

Tale

H. C. ANDERSEN'S 'SCHILLER FAIRY TALE' AND THE POST-ROMANTIC RELIGION OF ART

[ABSTRACT]

In his story 'Den gamle Kirkeklokke' ['The Old Church Bell'], Andersen transforms, reinterprets, and dissolves Schiller's popular poem 'Das Lied von der Glocke' ['The Song of the Bell'] into prose. Written for the Schiller celebrations in 1859, it re-establishes the Romantic cult of the artist under profoundly changed cultural conditions. The article examines Andersen's complex relationship with the Weimar culture and reveals the hidden autobiographical patterns in his Schiller narrative. By adopting Schiller's role for himself and at the same time linking it to the biography of Thorvaldsen, Andersen manages to bridge the only recently developed national gap between Danish and German culture. He simultaneously arranges the story as a critical commentary on his own Romantic tale 'Klokken' ('The Bell'). Thus, 'my Schiller fairy tale' turns out to be a post-Romantic legend that succeeds Wackenroder's and Tieck's outdated 'religion of art' in a decidedly 'prosaic' mode.

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Because of Friedrich Schiller, Hans Christian Andersen even wanted to change the course of a river. On March 29, 1860, his friend Adolph Drewsen recounts:

A few days ago, Andersen asked me where Schiller's city of birth, Marbach, was actually situated, namely, whether it might not perhaps be on the Danube, and when he heard that it was on the Neckar, he wished to know into which river the Neckar flows. We got hold of a map, and I showed him the course of the river to its discharging into the Rhine. He didn't like that; he badly wanted the Neckar to flow into the Danube.

Why might that be? Drewsen elaborates:

Because he had received the invitation to write something for the Schiller Album which will be published on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his birth in November, and after thinking about this for a long time, he struck on his idea which he had taken from Schiller's *Bell*; namely, he imagined that the church bell in Marbach was ringing while

HEINRICH DETERING TRANSLATED BY SABINA FAZLI

Schiller's mother was giving birth, – that this same bell would then fall down and break and then lie in the church yard until it was used in casting the same sculpture in which its ore happened to be used in the head and chest.¹ (Andersen, *Eventyr* 7: 310 et seq.)

When Drewsen gave him this devastating geographical information about the Neckar, for better or worse, Andersen seems to have abandoned the plan of shipping the old church bell from Marbach to Munich where it would have been molten down. Drewsen concludes his account: 'Today, ... he came in and said that he had finished writing the story, and of course, on his demand, I had to drop everything and follow him to my room so that he could read it to me. He wanted to call it "The old church bell"' (ibid.).

In 1859, inspired by the national Schiller celebrations, Major Friedrich Anton Serre of Maxen Manor, near Dresden (1789-1863), one of Andersen's friends and patrons, had asked the poet to write a contribution to the *Schiller Album* which Serre intended to publish in the context of his Schiller lottery.² In 1860, the short tale appeared in German; at the end of 1861, it was published in Danish in the *Dansk Folkekalender 1862*, together with an illustration of the Stuttgart monument. In 1868, Andersen included the story in the 26th volume of his *Samlede Skrifter*. Andersen himself called it 'my Schiller fairy tale'.³

From the beginning, Andersen's concept aimed at transforming, reinterpreting, and dissolving Schiller's most popular poem into prose. This change of genre is highly symptomatic of the transformation of literary models from the age of Goethe to the period which, in German literature, bears such different names as *Biedermeier*, *Restauration*, and *Vormärz* and is known as the *Guldalder*, the golden age of national literature, in Denmark. While the expansive and, at the same time, narrative and didactic contemplative poem (*Gedankengedicht*) harmonizes narratives and reflections on the philosophy of history, anthropology and political morality, Andersen refashions it into the miniature form of the 'fairy tale'. Only in the widest sense does the tale comply with the Romantic conception of the genre. For Andersen's tale, the genre does not imply anything other than a sequence of complaisantly intertwined set pieces, openly governed by poetic imagination. Andersen's text is no longer about models of history and moral didacticism, middle-class concepts of ethical autonomy, the control of one's emotions, models of family life and craftsmanship, but about the celebration of the artist who has formulated all of this through his authority, which is implicitly accepted and in no need of reflection.

The cult of the artist, which takes the place of the imagined world articulated and mediated in the work of art, also strives to establish harmony. In the Schiller celebrations, this cult is supposed to celebrate national unity as something already achieved on an intellectual level and, at the same time, to mark it as politically imminent. However, from the perspective of Andersen, the Danish poet, this marks the juncture from which the crumbling cultural symbiosis of German and Danish culture should be restored. But to highlight this transnational context, which is informed by the pathos of national unity in Germany and a new national spirit in Denmark defined by anti-German sentiment, Schiller has to

be 'Danified' to the same extent that he figures as a German poet – an extremely difficult balancing act, which the affectedly harmless text does not easily betray.

