksling*, ed. Knud Arne Jürgensen, Copenhagen, 2005, p. 92. 'Søren Kirkegaard blev i Sø[n]dags begravet fra Frue Kirke, der var fra Vedkommendes Side gjort meget lidt! ~~gjort,~~ Kirkestolene stode lukkede og Trængselen in Gangene var saaledes særdeles stor. Madammer med røde og blaa Hatte løb ud og ind – item Hunde med Mundkurv. ~~Veed~~ [*ændret til:* Paa] selve Graven var der Scandale; en Søstersøn[nen] til den Afdøde, traadte op da hele Cerimonien der var forbi, (den, at Tryde have kastet Jord paa Kisten,) og talte imod at han var begravet paa denne Maade, han mindede [*ændret til:* ærklærede], det var omtrent Meningen, at Søren Kirkegaard have mældt sig ud af vort Samfund og saa skulde vi ikke begrave ham paa vor Maade! – jeg var ikke derude, men deer skal have været uhyggeligt. – Bladene tale lidt derom, Søstersøn har nu i Fædrelandet, sidste Torsdagsnummer, givet det Sagte tillige med nogle Efter-Ord, det Hele er mig ~~noget~~ et Vrængbilled af Søren K., – jeg forstaaer det ikke!'

[40] His father, Antoine, had arrived from Sweden in 1791, becoming First Solo Dancer and then taking over the management of the ballet company in 1816 on the death of Vincenzo Galeotti.

[41] The playbill for the event misspells Johanne Luise Pätges' name as 'Petcher'.

wife of J.L. Heiberg and one of the great stars of the Danish stage, Andersen would carve a rather different path for himself.

Jens Andersen gives a lively account of H.C. Andersen's role in the proceedings: 'In the heat of the battle, he and the other sorcerers, "with loud shrieks", were supposed to flee through the grove, which meant diagonally across the stage, and then disappear in all directions. Things went splendidly, up until the grand finale. Huge boulders were supposed to crash down onto the stage while all the sorcerers performed their finale dance, which according to the script would end with them "falling among the piles of rocks in various ghastly positions and groups." Unfortunately, Andersen fell so hard and with such drama at the premiere that, as Bournonville reported, he plunged headfirst into a crack in the rocks … Bournonville remembered that the final reaction to the play "was not marked by any clear expressions of displeasure, but with an ominous snickering".'[42]

This is not the place for a full account of the friendship between Bournonville and Andersen, but it is important to note its closeness over so many years, as well as the directness with which both men addressed each other: the intimacy of a friendship begun early, and the mutual respect between two highly creative men of great intellectual power and wide reading is evident in their correspondence, preserved for the years 1837–75.[43] A single instance to illustrate the tightness and empathy of their relationship is the way in which Bournonville tactfully and kindly dealt with Andersen in 1843, when he became besotted with the Swedish soprano, Jenny Lind, then a house guest with the Bournonville family. Charlotte Bournonville was to record in her memoirs, years later, the memorable strength of Andersen's infatuation with Lind: 'of course we didn't imagine him as a primo amoroso, and we thought it would be fun to tease him … When Jenny Lind came to see us, he never stopped asking, "Has Jenny Lind never talked about me? Has she never said 'I like him'?" But we said "no", because although Jenny Lind did talk about him and liked him very much and admired his works, she was not in love with him'. It's clear that Andersen's love life was a

[42] J. Andersen, *op.cit.,* p. 40. Bournonville's recollections appear in the last volume of his *Mit Theaterliv* to be published (1877–78). Volume 1 had appeared in 1848, and Volume 2 in 1865, after his return to Copenhagen from Stockholm.

[43] *Digterens & Balletmesterens luner: H.C. Andersens og August Bournonvilles brevveksling,* ed. Knud Arne Jürgensen, Copenhagen, 2005, p. 92.

matter of open knowledge in the Bournonville house, even amongst the children.[44]

After Bournonville left for Stockholm in early October 1861, it was several months before the friends exchanged letters: Andersen wrote a friendly note on 22 January 1862, to which Bournonville replied almost immediately, on 31 January, saying, 'You are really an amazing man! You don't forget me, you think of me, send me your lovely poems and far from getting cross at my all too long silence, you write me the loveliest letter! In truth, I could be ashamed if I wasn't at the same time both happy and proud … So now, you won't get any more of these kinds of sweet things today, although you do deserve it for all the beautiful things you have served up to me and my muse. Yet I can't help but pat you on the cheeks for the genuine friendship that runs through your whole letter, and which every warm heart would be grateful to receive; thanks, dear friend, for all your goodness and inclusiveness, and be sure that you, when you visit me and my family, will find gratitude and acceptance.'[45]

A little later in the same letter, Bournonville responds to the news, from Andersen, that he planned to spend a whole year away travelling, to Spain and Africa: 'I can hardly believe that: firstly, stuff overwhelms you, and you must get home to organise your material; secondly, can you possibly be without your Copenhagen wickedness so long, and on top of that the triviality whose influence seems to give your work their necessary sourness or, if you will, bittersalt? It is curious that the foun-

[44] Charlotte Bournonville, *Erindringer fra Hjemmet og fra Scenen*, Copenhagen 1903, p. 296. See also C. Roth, 'Bournonville: Some Untold stories, in *Fund og Forskning 46,* Copenhagen, 2007, pp. 159–162. That this friendship made an impression on Jenny Lind was evident in 1845, when she presented Bournonville with an inscribed silver toddy pot, now preserved in the Bournonville family. The inscription is in Swedish: 'From Jenny to her father in the dear Danish home', which Andersen, in *The Fairy Tale of My Life,* construed as giving him the status of brother to Jenny Lind; he'd had a rather different relationship with her in mind in 1843. (Private communication from Eskil Irminger, 5.1.11.)

