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## Hans Christian Andersen's Media Ecology

*'The Old Church Bell' in Folkekalender for  
Danmark (1862)*

*Folkekalender for Danmark* (the peoples' calendar for Denmark) was borne out of crisis. As the publishers Lose and Delbanco state in the Preface to the first issue of 1852, published towards the end of the previous year, they have carefully considered the challenges of producing "et billigt illustreret folkeblad" (a cheap illustrated magazine for the people).<sup>79</sup> More than any other type of publication, they state, this kind is in dire need of supportive readers, as the Danish readership is small compared to other nations ("Erfaringen har viist, at en Bog af denne Natur mere end enhver anden trænger til en levende Understøttelse fra Publicums side, idet Virkekredsen i Danmark er lille i Sammenligning med den i andre Lande"). The publishers, however, do not merely appeal for financial support to continue a long but waning tradition of calendars or almanacs.<sup>80</sup> The

79 "Forord," in *Folkekalender for Danmark 1852* (Copenhagen: Lose & Delbanco, 1851), n.p.

80 According to Henrik Horstbøll, printed almanacs in Danish had been around since the sixteenth century. In the age of the absolute monarchy (from 1660), a monopolised almanac was used as state propaganda, but from the 1840s a diversified market for a new form of almanacs and calendars provided some of the tools for the national and liberal movements (see Henrik Horstbøll, "The unstable Almanac: Transformations of the Almanac in Denmark in the

moment is ripe, they insist, as “for three years, our nation has had to fight for its independence” (“Vort Fædreland har nemlig i 3 aar maatte kæmpe for sin Selvstændighed”) – due to the fact, they write, that “they have tried to rob our language of its rights”. This unspecified “they” refers the reader to the at the time very recent memory of what later became known as the First Schleswig War or Three-Year War from 1848 to 1851, the confrontation between Schleswig-Holstein and the German Confederation on one side and an emerging democratic and nationalist Denmark set on keeping Schleswig part of the Danish state on the other. The publishers of the calendar seek to enlist potential readers in their national-liberal cause, to form a community that also includes the featured authors, who, they claim, vigorously desire to lay claim to Danish independence by offering their texts to this publication (“hvor levende det Ønske nærredes af vore Forfattere, ogsaa i denne Retning af Litteraturen at hævde vor Selvstændighed”). The publishers express the hope that “the national character” of this small publication, “reflected in its treatment of national topics and its popular renditions of objects of common interest, will justify its publication and earn its right to carry the title: Peoples Calendar for Denmark” (“Vi haabe, at det nationale Præg, dette lille Skrift har faaet ved at behandle fædrelandske Emner og give populære Fremstillinger af Gjenstande, der have almen Interesse hos os, maa skaffe det Indgang og berettiget det til at bære Navnet: Folkekalender for Danmark”).

The calendar is an explicit and self-conscious example of Benedict Anderson’s argument that newsprint, print technologies and communication infrastructures were instrumental in shaping imagined national communities in Europe in the nine-

Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” in R. Siegert ed. *Volksbildung durch Lesestoffe im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert: Voraussetzungen – Medien – Topographie*, Bremen: edition lumière, 2012, pp. 207–226). However, the rise of the popular and civic almanacs and calendars in the 1840s coincided with a more general boom in periodical publications and an intensified competition for readers, as the above quotation reflects.

teenth century; here by enlisting readers and authors alike in a common cause to assert linguistic and national independence in a state of perceived persistent national crisis arising from the recent war, its political context and aftermath.<sup>1</sup>

In the nineteenth century, popular causes could be boosted by enlisting celebrities. It was, therefore, a real scoop for the publishers that they succeeded in enlisting Hans Christian Andersen among their contributing authors; his world-famous fairy tales and author persona at mid-century were already the pride of the nation – it was also well-known that despite his deep affection for German culture and his friendships with numerous German nobilities and artists, he had letters published in foreign newspapers calling for sympathy with the Danish cause and had produced several patriotic poems and songs.<sup>2</sup> It might still be surprising to us that Andersen eventually contributed 29 original texts, including poems, songs, travel descriptions from Skagen and Silkeborg, portraits of notabilities and 21 tales and stories to *Folkebladet*.