In any case, the expansive and solemn form of Schiller's poem does not suit Andersen's difficult project. Neither his Danish nor his German middle-class audiences appreciated regular alternating lines and complex stanzas, preferring the small form of the decidedly modest 'Albumblatt' which aims for innocence and preciousness. The prose is chatty and colloquial and has the coherence of a plain and uninterrupted narration. And it adds up to a memorable verbalized genre painting suitable for reading out aloud – a painting which is, in the end, *identical* to the Schiller monument which the Danish sculptor Thorvaldsen had erected in German Stuttgart. The 'Schiller fairy tale' establishes itself as the monument's Romanticized and narrativized etiology. In the course of the narrative however, the original writer, who embodies the authoritative herald of an encompassing conciliatory middle-class moral, takes on traits of Andersen himself – *Quod erit demonstrandum*.

'If I were a Schiller': Andersen in Weimar

Andersen was the only non-German artist whom Major Serre asked to contribute to the *Schiller Album* – and not without reason. The *Guldalder*, in which Andersen grew up and his unprecedented literary career developed, was a partly late Romantic, partly early realist relative of *Biedermeier*, and in many aspects it constituted a Danish continuation of the age of Goethe. Copenhagen of Danish cultural history was, in this exact form, a 'cultural centre of the age of Goethe'.⁴ Thus, even Andersen's autobiography, initially written for German readers and published in German, obviously refers to Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. Its title is *Das Märchen meines Lebens ohne Dichtung* [The Fairy Tale of My Life], and Andersen fashioned it as a self-assured balancing act between documentation and stylized self-fictionalization. I shall return to this later.

For a talented and ambitious outsider like Andersen, emulating such a model was not only a question of inclination, but also of self-fashioning in the literary marketplace. On 18 July 1832, Andersen wrote to his friend Chamisso, the German-French poet: 'Denmark lies somewhat in a corner which is why its poets have to remain unknown unless they are able to intellectually emigrate to neighboring countries' (Andersen, 'Breve').⁵ This sentence summarizes his (not unique) attitude towards Germany at the time. Indeed, Andersen determinedly took his literary success in Germany in hand early on, not the least for the sake of his fame in his home country. Appropriately framing and presenting his texts for a German *Biedermeier* audience, he subtly sought to allow for their demand for unpolitical and comforting literature that contrasted with the rebellious *Zeitgeist* of *Vormärz* activists. It was part of his marketing strategy to blur the borders between Andersen-the-poet and his protagonists so that the stories told in the novels were supplemented by the story of their author. His plan worked brilliantly. With a middle-class reading audience concerned about losing social status and

the threat of revolution, the alleged authentication of his stories by the life of their writer laid the foundation for the poet's continuing fame.⁶ In its most productive consequences, motivated by the outsider's literary and social ambition and the economic aspirations of a child of poor parents, this search for a secure position in the market brought about the cross-fertilization of two national literatures which would largely become the tool of two contesting nationalisms, even during Andersen's lifetime. In this, it turned out to be a piece of luck that, early on in his search for German connections, Andersen chanced upon a place which had been central during the age of Goethe and played an almost mythical role in the consciousness of Danish intellectuals. While he had shyly avoided the obvious opportunity to visit Goethe when he first traveled in Germany, on a journey which had followed Romantic models, he gladly accepted the personal invitation extended by the Hereditary Grand Duke Carl Alexander of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach in June 1844.⁷ Andersen was universally admired and securely accepted as a novelist and thus seemed to be an ideal candidate for the envisioned re-establishment of Weimar's *Musenhof*. Many passages in the two men's extensive correspondence read like a satyr play, reminiscent of operetta. Once again they re-enacted the pattern of sentimental friendship while, ironically, neither was entirely confident in German (one of them being a Dane, the other an aristocrat educated in French).⁸ During the unrest of the *Vormärz*, it seems that they wanted to prove that the growing national differences could be overcome through idealism, humanity and the love of friends, with their friendship as a biographical extension of the texts they had read.

For Andersen, the friendship gained social, emotional, and perhaps even erotic meaning so that, occasionally, he not only dreamed of his imminent fame as a German-Danish poet, but also considered moving to live permanently in Weimar. (In a greater age but less successfully, Jens Baggesen and Adam Oehlenschläger had already tried to gain entrance to the Weimar *république des lettres*.) However, the same national tensions which should have been overcome by the sentimental and purposely constructed new friendship between the prince and poet finally destroyed the artful structure with the onset of the German-Danish war.

In June 1844, this catastrophe lay in an indefinite future. As soon as Andersen had arrived in Weimar, he went to visit the great dead poets in the Ducal Vault:

In the chapel, the coffins are now switched, Göthe and Schiller sitting side by side, and I wanted Göthe's coffin, but I was bending over Schiller's. I stood between the two, said the Lord's Prayer, asked God to make me a poet who would be worthy of them, and for all the rest, his will be done in evil and in good.

And then he adds a phrase typical of himself and the contemporary cult of poets: 'on the coffins, there were laurel leaves, I took some from each' (Andersen, *Dagbøger* 2: 402).⁹

On the way to the Hereditary Duke's birthday celebration at Weimar Theater, he sees 'Schiller's house' (ibid. 398), which he also records in his diary. From the beginning, he speaks highly of Carl Alexander, describing him as a 'young

26-year-old, well-built man' and as his born friend: 'he is the first of all the princes whom I really like, the first of whom I would wish that he was not a prince, or that I was a prince, too' (ibid. 400). In the course of the budding friendship, Andersen becomes a permanent guest in the town, which he has for years called 'meine zweite Heimat' ['my second home']. Never before had he been closer to the German Parnassus. He tried to evade the Duke's expectations, albeit not without coquetry. As he laments in a letter dated 14 February 1846: 'Alas, I won't be a Göthe.' (Andersen, *Briefwechsel* 42). No, surely not. But whose coffin had he bent over and whose laurel leaves had he providently pocketed?