[45] Jürgensen, *op.cit.,* p. 120–121. 'Du er dog et mageløst Menneske! Du glemmer mig ikke, Du tænker paa mig, sender mig Dine deilige Digtninger og langtfra at vredes over min altfor lange Taushed, skriver Du mig det kjærligste Brev til! Jeg vilde i Sandhed blive skamfuld om jeg ikke paa samme Tid var baade glad og stolt … See saa, nu faaer Du ikke mere i dag af det Slags Sukkergodt, endskjøndt Du vel kunde have fortjent det for alle de smukke Ting Du opvarter mig og min Musa med, dog kan jeg ikke lade være at klappe Dig paa Kinden for den oprigtige Venlighed, der gaaer igjennem hele Dit Brev og som maa gjøre ethvert varmt Hjerte godt at modtage; Tak, elskelige Ven for al Din Godhed og Deeltagelse og vær overbevist om at Du hos mig og min Famillie skal finde Taknemmelighed og sand Anerkjendelse.'

dation of Danish literature, despite all the clogs and hiking boots that endlessly stamp through it, can still be so fruitful, and that in the midst of the howls of bullying and indifference which oppress our poets, they can produce such beautiful sounds as those that often ring out from the fatherland's harp.'[46]

Bournonville was to mention the sharp tongues of his countrymen again when he wrote, in 1865, shortly after his return from Stockholm: 'I was interested to hear a seventy-year-old peasant from Telemark say to a Swedish student with whom he had shaken hands at a banquet in the grove: "You know, when I was a lifeguardsman in Copenhagen, I never dreamed I would become such good friends with the Swedes." However, these two races were still very foreign to one another and, in particular, highly different in their addresses, where Danish humour was lacking to a considerable degree. A young Norwegian who was standing next to me during one of Svedelius' effusive orations said of the Swedes: "They are splendid people, but they lack irony." I am almost inclined to think that we Danes possess too much of that Attic salt.'[47] It is this story that he has in mind when he makes the same point towards the end of his 1861 speech. Though Bournonville's story recalls a visit to Norway in 1852, there is no mistaking, for all his careful politeness, that the author himself was perfectly capable of being very direct in his speech, and never more pungently than when talking about theatre managers.

It would be wrong to deduce, from information about books surviving from Bournonville's library, or from what he does or does not mention in his writings, that he had or had not read particular books, whether he owned them or not. As it is, though, those books by Kierkegaard which have remained in the collection held by his descendents[48] suggest

[46] Jürgensen, *op.cit.,* p. 121. 'Det troer jeg næppe: *Primo* overvælder stoffet Dig og Du maa hjem at ordne Dine Materialier – Secondo, kan Du umulig saa længe undvære lidt Kjøbenhavnsk Ondskab, til og med Trivialitet, hvis Indflydelse synes at give Dine Producter den nødvendige *Syre* eller om Du vil *Bittersalt.* Det er dog mærkeligt at den danske litteraire Jordbund, uagtet alle de Træsko og Traustøvler der uophørlig trampe den til, alligevel kan være saa frugtbar og at der midt imellem de Jammerskrig som Haan og Ligegyldighed afpresser vore Poeter, kan fremstaae saa liflige Toner, som dem, der ofte klinge fra de fædrelandske Harper.'

[47] *Mit Teaterliv*, p. 202.

[48] I am grateful to Eskil Irminger for providing information about that part of Bournonville's library which remains in the family. For a discussion of the whereabouts of other elements which survive, see Knud Arne Jürgensen, 'Balletmesterens bibliotek: August Bournonvilles samling af udenlandske balletlibretti og hans bibliotek', *Fund og Forskning*, 33 (1994), pp. 168–170.

that Bournonville took as little notice of his contemporary's work as the philosopher did of his, until the scandal at his funeral in 1855, related by H.C. Andersen, may have piqued his interest. Andersen says in his letter of 24 November, 'Of the papers from home, you naturally get Berlingske Tidende, so I won't go into detail about matters I assume you know about, for the moment mostly about Kierkegaard's life and death'.[49] Bournonville, who was in Vienna, replied to the letter on 10 December with one devoted to theatre news and shared acquaintances; Kierkegaard and the news of his scandal-raising burial prompt no interest or response at all. But Andersen clearly knew that Bournonville would understand what he was talking about when, in his next letter on 20 December, the flow of his thought passes from a book about religion to a comment on Kierkegaard. 'I got a letter from Fr. Bremer yesterday; she is working on a new book, which won't be published any time soon. I understand that it has a religious content. However, we still receive books here for and against Søren Kierkegaard's view, without being of any great consequence.'[50]