While in the years 1835 to 1872 Andersen published no less than 25 small books of tales and stories (100 of his tales were first printed in such books) 60, particularly later tales, were first published in newspapers, magazines, calendars and other kinds of periodicals.<sup>3</sup> Attending to the media networks, their

- 1 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983)
- 2 For instance, Andersen's poem "Soldatens Sang Til Dannebrog" was published in *Fædrelandet* (1849), his patriotic poem "Danmark, Mit Fædreland!" was published in the same periodical the following year, and his collection of war poems *Fædrelandske Vers og Sange under Krigen* (Patriotic verses and songs during the war) was published by C. A. Reitzel in February 1851 with all proceeds going to the families of the fallen and the wounded. In 1848, a government official asked Andersen to help with an effort to gain English support for Denmark's struggle against Prussia by writing an open letter to be published in the *Literary Gazette*.
- 3 Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen, "The Fairy Tale and the Periodical: Hans Christian Andersen's Scrapbooks." *Book History* 16 (2013): 132–154. doi:10.1353/bh.2013.0003.

affordances and visual-textual ecologies,<sup>4</sup> through which a large share of Andersen's tales and stories were disseminated to contemporary readers provides us, I believe, with new perspectives on the tales themselves, but also on Andersen's authorship more generally, how he became already during his lifetime, as Henk van der Liet writes, "through the vast proliferation of his work [...] an international literary celebrity and [...] one of the most successful European writers of the century."<sup>5</sup> While we are arguably most used to reading Andersen in various kinds of anthologies and collected-works editions, which in different ways monumentalise and de-contextualise his writings, reading Andersen in nineteenth-century periodicals offers a different experience. We should, therefore, consider the expressed purpose of a periodical publication such as *Folkekalender*, its readership, and, centrally, its motley assemblage of texts and images.

In the first issue of *Folkekalender for Danmark*, the reader would find the standard calendar with a helpful list of holidays, amusing and thought-provoking aphorisms, witticisms and poems provided for each month of the year; then a genealogy of the Danish Royal family, a list of foreign Royals including all the German Dukes, members of "Statsraadet" (the government), and foreign ambassadors in Denmark. It is a veritable cornucopia of diverse reading materials and visual attention-grabbers. There is even a poem praising Prince Christian of Glücksburgh followed by his xylographic portrait, printed in such a way that it could be torn out and hung on the wall at home. It is notable here that the Prince is not depicted in military or Royal regalia but instead dressed as a member of

4 The term "visual-textual ecologies" is used here to point to the dependencies between human intentionalities, socio-political contexts, industrial innovations and the material conditions for the combined productions of novel image-texts that drove the periodical revolution in the nineteenth-century.

5 Henk A. van der Liet, "On your feet! H. C. Andersen's Maiden Trip into Literary Space." *Aktualitet – Litteratur, Kultur Og Medier* 13(2), 2019, p. 1, available at <https://tidsskrift.dk/aktualitet/article/view/114472>.

the new bourgeois elite. With all the formalities appropriate to a calendar noted, and following the year-book's top story, a description of the Danish Constitution of 1849 and a (not very fine) woodcut of "Folketingssalen" (the assembly hall), we find Andersen's tale "Der er Forskjel" ("There is a Difference"). Further in, his patriotic poem "Fest-Sang til Landsoldaten" (Song celebrating the common soldier) and his tale "Verdens Dejligste Rose" ("The World's Fairest Rose") can be read side by side with stories from the battlefield, an article about the history of lighthouses, the lavishly illustrated story of Erik and Abel, the history of the manor house Gammel Estrup, a translated tale by Dickens, an article about Danish marine Vessels, Grundtvig's poem "Den Tapre Landsoldat" ("The Brave Soldier") with an illustration of Bissen's famous sculpture naturally found its way into *Folkebladet*, as well as an article about new and improved harnesses for horses and tools for agriculture. There seems to be something for everyone and surely Andersen's tales and patriotic song were meant to last the readers and their families the entire year; to also be read or sung out aloud, and to be returned to again and again.

My interest in Andersen and *Folkebladet* is part of a larger project concerned with the interdependence of Andersen and the nineteenth-century periodical press. Here I pursue the argument that, contrary to still prevalent conceptions of Andersen as exclusively a writer of fairy tales for children whose timeless stories grew out of a rich oral folk tradition or his own quaint naïveté, his authorship appropriated and was conditioned by a great variety of contemporary print, visual, and mixed media. I argue that Andersen's success as a writer in the nineteenth century was to a significant degree due to his ability to make use of and respond imaginatively to the interests and daily lives of a growing mass-reading public and the needs and possibilities of an expanding and diversifying ecosystem of periodical print available in Denmark and from abroad.

In my research, I consider the expanding international periodical press as a central medium for understanding the evo-

lution of Andersen as a modern, cosmopolitan writer. I trace this development from his early periodical poems (of which the widely reprinted and illustrated “Det døende Barn” (“The dying child”) from 1827 is a central example) to his periodical tales (tales that were written for and printed in, in the style of, or referring to periodicals) such as “Den lille Pige med Svovlstikkerne” (1846, “The Little Match Girl”), “Vanddraaben” (1847, “The Drop of Water”), “Om Aartusinder” (1852, “Thousands of Years from Now”), “Dryaden” (1868, “The Wood Nymph”), “Gudfaders Billedbog” (1868, “Godfather’s Picture Book”) and “Den store Søslange” (1871, “The Great Sea Serpent”).<sup>6</sup> I place Andersen’s periodical authorship in relation to his visual collage technique preserved in the private picture books he made as gifts to the children of friends and benefactors made from the scraps of nineteenth-century periodicals and other visual media. It is a central argument of this study that Andersen’s mature literary style was conditioned by the way he used the visual and textual materials of illustrated periodicals in such private, dialogic and intermedial book productions.