Admittedly, Schiller's person and works had meant less to him than Goethe's, and the former had never been as naturally close to Andersen's writing. But he had been as familiar with Schiller's works since his school days as might be expected from an assiduous and educated Danish reader of the *Guldalder*.¹⁰ School essays on Schiller have been preserved (cf. Høeg). Whenever, during his almost continuous traveling, he had the opportunity to see a performance of a Schiller play, he seized it. In 1834 he saw Donizetti's opera adaptation of *Maria Stuart* in Naples and *Wallenstein* in Prague; in 1843 *Maria Stuart* in Paris; in 1852 *Piccolomini* in Munich; in July 1857 the *Räuber* in Dresden, and in August of the same year *Die Jungfrau von Orléans* in Dresden ('left during act five') (Andersen, *Dagbøger* 1: 349, 491; 2: 348; 4: 103, 272, 277).

In January 1856, he met Caroline von Wolzogen, Schiller's sister-in-law, for the first time – and found that she was an admirer of his writings: 'she was really taken with my *Bilderbuch*' (ibid. 3: 58).¹¹ She asks him to read three fairy tales to her and promises a piece of Schiller's manuscript of *Wilhelm Tell* in return. (Later, in June 1852, Andersen would again receive 'a beautiful page in Schiller's hand', as he notes in his diary, this time from Franz Liszt in Weimar [ibid. 3: 60; 4: 87].) Like taking the laurel leaves from the tomb, this small gesture shows Andersen consciously participating in the kind of Schiller cult which transforms practices of catholic veneration of relics into a secular cult of the artist. He does not cherish the manuscript as a philological document but as a contact relic.¹²

Retrospectively, it is strange to see how the motives were already slowly accumulating in Andersen's letters and diary entries which would much later constitute the tale for the *Schiller Album*. When, during the same stay in Weimar, on 27 January, he again went to visit the Ducal Vault, this time in the company of chancellor von Müller and Swedish soprano Jenny Lind, he suddenly and for the first time remembers a congenial fellow Dane. Had he not visited the tomb of sculptor Bertel Thorvalden, also accompanied by Jenny Lind? For the moment, this is nothing but a casual association; in the Schiller tale, it will come to define the whole plot.

On 1 September 1846, Carl Alexander says goodbye to Andersen using a sentence implying succession and identification, at least in its retelling in Andersen's diary entry: 'The Hereditary Grand Duke very much against my leaving! where Schiller and Göthe could work, he said, I could, too.' (ibid. 3: 375). Half a year later, in June 1847, Andersen again explicitly refers to this in a letter from The Hague. Writing to Carl Alexander, he describes how he had been received in the

Netherlands in slightly wobbly German and showing much greater awareness of his own role: ‘If I were a “Schiller”, one could not receive me more honorably than I am! It is like a dream!’ (Andersen, *Briefwechsel* 21).

From now on, the dream of taking, if not Goethe’s, then Schiller’s place beside a new *Musenfürst* [prince of the muses], turns into a continually recurring association, an *idée fixe*. And as German and Danish national positions became more entrenched, the idea became more ‘fixed’. He articulated it most clearly when he was invited to the inauguration of the Goethe-Schiller monument. However, as he resentfully notes in his diary, he was not allowed to follow the ceremony from the Grand Ducal stand. Three days earlier, he had prowled the town in anticipation, writing in his diary on 1 September: ‘Saw the Schiller-Goethe monument erected on the theater square, both were tightly draped, but you could still see the shape and their feet. The whole town is busy’. He then adds a casual and ambiguous remark: ‘Goethe has booked a room for me’ – he is of course talking about Walther von Goethe.¹³

On 4 September, the 100th birthday of Goethe’s Grand Duke Carl August (among the guests of honor filling the stand, Andersen discovers ‘Mrs. Goethe and her sons’ Wolfgang and Walther, ‘and Schiller’, namely, his son Walther), Ernst Rietschel’s monument is unveiled. ‘It was’, Andersen writes, ‘a great moment when the veil fell from the group of poets, Schiller and Goethe.’ And then, in three succinct words, the surprised, exhilarating realization: ‘Schiller ligner mig’ [‘Schiller resembles me’] (*ibid.* 4: 286). It is important to note that it is not Andersen whom Schiller resembles: it is Schiller *in whom Andersen recognizes himself*.

Rietschel’s double monument was not the first Schiller memorial Andersen had seen. On 9 August 1855, when he was traveling, he had seen the Schiller monument in Stuttgart made by Thorvaldsen, whom he had suddenly remembered in the Ducal Vault (*ibid.* 4: 175). (On 25 September 1869, in Stuttgart for the second and last time, he would again look on ‘Thorvaldsen’s sculpture of Schiller’; by then, however, his Schiller tale would already have been completed [*ibid.* 4: 439].) In his extremely popular poem ‘Danmark, mit Fædreland’ of 1850, he suggests that Thorvaldsen’s sculptures have spread Denmark’s fame in the world like Andersen’s own novels, fairy tales and poems: ‘A small country – and yet, around the world / resound your song now and the blow of your chisel’ (Andersen, *Landschaft mit Poet* 65; my translation). The song also suggests Andersen’s own poetry; the blow of the chisel is Thorvaldsen’s. The same Thorvaldsen, then, has made the memorial of Schiller in whom Andersen recognizes himself when looking at Rietschel’s Weimar sculpture group.