The Kierkegaard book with the earliest publication date to survive in what remains of Bournonville's library was published in 1852, and is bound together with a similar work published in 1857. The volume includes *To taler ved Altergangen om Fredagen, Anden Udgave* (Copenhagen 1852) ['Two Discourses for Friday Holy Communion, second edition'] with *Ypperstepræsten, Tolderen, Synderinden, tre Taler ved Altergangen om Fredagen. Anden Udgave* (Copenhagen 1857) ['The High Priest', 'The Publican', The Sinning Woman', Three Discourses for Friday Holy Communion, second edition]. It seems reasonable to suppose that the two works were bought together after the later of these two dates, when Kierkegaard's rudeness to Mynster and the scandal at his funeral, as well as Andersen's comments, had brought him to Bournonville's attention sufficiently to move him to buy a copy of his work.[51] So Bournonville

[49] Jürgensen, *Digterens & Balletmesterens luner*, p. 93. 'Af Blade hjemme fra faar Du rimeligviis Berlingske tidende, altsaa hvad jeg kan antage at Du kjender derfra vil jeg ikke udbrede mig om, det er for Øieblikket meest om Kirkegaards Liv og død.'

[50] Jürgensen, *Digterens & Balletmesterens luner*, p. 98. 'Frøken Bremer har jeg igaar Brev fra hun arbeider paa en ny Bog, som dog ikke saa snart vil komme ud, jeg forstaaer at den er af religiøs Indhold. Endnu kommer her stadigt Bøger for og mod Søren Kirkegaards Udtalelse, dog Intet af stor Betydenhed.'

[51] There are two other books by Kierkegaard remaining in Eskil Irminger's hands. *Dømmer selv! Til Selvprøvelse Samtiden anbefalet. Anden Række* 1851–52 [*At blive ædru & Christus som Forbillede eller Ingen kan tjene to Herrer*] Eskil Irminger comments: the text is from 1851–52, but this edition was printed in 1876, so if it was owned by August Bournonville, it

was being entirely straightforward when he said, in his 1861 speech, 'I confess that I have not yet read [*The Concept of Irony*], likewise I have altogether only read and digested the tiniest part of this author's works'.

It is important to recognise that even an intellect of Bournonville's range and calibre will have blind spots, areas which mattered to others that simply don't matter very much to him. It seems clear that while politics and a broad range of cultural activities were matters of great interest and importance to Bournonville, religious discourse was not one of his particular interests despite the frequent displays of religious piety incorporated in several of his ballets, and that figures now regarded by historians of the period as having had general significance only impinged on Bournonville's consciousness when their activities affected him directly.[52] So there is only one mention of N.F.S. Grundtvig in *Mit Theaterliv*, where Bournonville is musing over the literary sources of his ballets on themes chosen from Nordic mythology: 'In Finn Magnussen and Grundtvig as well as Petersen's Norse mythology, but mainly in Oehlenschläger's magnificent epic, *Gods of the North* ['Nordens Guder'], one will find the sources from which I have drawn my subject … If our Christian speakers and poets can paint for us both Paradise and Hell with living colours – nay, even people them with creatures of highly different natures – surely it must be permissible to adapt the fictions of paganism according to the demands of the stage and to presume that these characters may to a certain degree help to revive interest in the writings which contain these national treasures.'[53] Bishop Mynster fares a little better than Grundtvig in *Mit Theaterliv*, being included in a list

was not his for very long. The third work is *Atten opbyggelige Taler. Anden Udgave* (Copenhagen, 1862) [Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses, second edition]. The library includes two philosophical works not connected to Kierkegaard: *Udvalg af Biskop Jens Paludan-Müllers efterladte Papirer, udgivet af hans Sønner* (Copenhagen 1868) and Louis Figuier, *Dagen efter Døden eller Det tilkommende Liv i Overensstemmelse med Videnskaben. Med 23 Billeder.* (Copenhagen 1872). There are two books in the collection related to J.L. Heiberg: *Johan Ludvig Heibergs Poetiske Skrifter. Paany samlede og ordnede af Forfatteren*, Copenhagen 1848–49, Vols. 1–8, each volume of which is inscribed by Bournonville, but without any notes or comments by him; and *Breve fra og til Johan Ludvig Heiberg*, Copenhagen 1862, which bears only Charlotte Bournonville's signature and, like the others, shows no trace of having been read very much. A further book by Heiberg, not in Eskil Irminger's collection, was sold at Arne Bruun Rasmussen's auctions in Copenhagen in April 2005: *Fata Morgana* (1838), with a long, very kind, versified inscription from Heiberg to Bournonville.

[52] Jürgensen, *The Bournonville Tradition: The First Fifty Years, 1829–1879*, London, 1997, Vol. 1, pp. 66–67.

[53] *Mit Theaterliv*, p. 350.

of men of learning,[54] perhaps because Bournonville as mentioned had been married by him in the Slotskirke on Midsummer Eve, 23 June, 1830.[55]

Nowadays we are used to classifying Kierkegaard as a philosopher, the man from whom the very modern idea of Existentialism stemmed. His insistence on the individual's personal path towards salvation, building on their direct experience of ordinary life, seemed to be of great importance to those who rediscovered his writings in the twentieth century.[56] To his contemporaries, he was primarily an idiosyncratic sermonizer, a man concerned to save souls. Although it rarely took long for those of his works published under a pseudonym to be attributed to him, it remains the case that he only published his name as author in respect of books addressing specifically religious topics. In the early years of his fame, he engaged keenly with Copenhagen's cultural life and with the social activities of his own circle, attending performances of stage works and especially opera at the Royal Theatre. There's a particularly interesting commentary on his experience of the difference between the ways in which language and music communicate in *Enten-Eller* [Either-Or],[57] and his *Gjentagelsen* [Repetition] has much to offer a thoughtful musician. But for most of his life, he hardly watched the ballet or took any interest in it.

However there are three very important exceptions, all dating from the same brief period of intense interest, when Kierkegaard discusses ballet, and in one instance Bournonville himself, in his work. In *Begrebet Angest* [The Concept of Anxiety],[58] as part of an extended discussion of the demonic, Kierkegaard seeks to illustrate the emotional significance

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 631.
[55] *Ibid.*, p. 495.
[56] 'Existential' ideas were transmitted to modern European culture through the work of H.C. Andersen rather than Kierkegaard, whose philosophical exploration of the issues was only rediscovered later.
[57] S. Kierkegaard, *Enten-Eller*, trans. as *Either-Or*, 1843, trans. H.V. and E.H. Hong, Princeton, 1987, 2 vols, vol. 1, pp. 65–71, vol. 2, pp. 136–137. Kierkegaard acknowledges that music is a 'kingdom' he doesn't know as well as that of language, neatly capturing the importance of a person's aptitude (capacity to respond) without recognising that a musician might say just the same thing, with the subjects reversed, about poetry and music and their impact on them. For more about these apititudes, see C. Roth, *Being Happier*, Sheffield 1997.
[58] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: a simple psychologically orienting deliberation on the dogmatic issue of hereditary sin*, Copenhagen, 1844. Ed. and trans., Reidar Thomte and Albert B. Anderson, Princeton 1980.

of suddenness, and speaks of the special power inherent in 'the mimical' to embody it. 'The most terrible words that sound from the abyss of evil would not be able to produce an effect like that of the suddenness of the leap … because all the despair and all the horror of evil expressed in a word are not as terrible as silence. Without being the sudden as such, the mimical may express the sudden. In this respect the ballet master, Bournonville, deserves great credit for his representation of Mephistopheles. The horror that seizes one upon seeing Mephistopheles leap in through the window and remain stationary in the position of the leap!'[59] Kierkegaard had already mentioned 'the leap' in a work of the previous year, 1843: 'It is supposed to be the most difficult feat for a ballet dancer to leap into a specific posture in such a way that he never once strains for the posture but in the very leap assumes the posture. Perhaps there is no ballet dancer who can do it – but this knight does it. Most people live completely absorbed in worldly joys and sorrows; they are benchwarmers who do not take part in the dance. The knights of infinity are ballet dancers and have elevation … to be able to come down in such a way that instantaneously one seems to stand and to walk, to change the leap into life into walking, absolutely to express the sublime in the pedestrian – only that knight can do it, and this is the one and only marvel.'[60]

Peter Tudvad suggests that Kierkegaard may also have seen a performance of *Sylfiden* at around this time (to be precise, on 31 May 1843, because it formed a double bill with a comedy version of *Romeo and Juliet* by C.A. Warburg);[61] Kierkegaard writes, in *Fear and Trembling*, 'this [story] would be a subject for a poet who knew how to pry secrets out of people; otherwise, it can best be used by a ballet master, with whom the poet frequently confounds himself these days.'[62] This use of ballet as a means by which to draw attention to the power of the word, and the impotence of movement alone to convey meaning precisely, also appears in *Either/Or*, in a passage from the extended discussion of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and other incarnations of the Don Juan story: 'it might seem

[59] *Ibid*, p. 131. Kierkegaard saw Bournonville perform the role of Mephistopheles in his ballet *Faust* (1832) between 10 June 1842 and March 1843, see Peter Tudvad, *Kierkegaards København*, p. 264.

[60] Søren Kierkegaard, *Frygt og Bæven* [Fear and Trembling], Copenhagen 1843. Ed. and trans. Howard. V. Hong and Edna H. Hong in a single volume with *Gjentagelsen* [Repetition], Princeton 1983, p. 41.

[61] Peter Tudvad, *Kierkegaards København*, p. 266.