Suffering, Aspiration and Apotheosis: The Legend of an Artist

This was more or less Andersen’s mindset when, in 1860, he accepted Serre’s offer to write a story for the planned *Schiller Album* and casually asked about the course of the Neckar. The story’s explicit basic notion is to combine the memory

of Schiller with that of Thorvaldsen. This warrants closer scrutiny. In a letter to Carl Alexander dated 3 May 3 1860 and written in German, Andersen explains the outline of his story.

I have written a new fairy tale for Schiller's Album. It is called: 'The old church bell'. When Schiller was born, his mother heard the sound of the old church bell in Marbach: in the end, this bell will be turned into the head and the chest of Thorvaldsen's Schiller monument in Stuttgart. Here, Schiller's life resonates with 'Song of The Bell', and through Thorvaldsen, I introduce an element from my homeland; I hope that you will be pleased with my little tale, dear Grand Duke. ... Please graciously remember me. / I am your Royal Highness' humble servant / H. C. Andersen. (Andersen, *Briefwechsel* 241 et seq.)

The idea of illustrating Schiller's life and the history of his works through 'The Song of The Bell' came to him naturally, since Andersen knew the poem from his youth. He had encountered it everywhere in different versions during this period of widespread enthusiasm for Schiller. He would have learned about the poem during his time at grammar school in Slagelse. As a twenty-year-old in 1825 (Andersen, *Dagbøger* 1: 49) he heard it as a song, and he twice saw it adapted in the form of *tableaux vivants* at the Vienna Burgtheater, first in June 1834 (*ibid.* 1: 455), then again in May 1854 during an evening entertainment dedicated to Schiller: 'Schiller's Bell with living pictures and Wal[l]enstein's camp' (*ibid.* 4: 138).

Andersen's Schiller story displays little of the imaginative wealth or satirical spirit of his other *Eventyr og Historier* [*Fairy-tales and Stories*], neither in the slightly dull basic theme nor in its execution.¹⁴ On the contrary, this seems to be the *Biedermeier* Andersen, *par excellence*. In almost shocking conventionality, the text reinforces and illustrates an image of Schiller which corresponds to the ideal current among the German and Danish educated middle classes. Schiller's life is idealized as a sentimental lower-middle-class rags-to-riches story which leaves out no clichés. In a poor but idyllic small town, Friedrich is born to a humble family whose members are, first and foremost, 'honest and hard-working' and 'also with the fear of God in the treasury of the heart'. Praying devoutly, mother Schiller gives birth to her child while the old church bell rings solemnly. The birth of the genius unmistakably evokes Christmas and the basic model of the Romantic religion of art reduced to middle-class interiority shows right from the beginning.¹⁵ Schiller not only seems to be a saint, but the virtual Christ Child of the religion of art:

Our Father wanted to give them a child; it was the hour when the mother was confined in great pain that she heard the sound of The Bell from the belfry wafting into her room, so deep, so solemn, it was a holiday, and the sound of The Bell filled the praying people with devout faith; their heartfelt thoughts raising themselves to God, and in the same hour she gave birth to her little son ... the child's bright eyes looked at her, and the little one's hair was glossy as if made of gold; the child was received into the world by the sound of The Bell on that dark day in November ...

The adolescent child is pious and good; when listening to verses from Klopstock's *Messias*, he sheds 'hot tears'. In the Marbach churchyard, he 'almost devoutly' gazes at the old church bell which had fallen down, and his mother tells him

how The Bell had done its duty for centuries, it had rung for baptisms, weddings, and funerals; it had told of happy celebrations and the horror of fires; yes, The Bell sang the whole of a man's life. And the child never forgot what the mother had told him, it sounded in his breast until he had to sing about it as a man.

The second maker: In the end, everything goes back to his mother.

At the 'military school' – to use Andersen's exact words – the adolescent suffers under the drill and instead of letting himself be deformed into a 'cog ... in the big wheel, to which all of us belong' he lets the song 'in his breast' resound wide over the land. As a 'pale-faced refugee' he escapes across the state border and sets out on his path of glory, which the text only briefly summarizes. In this, like his life, his works, too, are reduced to the canonical texts of the educated middle classes. Along with the eponymous bell, the text also mentions *Fiesko*, *Tell*, *The Maid of Orleans* and, *nota bene*, *Dignity of Women*, which had already been mocked by the Romantics.

Schiller's life runs parallel to the fate of the old Marbach church bell, which is first broken, demeaned and forgotten and then raised as the material of the memorial which is finally erected in honor of the poet. Religion, too, which had lost its footing, is reinstated with new brilliance in the cult of the artist. Under the Danish sculptor's masterful hands, whose art is admired all over the world, the molten ore of the bell is transformed into the 'head and chest of the sculpture which today stands revealed in front of the old palace in Stuttgart, on the square in which he, whom the memorial depicts, used to walk as a living person.'