[62] *Ibid*, p. 94.

that Don Juan could be interpreted best as ballet … [which] presents almost nothing more than the torments of despair, the expression of which, since it has to be solely in pantomime, he shares with many others who are in despair. What is essential in Don Juan cannot be presented in ballet, and everyone readily feels how ludicrous it would be to watch Don Juan infatuating a girl by means of dance steps and ingenious gesticulations, Don Juan is an inner qualification and thus cannot become visible or appear in bodily configurations and movements or in molded harmony.'[63]

Kierkegaard addresses his temporary fixation again in *Repetition*, published in tandem with *Fear and Trembling* in 1843. 'There is probably no person who has not gone through a period when no richness of language, no passion of interjection was adequate, since no expression, no gesture sufficed, since nothing satisfied him other than breaking into the strangest leaps and somersaults. Perhaps the same individual learned to dance. Perhaps he frequently went to the ballet and admired the art of the dancer. Perhaps there came a time when ballet no longer stirred him, and yet he had moments when he could return to his room and, indulging himself, find indescribably humorous relief in standing on one leg in a picturesque pose or, giving not a damn for the world, settle everything with an *entrechat*.'[64] Clearly the remarks above about Bournonville's range of competence apply to Kierkegaard too, when it comes to the limitations of his response to ballet's expressive capacity, his scant empathy with its communicative power.

It is a measure of the disengagement between the characters in this drama that even though Kierkegaard published three books referring to the ballet in 1843–44, one of them mentioning Bournonville by name and offering praise, the references were not picked up by H.C. Andersen, who clearly wasn't following Kierkegaard's authorship all that closely, nor did he or anyone else report them to Bournonville. This period in the early 1840s was one in which Andersen and Bournonville were, perhaps, in closest contact with each other; at least, the documentary record of their friendship and of their interaction with the Swedish soprano Jenny Lind is quite full. So it's possible that something was said, but not written, about Kierkegaard's remarks. But it seems most likely that Bournonville had no idea that Kierkegaard had had a brief but

[63] *Either-Or*, vol. 1, p. 106. I am grateful to Peter Tudvad for drawing my attention to this passage.
[64] *Ibid*, from *Repetition*, p. 158.

intense phase of interest in the ballet at this time, and that they were not personally known to each other at all. Surely, if they had become acquainted by virtue of Kierkegaard's published remarks, Bournonville's reference to the philosopher in his 1861 speech would have mentioned it?

One supposes that, for most of his life, Kierkegaard thought ballet an entertainment designed for other people; with the exception of this passing interest in 1843–44, the ballet was, for him, as religious discourse was for Bournonville, a blind spot. It is no criticism of either man to make this observation: if you asked members of a modern audience at the opera whether they would be interested in seeing a ballet performance, by far the largest number of them would refuse, and *vice versa*; the same specialised enthusiasms still differentiate audiences for chamber music, for song, for contemporary dance, and similar subdivisions within other cultural strands.

The identity of Ferdinand Jacobsen, the character Bournonville makes fun of in his speech, is a puzzle to some degree, but the way in which Bournonville presents the story makes one suspect that the intended victim of this joke was actually J.L. Heiberg. There is a Herr Jacobsen named in the bill for the 1821 performance of *Armide*, the third of twelve Evil Spirits. But this Jacobsen was one of the group of quite young performers, 'actors' like Andersen and Fr. Pätges, who were drafted in to staff the production and fill the stage, not the corpulent man described in the speech, nor playing the character of the Greek god, Pan.[65] Bournonville adopts a classic theatrical device in order to lend credence to his invention: he introduces the very well known actor Frydendahl[66] into his narrative, having him quiz the invented character about his role just as a modern story-teller or comedian might invoke the name of a real person, or mention a real event or place, to give substance to something they had made up. Apart from the generalised assertion that he is making a joke which precedes mention of Jacobsen, there are four clues to suggest a satirical double-meaning: he is introduced with the remark, 'in short he was the contrary of irony', a

[65] I am grateful to Eskil Irminger for finding Herr Jacobsen in the 1821 playbill for *Armide*, and to Niels Peder Jørgensen, Librarian to the Royal Theatre Copenhagen, for providing further information about his status.

[66] Jørgen Peter Frydendahl (1766–1836) was nicknamed 'The Count' because of his aristocratic appearance and manners, so the words translated as 'the fine man's polished manners' apply to him in particular. (Private communication of 1.2.11 from Eskil Irminger.)

clear signal that the hearer is to expect what follows to mean the opposite of what it seems to say; the philosophical-religious content of the joke about being a God, not just any god, but 'the forest god Pan', the least appropriate choice given Heiberg's views; the teasing about good manners and sophistication, for which Heiberg and his wife had been famous; and finally the way in which the character 'appeared in the Foyer with ivy wreathed around his head, chest and stomach'. The bust of Heiberg adorning the foyer of the current Royal Theatre, which opened in 1874, did not arrive there until 1884, when a long-running argument with a willing sponsor was finally settled, but gossip about the original and its presentation to Fru Heiberg was fresh in 1861.

We know from the final parts of Bournonville's *Mit Theaterliv*, published between 1877–78, that at the end of his life, he had decided views about memorialisation, statues and busts. Bournonville writes[67] with some sarcasm about a controversy stirred up by disagreements between the theatre management and a rich donor, J.C. Jacobsen, who wanted to give a large sum to decorate the foyer of the new Royal Theatre. Jacobsen disapproved of the management's plans to commercialise the area, maintaining and expanding a café which would remain open to the public until midnight in return for higher rent payments, where he preferred to maintain the agreed plan, serving only 'daintier refreshments'. Bournonville writes, 'The brewer, Captain Jacobsen – a highly respected citizen who, out of rare patriotic devotion and great generosity, has erected for himself a lasting monument within the realm of art and science – offered, at his own expense, to have twelve marble busts and their pedestals executed in memory of famous Danish artists, musicians, and actors, on the condition that these works of art were to be set up in the public foyer as soon as it could be decorated in accordance with the published plan.'[68] The disagreement meant that there was a long delay in bringing Jacobsen's donation into play, and it wasn't until 1883, after Bournonville's death, that a copy of H.W. Bissen's bust of J.L. Heiberg by the sculptor's son, Vilhelm, was put on display in the theatre.[69]

The original bust had been modelled by the sculptor H.W. Bissen between February and March 1860, and its gypsum cast finished during

[67] *My Theatre Life*, trans. Patricia McAndrew, p. 395.

[68] *My Theatre Life*, trans. Patricia McAndrew, p. 395.

[69] I am grateful to Ole Nørlyng for his kindness in expanding on the information about this bust included in his *Apollons Mange Masker, det Kongelige Teaters udsmykning og kunstsamling*, Copenhagen, 1998, p. 125, in a private communication, 13.1.11.

the summer of 1860, before Heiberg's death on 25 August that year. It was shown to Johanne Luise Heiberg six weeks after her husband's death, when her brother arranged for it to be set up in her living room, surrounded with flowers and candles. 'I pressed a kiss upon that dead mouth, whose cold chilled me', she is reported to have said.[70] A marble version of this original cast was completed by the year end, and later left in Fru Heiberg's will to the Students' Association.

Bournonville, writing after the completion and opening of the new theatre but before its decorations had been completed, does not hide his distaste. 'The busts were to be the principal ornaments and the whole was to correspond – as much as possible – to the high purpose of the Theatre. In order to avoid the profanation that "pub life" involuntarily entails, the donor demanded a firm guarantee that the foyer must never be used for anything other than its original purpose, namely, that of furnishing an elegant meeting place for the audience during the intermissions. But here he ran up against the financial views of the authorities; for the rent from the food and drink concession offered an income which the Theatre treasury did not feel it ought to forego … the donor was informed that if he did not feel inclined to accept this arrangement, he was free to keep both his busts and his money! … a contract has been concluded with the confectioner, who, as temporary decoration, has had the whitewashed walls of the foyer coated with yellow distemper and given it a striking resemblance to the "second-class waiting room" in the railway station at Køge.'[71] Bournonville is markedly less sharp-tongued when discussing his attitude to another memorial, that proposed to mark the seventieth birthday of his old friend, H.C. Andersen. 'In order to delight him on his seventieth birthday, a plan was undertaken to erect a bronze statue in his honor. A public subscription was requested, and they wished to see my name as one of his oldest friends on the list of those inviting people to subscribe. But I was sorry to admit that while I would gladly have gone along with any other mark of honor, it was against my convictions to apotheosize a man who was still living, and, feeling safe from any misunderstanding, I submitted the reason for my refusal in writing. However, the request met with the liveliest support from every class and throughout the nation. And since I too have willingly given my contribution to the cause, I shall take great

[70] 'Jeg trykkede et kys på denne døde mund, hvis kulde gennemisnede mig'. Nørlyng, *op.cit.*, p. 125. See also *Johanne Luise Heiberg*, Bodil Wamberg, Copenhagen 1988.
[71] *My Theatre Life*, trans. Patricia McAndrew, p. 395.

pleasure in seeing the statue in the Rosenborg Gardens, surrounded by young folk who have delighted in reading *Andersen's Fairy Tales.*'[72]

Interestingly, the 1865 publication of *Mit Theaterliv*'s second volume ends with a sculptural characterisation of Johanne Luise Heiberg and Anna Nielsen. Having praised Anna Nielsen's '*Fidelity to Nature, Feeling, and Purity*', he contrasts Fru Heiberg's 'real calling … for the *gay*, *witty*, and *amiable* genre … If we should still have in mind a comparison between these unequal dramatic magnitudes, it must be as *conceptions* rather than as *personalities*. Both have – though with different impressions – worked in comedy and tragedy. But the august Muses will brook no divided worship. We shall, therefore, refer each of our chosen priestesses to their respective altar, and, should our capital one day be obliged to erect to the scenic art a worthier temple than the one that is now standing, I could propose the provision of vestibule adornments which – like those of the Théâtre Français – at once afford a symbol and a memorial. If we then give Thalia Fru Heiberg's facial features, those of Anna Nielsen ought to denote Melpomene.'[73]