Young Friedrich had so reverentially listened to his mother's memories that he kissed the now useless bell, and 'The Bell' would then sound 'within his young breast'. '[I]n it there was ore that boomed out and needed to resound in the wide world'. These are the same verbs that have also been used for Schiller's poetry: to sing, sound and resound. 'The Song of The Bell' takes the place of 'The Bell', art is substituted for the church – yet, in art and with the work of Schiller (the art Messiah) and Thorvaldsen (his evangelist), struggling religion is granted new life.

Here, at the last, Andersen's tale proves to be a post-Romantic transformation of the type of Romantic legend of the artist which had been developed in Ludwig Tieck and Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder's *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* [*Outpourings of an Art-Loving Friar*]. (This also fits with one of the simple collages which Andersen collected in his *Album*: It combined a portrait of Schiller with a painting of the entombment of Christ.¹⁶) The middle-class virtues of hard work, simple faith and control of one's emotions replaced the model of the genius and poetical inspiration. These middle-class values especially produced (and artistically authenticated) the apotheosis of the artist as an exemplary saint, or even, as in this example, his transformation into a redeemer and savior. However, the core of his salvation is not a divine universal mind but an

ideal which has already been reduced to a rhetorical shadow. As soon as Wackenroder and Tieck's catholicizing traits in their legends of the artist faded, this ideal shows as the embodiment of protestant middle-class virtues, namely, a strict ethos of work and duty. Merging with this transformation, the mediacy of salvation through art eventually changes, too. The narrative no longer focuses on the saintly artist and his work of art (here Schiller and his poetry) as the mediators between the sacred and its recipients. It focuses on the apotheosis of the artist as saint in a work of art of the second degree (here Thorvaldsen's sculpture), whose legend (here Andersen's tale) is itself a work of art of the third degree.

Traditional institutionalized religion has vanished, symbolized by the muted church bell, which is here physically and literally transformed as Thorvaldsen, the ingenuous sculptor, virtually resurrects the old material in his depiction of Schiller, the artist genius. The established Christian message of the church bell has been changed into the credo of a middle-class cultural protestant cult of the artist. The work of art, which is here praised, depicts a saint-like life of suffering in which external obstacles can be conquered by self-discipline. The artist finally triumphs through 'struggle' and 'work' in preaching 'the immense and beautiful' sung by 'Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller', who is effectively praised in the last sentence with a full orchestral fortissimo. In his monument, the matter of the old religion and the adoration of his new art merge into one, not in plain historical facts but in Andersen's pious legend, the outpourings of a Schiller-loving friar.

And yet, surprisingly, Andersen manages to sneak into the first degree of the religion of art in an indirect way. By implicitly fashioning himself as a kindred spirit of the saint, the writer of the legend positions himself as close as possible to the object of the legend.

The text not only inscribes more than one Danish version of Goethe's 'Denn er war unser!' ['Because he was ours'] (Goethe 91), but also discreetly adds: And Andersen is like him. In the subtext and between the lines, the text formulates an *imitatio* of Schiller.

Three Songs of The Bell: Romantic and Post-Romantic Religion of Art

Andersen achieves this through a surprising minor motif: young Schiller's ugly appearance. Without this characteristic the text would be smooth enough that even Andersen scholars might be excused for not noticing it.¹⁷ Yet, surprisingly, this detail stands out from the rosy *Biedermeier* picture in that, as far as I can see, it cannot be found in such clarity in any other document of the early Schiller cult.

Indeed, the pious child in Andersen's tale is 'lanky, has reddish hair, a freckled face, yes, that was him'. Andersen had learned about this first-hand, on 13 August 1855, in Stuttgart. The diary records: 'at noon, dinner at the Grand Duke's, with Schiller's oldest son who is a baron, he gave me the portrait of his father which resembled him most, told me that he had had *red* hair' (Andersen, *Dagbøger* 4: 177).¹⁸ It is noteworthy how the Schiller narrative handles this detail: His idealiza-

tion as a golden-blond is limited to the perspective of his loving mother but is actually an obligatory detail in any German artist legend. Schiller's red hair only glows 'as if it were golden' in his mother's eyes, through which the text is looking at the child. The narrator's voice, however, corrects this view and states how, for the rest of his life, the hero cannot shake off his lowly birth, which his red hair epitomizes. Even though Andersen's Schiller goes on to win fame and recognition, he is still 'the poor boy from tiny Marbach'.

One of the central motifs in Andersen's works, both the novels and the fairy tales, is the portrayal of stigmata as secret marks of distinction – from the hero of *O.T.*, who is literally stigmatized through a tattoo, to the one-legged toy soldier, the mermaid caught in the wrong body, and the ugly duckling.¹⁹ And it is one of the central motifs in Andersen's autobiographies, too, starting with the early and only posthumously published *Lesebuch to Märchen meines Lebens ohne Dichtung*. Here especially, Andersen's autobiographies and semi-biographical fictions suggest the flipside of his successful fairy-tale career, behind the idealizations. It shows a threefold stigmatization with which he never came to terms: a physical stigmatization due to his clumsy appearance, and his very lanky and disproportional body; an erotic stigmatization in his inability to conform to normative heterosexual roles; and a social stigmatization because he came from a world of poverty, alcoholism and prostitution.