There is a lesson here for us, the seekers of delight in the gardens of history: we need to remember to distinguish as carefully as we can between things which are 'facts', unarguably true, and those things whose truth depends on our own knowledge and interpretation. This article has shown what can happen when, 'speaking of irony', we take something which appears to be true as though it is, and place it in contexts in which its untruth turns out to be misleading or unhelpful. The *Guldalderkultur* of nineteenth century Copenhagen was one in which a remarkably vigorous and creative cultural life developed amongst quite a small community of creative artists. A number of them were friends with each other, and sometimes their influence on each other is direct and demonstrable. But we need to take care to remember that it is also true that they, like their modern counterparts, sometimes remained busy within their own cultural enclave, unaware of or uninterested in the work of their contemporaries.[74] When there are clear parallels, visible to us, between the ideas and expressive strategies in their work, we cannot assume that those exist because they were intentional. At times,

[72] *My Theatre Life*, trans. Patricia McAndrew, p. 665.

[73] *Ibid,* p. 333.

[74] For example, the relative isolation of the artist, Christen Købke (1810–48), from the cultural life beyond painting that was teeming around him in Copenhagen, is quite remarkable. See David Jackson, *Christen Købke, Danish Master of Light*, Edinburgh and London 2010.

such co-incidence of interest arises amongst those who live in common, with identical social and economic or cultural influences separately generating comparable responses which, far from influencing each other, are each the independent product of their now-virtually-invisible common context.

Appendix 1

A full transcription of Bournonville's text

En udmærket dansk Philosof har skrevet en vidtløftig Afhandling om Begrebet "Ironi". Jeg tilstaar med Undseelse at jeg ikke endnu har læst den, ligesom jeg overhovedet kun har læst og fordøiet yderst lidt af bemeldte Forfatter derimod nød jeg den Lykke ofte at spadsere med ham og vederqvæge mig med hans uudtømmelige Kilde af Viid og Skarpsindighed. Saameget fik jeg ud af det at Ironi ikke er ensbetydende med Latterlighed, Spot eller Bitterhed, men derimod et vigtigt Element i vor aandelige Tilværelse, den Tilsætning af Spiritus der betager Viin-druens qualmende Sødme den Straale koldt Vand der dæmper Feberheden, kort sagt det Smiil igjennem Taarer, der forhindrer os fra at blive flæbevorne. Jeg vil ikke paastaa at alle de Venner der her er forsamlede kjende mig til bunds men saameget har de dog seet af mit Livs Overflade, at det snarere er Følelsen end Ironien der spiller Hovedrollen i mit Indre – Jeg og min Kunst tilhører egentlig en sentimental Tid og Retning, jeg har bestandig levet i Kamp mod Ironiens udvortes Indflydelse, og jeg vil ikke nægte at den er voxet mig over Hovedet, i den Grad, at jeg ofte har følt [side 2] mig fremmed og forlegen midt i denne selvparodierende Stemning. Idag har jeg først rigtig faaet Øinene op for dens egentlige Værd, og jeg kalder den tilhjælp i dette Øieblik for ikke at overvældes af Følelser. Tro ikke at jeg vil forsøge at ironisere over den Stemning, der har fremkaldt den ligesaa hædrende som smigrende Demonstration, jeg her er Gjenstanden for, men idet jeg taknemlig modtager den Mindekrands mine Venner og Kunstfæller her række mig, vil jeg med et Smiil skue tilbage paa de Skrøbeligheder, der have klæbet ind i min Kunstnerfoed og ligesom jeg før altid har stræbt at lægge Alvor i det Lette og Skjæmtende vil jeg nu bringe Lethed og Skjæmt ind i det Alvorlige. Vi havde engang en temmelig corpulent Figurant ved Navn Ferdinand Iacobsen, et levende Billede paa det Umiddelbare: Grov, drikfældig Røst og uden Manér. Kort sagt det modsatte af Ironie – I den uforglemmelige Ballet Armida

skulde han forestille Skovguden *Pan* og mødte i Foyeen bekrandset med Efeu omkring Hoved, Bryst og Mave – Frydendahl nærmede sig ham med alle den fine Mands slebne Former og spurgte, Hvad skal De min bedste Søn forestille iaften? Jeg er Gud! var det korte men betegnende Svar – En olympisk Latter gjenlød i den glade Forsamling, men ingen tænkte [side 3] paa at *det Ord*, denne skikkelige Mand udtalte i al Troskyldighed, – altfor ofte var bleven til Kjød mellem Kunstnerne og boede iblandt os – under Hovmodets Selvtilbedelse ja endog under Misfornøjelsens mangfoldige latterlige Former. Naar man har været berørt af Ideen, levet og lidt for den og vandret imellem Kamp, Seir og Nederlag bringes man let til at betragte sig selv som et Centralpunkt for Bevægelsen, man fordrer en vedvarende begeistret Anerkjendelse og finder til Slutning enhver Ytring for ringe – Jeg har sat altfor stor Priis paa Publicums Bifald – havde det tiltaget i Forhold til min Begjærlighed, saa havde jeg gaaet indtil det Extravagante – det har visseligen holdt sig tilbage – og jeg bør være taknemmelig derfor, thi jeg har lært at indsee min Svaghed og at holde op medens Legen endnu var god. Jeg trækker mig tilbage med de behageligste Indtryk og skal med Glæde see det Værk fortsættes som jeg har offret min bedste Kraft til og som jeg skal ledsage med min varmeste Ønske ja med Raad og Daad naar det forlanges. Jeg gaar et Par Aar udenlands for [side 4] ikke at blive blød om Hjertet herhjemme – det er ganske vist at efter vore Forhold har jeg for lidt Ironie, men det Forraad, jeg i saa mange Aar har kunnet samle af denne Ingredients vil komme mig særdeles tilgode i Sverrig. Thi jeg maa sande hin Nordmands Ord. Svenskerne er et poetisk og ridderligt Folk, men de savne Ironie. Og nu mine elskede Brødre og Venner. Tak for al Eders Godhed, for alt hvad der har rørt og moret mig – skulde jeg komme til at lee og græde paa eengang, saa maa vi erkjende