This troubling detail opens up a rift in the text and the closer one reads, the further it goes.

Schiller's story not only resembles the story its author tells about himself in that it is an artist legend turned into a middle-class success story, but also in the exhibition of a stigma that success is supposed to erase. In both respects, the text surprisingly thoroughly aligns *this* hero, too, with its author's autobiographical narrative. While the text's surface only varies the well-known image of Schiller, the subtext amounts to one simple sentence: 'Schiller resembles me'.

The love and piety of Schiller's parents can only appear exemplary because they contrast with a background defined by poverty, which the first paragraph orders into three steps: the poverty of the town, the family home and the family. The house in which Schiller's parents live is one of the poorest and darkest among 'the old, small houses'. It is, with its 'low windows, poor and humble to look at'. Only the dark background of this Bethlehem stable in Marbach lets the love of this holy family shine so brightly – including the father's love of literature, 'pious songs', Kloppstock and Gellert. Andersen fashions the famous beginning of his autobiography *Mit Livs Eventyr* [The Fairy Tale of My Life] in exactly the same way, though here there is a much more drastic social misery that is even more energetically idealized:

In 1805, in a small, poor room in Odense, there lived a newlywed couple who dearly loved each other, a young cobbler and his wife, he, barely twenty-two years old, a strange and talented man, a truly poetical mind, she, a few years older, ignorant about the world and life, but with a warm heart. (Andersen, *Mit Livs Eventyr* 13; my translation)

On closer scrutiny, some characteristics which Andersen depicts in his image of Schiller *only* apply to Andersen's, and not to Schiller's, origins. As is well known, the room in which he was born was small and narrow but the house in which it was situated was not; there can be no talk of low windows, a humble appearance, or even a 'small house'. However, it does apply to Andersen's own 'Barndoms-Hjem', his 'childhood home' in Munkemøllestræde, Odense. Also, Schiller's suffering at the Karlsschule is subtly modified to resemble the humiliations which Andersen had to endure under the pedagogical terror at the grammar school in Slagelse, as he recounts in *The Fairy Tale of My Life*. The turn of phrase alone aligns the two educational institutions when the Karlsschule is initially called a 'military school', which might be interpreted both literally and metaphorically. Told with obvious sarcasm considering the background and the reference to his life, both young poets 'are very graciously admitted to the military school, to the department which the children of high-society attended, and that was an honor, a piece of luck' (Andersen, 'Kirkeklokke'). Thus obliged to kiss the hand that feeds them, both have to choose whether they want to be a bell or a cog in the wheel of middle-class society, either a saint of middle-class religion of art or (as it is explicitly phrased in the text) a 'number'. Consequently, both take flight – to literature and across the state border. In Andersen's self-portrait, it reads thus:

From abroad I have received, as I said, the happiest recognition over the years, which backed me up mentally. If Denmark has a poet in me, no one here has spoiled me to be one. While parents often care for and tend any kind of budding talent and put it in a hot house, the majority of people have done their utmost to stifle mine; but that is how our Lord wanted it for my development, and that is why he sent beams of sun light from abroad, and let that which I have written cut its way. (Andersen, *Mit Livs Eventyr* 175 et seq.)

Thus writes Andersen about himself. And about Schiller:

[T]he more crammed it was behind the walls of the school, ... the stronger it sounded in the young fellow's breast and he sang it in the circle of his friends, ... and the sound traveled across the borders; but this was not why he had received schooling, clothes, and food ... he had to leave his fatherland, his mother, his loved ones, or drown in the flood of mediocre men.

Indeed, neither of them belonged 'among mediocre men' (a phrase which recurs, aimed at Andersen's *alter ego*, in the fairy tale 'The Shadow'). They are both rewarded for their suffering, since they overcame it in the medium and through the means of art. They gain international fame which travels as far as feet can walk, as the phrase goes in the Schiller tale. Like Andersen as the hero of his fairy-tale life who survives only because of his literary works, in his depiction of Schiller, the few 'written pages on the "Fiasco"' are the poet's 'whole wealth and hope for the future'. With the example of the Marbach author, Andersen effectively only varies one of his own maxims: 'the heart has to suffer and try what it shall sing out loud'. Taken together with the sentence 'the poor child had become his nation's

pride', it suggests the underlying construction of Andersen's own *Mit Livs Eventyr* [The Fairy Tale of My Life].

In Andersen's story, both Schiller and Thorvaldsen embody the myth of the poor boy who becomes a great artist. Yet beside these two and between the lines, Andersen is the invisible third man, at least at a superficial glance. Little Thorvaldsen is 'a very poor boy who had been wearing wooden clogs'; the child of poor parents in Odense wrote about himself 'Her løb jeg om med Træsko på / Og gik i Fattigskole' ['Here I ran about in clogs / And went to the charity school'].²⁰ According to Andersen's text, Thorvaldsen grew up in the idyllic Danish countryside which is similar to Schiller's Swabia: 'on one of the green islands where beeches grow and where there are many barrows'. However, using almost exactly the same words, Andersen had described 'Danmark, *mit Fædreland*' (my emphasis), his extremely popular anthem of 1850: 'Where mighty barrows / stand amidst small cottage gardens'; 'beechy Fatherland'; 'You green Islands, home of my heart here below' (Andersen, *Landschaft mit Poet* 65; 67). Thus, in this picture-puzzle narrative, Andersen paints his idealized self-portrait twice: in the roles of Schiller and of Thorvaldsen. He is the sitter's successor and his portraitist – like those painters who gaze at the onlooker out of the corner of a large painting.

The subtlest and most inconspicuous hint that Andersen has painted Schiller after himself – or that he has stylized his own life as an *imitatio* of the art messiah – can be found in a tiny mistake in the quotation. Significantly, in the Danish text the poor boy is not 'he, who shall later sing the most beautiful "Song of The Bell"' but 'he, who shall later sing the most beautiful song of "The Bell"'. Schiller never sang a song of *this* title; only Andersen himself has. He did so in 1845, in his most consistent framing of a post-Romantic religion of art which conceives of the Romantic *Kunstmärchen* as a variation of myth and only uses the term 'song' as a metaphor for a prose tale. A final glance at the first of Andersen's two bell fairy tales shows why he evokes it in the transformation of Schiller's 'The Song of The Bell', and the consequences this reference engenders.

'Klokken' ['The Bell'] was published in May 1845. The text is written in Andersen's characteristically plain style, which becomes more rhetorically elaborate towards the end of the story. For Andersen, who had started his literary career as a successful poet following Heine, this style is intimately connected with the fairy tale because only prose modelled on colloquial speech could conform to the folkloristic style to which he aspired. Only this kind of prose could gloss over the artificiality of the work of art, contrasting with Andersen's sometimes rather artistic and exalted verse. This kind of folkloristic appeal is at the center of Andersen's prose song of 'The Bell', which unites the poor and the rich, the educated and the uneducated in the spirit of a Romantic philosophy of nature.

The text tells the story of two very different boys, who simultaneously follow a mysterious sound which can be heard one night 'in the narrow streets of a big city'. It is a 'strange sound, like the stroke of a church bell, but you could only hear it for a brief moment because of the clatter of cartwheels and people yelling, and that is annoying' (Andersen, 'Klokken'; my translation).²¹ Outside the city gates, however, surrounded by nature, 'the sound of the bell' can be heard 'much

louder; it was as if the sound came from a church deep inside the serene, fragrant forest'. People start to become curious and go looking for it, and even the emperor's scouts are traveling ever further in their search. Yet they cannot discover the source of the mysterious sound. The two boys go farthest, each of them on his own: one 'a son of a king', the other 'a boy in wooden clogs, with a jacket so short it showed his long wrists'. They know each other from home and now they meet again in the open country where they set out independently to find the source of the sound. Only at the end of the world do they meet again, where the sun sets in the endless sea and where the starry sky can be seen above:

The sea ... stretched before them, and the sun stood out there like a shining altar, where sea and sky meet, everything blurred in glowing colors, the forest sang, and the sea sang, and his heart sang with them; all of nature was one holy church in which trees and soaring clouds make up the pillars, flowers and grass the woven velvet, and the sky itself the big dome ... and they ran towards each other and held each other's hand in the huge church of nature and poetry, and the invisible, holy bell chimed above them, blissful spirits floating around it, dancing a jubilant hallelujah.

Like the central motif of 'The Bell', Andersen also adopted from Schiller the 'church of nature' under the starry sky. 'Werden wir Gott in keinem Tempel mehr dienen, so ziehet die Nacht mit begeisternden Schauern auf, der wechselnde Mond predigt uns Buße, und eine andächtige Kirche von Sternen betet mit uns.'²² The passage can be found in *Kabale und Liebe* [*Love and Intrigue*]; Ferdinand says this to Luise in act 3, scene 4 (Schiller 808). In a school essay, the young Andersen commented on this scene: 'Night covers all of nature which seems to me like a holy church, the sky its vault, and its clear eternal lights are shining down on me. What holy silence! Noble and high feelings awake in my breast, now that the busy life of day is over.'²³ From this passage, Andersen draws the final image of the fairy tale of 'The Bell'. While this fairy tale once again proclaimed the Romantically conceived unity of 'church', 'nature' and 'poetry', 'The Old Church Bell' refers back to this and frames a post-Romantic, educated middle-class cult of art transformed into the cult of the artist. In 'The Bell', the poor boy and the king's son both stand 'in the huge church of nature and poetry'. In 'The Old Church Bell', art only gazes at itself: Andersen at Thorvaldsen and Thorvaldsen at Schiller. The order of this self-reflection can be reversed to reveal the stages of an *imitatio* which integrate the writer of the text into the story told: from Schiller to Thorvaldsen, from Thorvaldsen to Andersen himself.