At videre kan et Menneske jo ikke drive det.

Appendix 2

A new English translation of Bournonville's text

August Bournonville's speech to his friends on the occasion of his departure to Stockholm, 1861.

A clever Danish philosopher has written a complex dissertation on the concept of 'irony'. Bashfully, I confess that I have not yet read it, likewise I have altogether only read and digested the tiniest part of this author's works; however, I often enjoyed the pleasure of walking with

him and refreshing myself from his inexhaustible spring of wit and perspicacity. This much I learned from it: that irony is not synonymous with ridicule, mockery or bitterness, but is on the contrary an important element in our spiritual being; that addition of spirit which transforms the grape's sickly sweetness; that jet of cold water which dampens fever; in short that smile through tears which prevents us from becoming lachrymose. I will not claim that all those friends gathered here know me in depth, but they have seen so much of the surface of my life that they understand that it is feeling rather than irony which plays the leading role in my inner life – my art and I actually belong to a sentimental time and culture; I have lived in constant battle against irony's dissembling influence, and I will not deny that it has grown over my head to such an extent that I have often [page 2] felt myself a stranger and embarrassed in this self-parodying mood. Only today have I opened my eyes properly to its true value, and I call on it now so as not to be overwhelmed by feelings. Do not think that I will try to speak ironically of those feelings which have produced the both honourable and flattering demonstration of which I am the object today, but as I gratefully receive the memorial wreath which my friends and fellow artists here hand me, I look back with a smile on those frailties which have stuck to my artistic foot, and just as I have in the past always endeavoured to bring seriousness into the light and frivolous, I will now bring lightness and jests into the serious. Once we had a rather corpulent dancer by the name of Ferdinand Jacobsen, a living image of the unsophisticated: gruff, bibulous voice and no manners. In short he was the contrary of irony. In the unforgettable ballet Armida, he was to portray the forest god, Pan, and appeared in the Foyer with ivy wreathed around his head, chest and stomach… Frydendahl approached him with the fine man's polished manners and asked, 'What character is my good son going to represent this evening?' 'I'm God!' was the short but characteristic answer. An olympic laughter echoed through the happy audience, but no one gave it a thought [page 3] that *the word* this good-natured man had uttered in all naivety – all too often has been made flesh among artists and dwelt among us[75], out of arrogant self-worship, yes even out of dissatisfaction's manifold, risible forms. When one has been touched by an Idea, lived

[75] Eskil Irminger has recognised this quotation from the Gospel of St. John, 1:14, in exactly the wording of the three volume 1847 Danish edition owned by Charlotte Bournonville. The translation here adopts the English of the King James Authorised Version of 1612 in the year of its 400th anniversary.

and suffered for it and [on its behalf] wandered between battle, victory and defeat, one is easily brought to see oneself as a central point for the movement; one demands continuous, enthusiastic acknowledgement and in the end finds every such expression disappointing. I have set too high a price on public acclaim – had it increased in relation to my desire to please, then I would have continued to the point of extravagance. My desire has certainly restrained itself – and I should be grateful for that since I have learnt to realise my weakness and to stop while the going is good. I withdraw with the most agreeable impressions and shall be happy to see that work continue in which I have sacrificed my best efforts and which I shall accompany with my warmest wishes, even by word and deed when it is needed. I'll spend a couple of years abroad so as [page 4] not to become softhearted here – by our standards it is true that I have too little irony, but the reserves I have been able to collect of this ingredient in so many years will stand me in good stead in Sweden. For I must see the truth in those Norwegian's words. The Swedes are a poetic and chivalrous people, but they lack irony. And now my dear brothers and friends. Thank you for all your kindness, for all that has touched and amused me – should I happen to laugh and cry at the same time, then we must for sure acknowledge that a man cannot drive things any further.

SUMMARY

Colin Roth: *Speaking of Irony*

The purpose of this article is to draw attention to the ironic and satiric intent of a speech that the choreographer, August Bournonville, made in October 1861, and, in exploring its references, to shed light on the friendship-circles to which he belonged. Extensive quotations from contemporary documents – diaries, letters and published works – are employed to establish the character and concerns of the players, some of whom may not be familiar to specialists in the different disciplines represented here.