On 15 January 1846, Andersen wrote in his diary:

I read out loud three fairy tales of which 'The Bell' made the greatest impression, the prince in it, I told him [Carl Alexander], was an allusion to himself: 'Yes, I shall aspire to the noblest and best aims,' he said and pressed my hand. We were at table together and he proposed a toast to me (Andersen, *Dagbøger* 3: 46)

Can it be a coincidence, then, that Vilhelm Pedersen's contemporary illustration depicts the poor boy and the king's son in a way that makes you think you recognize a famous Weimar monument? Yet this is not an idealized friendship between two poets, but the connection of a poet and an art-loving prince. In the Schiller story, which Andersen wove from the lyric 'The Song of the Bell' and the prose fairy tale of 'The Bell', all of these strands converge. Here, the young boy who used to be his friend has inconspicuously identified himself with Schiller. The Danish poet who had sung 'the most beautiful song of "The Bell"' is identified with the German who wrote the most beautiful 'The Song of The Bell'. The Weimar prince, whom he had envisioned earlier, is now the reader to whom the fairy tale writer addresses his text. In his depiction of Schiller, Andersen shows the prince and anyone who is able to see it the story of his own life, suffering and triumph as a post-Romantic variation of an art-religious legend of the artist – wrapped in the plainness of fairy-tale prose in which Schiller's contemplative poetry is nothing but a faint, distant shadow.

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Notes

- 1 Translated by the author following the reproduction in the supplement volume to Andersen's *Eventyr*.
- 2 Biographical dates, here and in the following, according to Mylius.
- 3 For example, in his diary entries after he had finished his work on 23 April 1860: 'Letter with Schiller's fairy tale to Mrs Serre in Dresden' (Andersen, *Almanakker* 286).
- 4 On the cultural historical context, see Lohmeier. Not only Danish poetry of this period, but also the extremely productive fashion of the *Bildungsroman* after 1800 would not have been conceivable without the persistent Weimar model, together with the general popularity of *Faust* (on this, essentially, see Meier). Andersen is exceptional among his contemporaries as his infatuation with Goethe can be seen to permeate all of his works. His novels, which were widely read in Denmark and Germany, continuously vary the model of *Wilhelm Meister*. In his novel of society *De to Baronesser* [*The Two Baronesses*], Andersen makes a leitmotif of Goethe's term the 'rote[r] Faden' [the 'golden thread'], an organic development in the seemingly haphazard course of the world (on this, see the chapter on Andersen in Rühling). Even in Andersen's penultimate novel *At være eller ikke være* [*To Be or Not to Be*] of 1857, he elaborates at length on the question of how the second part of *Faust* should be correctly understood; Andersen even has the heroine give a complete retelling of the poem.
- 5 Translated by the author following the excellent database of Andersen's letters (Andersen, 'Breve') set up by Johan de Mylius in cooperation with Solveig Brunholm.
- 6 The fact that Andersen not only launched the biography as a preface to his best-seller *Nur ein Spielmann*, but had even written it himself shows the determination and unscrupulousness in his self-mythification. On this, see Möller-Christensen.
- 7 He then described his first journey in his travel journal *Schattenbilder*; on this, see Mylius' new, annotated edition.
- 8 The correspondence is accessible in an annotated edition (Andersen, *Briefwechsel*). Cf. also the chapter on Andersen in Steinfeld.
- 9 Here and in the following, translations of Andersen's diary entries by the author.
- 10 On Andersen's difficult integration into the 'culture of education and learning' (*Dannelseskultur*) of the Danish civil servants' state, see Pulmer, as well as Wullschläger and Jens Andersen.
- 11 Meaning the *Billedbog uden Billeder* (*Bilderbuch ohne Bilder* [*Picturebook without Pictures*]).
- 12 On this, comprehensively, see Schöne. On practices involving the poet's manuscript as a 'relic' in the age of Goethe, often using the term itself, cf. Kai Sina's study in progress *Geschichte des Schriftstellerischen Nachlasses*. Kahl gives an in-depth analysis of the early cult of Schiller's house of birth as a place of pilgrimage in the cult of the artist.
- 13 Andersen was staying at the hotel 'Zum Elephant, it costs 1 ½ Taler a day, view on the market square. Goethe's house is being decorated, Schiller's too, spoke with its owner, he thought I was the young Wieland. ... Rainy weather. Flags are flying on the town hall, the people are busy running about with flags and garlands. Home and to bed at 9' (Andersen, *Dagbøger* 4: 283 et seq).
- 14 In the following, quotations from 'Kirkeklokke', in my translations from Andersen, are in the text without further individual references.
- 15 On the term *religion of art*, cf. Costazza, Laudin and Meier. On an attempt at a definition, see Detering. On an overview of research, see Sina.

- 16 Reproduced in Andersen's *Mit Livs Eventyr* (163). (Joseph Stieler's reproduction of Ludowike Simanowics' Schiller portrait and Theodor Rehbenitz's pencil-drawn water color of the entombment of Christ.)
- 17 In Danish literary criticism, the text was especially praised as one of Andersen's 'best works' in its 'plain, naïve depictions' (thus in the Copenhagen journal *Flyveposten* of 2 December 1862). It is here translated following Flemming Hovmann's documentation of the reception history (Andersen, *Eventyr* 4: 210); in the further reception of Andersen, the text has only played a marginal role.
- 18 Followed by the remark: 'Without any doubt, I was the most popular man about town'.
- 19 For a basic definition, see Goffman.
- 20 These lines can be found on a commemorative plaque on its former building.
- 21 In the following, quotations appear without individual page numbers.
- 22 'As soon as we stop worshipping God in a temple, night will fall with inspiring showers, the changing moon will preach repentance, and a pious church of stars will be praying with us.'
- 23 Andersen's essay is titled *Betragtninger i en stjerneklar Nat* [*Thoughts on a clear starry night*] (cf. Høeg 92 et seq.).