In addition to providing an infrastructure for the stylistic development and material dissemination of Andersen’s works throughout his career, I am also investigating how Andersen’s self-fashioned author myth was disseminated through the press at home and abroad, how he used the press to promote national causes (as in relation to the First Schleswig War), and how he used the periodical press to fashion himself as a journalist of modernity, as when he visits the Universal Exposition in Paris through the tale of “Dryaden”.<sup>7</sup>

Returning to Andersen’s more than 20 years’ relationship with *Folkekalender for Danmark*, we should consider if it makes any difference to us if we read Andersen’s tales through or de-

6 See Stougaard-Nielsen, “The Fairy Tale and the Periodical”.

7 Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen, “The Idle Spectator: Hans Christian Andersen’s ‘Dryaden’ (1868), *Illustreret Tidende*, and the Universal Exposition.” *Scandinavian Studies* 78(2), 2006: 129–152.

pendent upon, as it were, this publication's media ecology. Evidently, periodicals offered a revenue stream for the author. The first issue of *Folkebladet* quickly sold out its print run of 4000 copies, and it is also clear that Andersen did not shy away from aligning himself with the dominant national-liberal spirit of the time by producing the poem celebrating the common soldier and tales such as “Der er Forskel” and “Verdens Dejligste Rose”, which animate the flora of fashionable nineteenth-century Biedermeier gardens. Gardening was a frequent topic for later calendars, and, as in Andersen's tale, careful aesthetic curation of the natural world has here as much to do with fashionable self-cultivation.

In the case of “Der er Forskjel”, it is significant that the tale situates the calendar reader in a semi-rural Springtime: it is May, and we find ourselves in a recognisable Danish countryside with fields, meadows, and lindens. In the tale, Spring is given a voice from inside a small apple tree.<sup>8</sup> A Countess passing by stops her carriage to admire the tree; she snaps off a branch just about to bloom and brings it to her manor house where it is given a prominent place centre stage between the other cut flowers from her garden. The branch, having experienced this sudden social advancement, is haughty, which, the reader is reminded, is a common human folly: “det var ganske menneskeligt!”<sup>9</sup> The proud apple branch insists on the necessary difference between species of plants, which, it is implied, is akin to human differences regarding social class. From its elevated position of distinction and difference, the apple branch does, however, find “some kind of sympathy” (“en Slags Medlidenhed”) with the lowest species of flora, singling out “Fandens Melke-bøtte” (“the devil's milk pails”):

8 H. C. Andersen, “Der er Forskjel.” *Folkebladet for Danmark 1852* (Copenhagen: Lose & Delbanco, 1851): 38–41.

9 “Der er Forskjel,” p. 39.

Og Æblegrenen saae med en Slags Medlidenhed især paa én Slags Blomster, som der var i Mængde af paa Marker og paa Grøfter; Ingen bandt dem i Bouquet, de vare altfor almindelige, ja man kunde finde dem selv imellem Brostenene, de skjøde op som det argeste Ukrud, og saa havde de det fæle Navn Fandens Melke-bøtter.

(And the apple branch looked down with especial pity on one kind of flower that grew everywhere in meadows and ditches. They were much too common ever to be gathered into bouquets; they could be found between the paving stones; they shot up like the rankest and most worthless of weeds. They were dandelions, but people have given them the ugly name, ‘the devil’s milk pails.’)<sup>10</sup>

The sun, on the other hand, will have none of it and kisses all the plants equally, the poor as well as the rich. The apple branch, we are told, had never thought about “our Lord’s infinite love for everything that lives and moves in Him, had never thought about how much that is good and beautiful can lie hidden but still not be forgotten” (“Æblegrenen havde aldrig tænkt over vor Herres uendelige Kjærlighed mod Alt, hvad der lever og røres i ham, den havde aldrig tænkt over hvor meget Smukt og Godt der kan ligge gjemt, men ikke glemt”) – yet, we are reminded, that, too, was human!

Innocent children arrive in the field and are on the contrary thrilled with “Fandens Melke-bøtter”, which they make into wreaths – children and common folk, it is suggested, know their hidden worth and beauty. They blow at the seeds and if they clear them all they will get new clothes before the year

10 H. C. Andersen, “There is a Difference,” transl. by Jean Hersholt, n.p. Available at [https://andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/hersholt/ThereIsADifference\\_e.html](https://andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/hersholt/ThereIsADifference_e.html). Accessed on 13/04/2022.

is over, according to the folk belief of their grandmother. Despite its name and humble appearance, the devil's milk pails is a prophet, as the sun explains, "Do you not see its beauty, its power". The apple branch retorts that this is only for children, but an old woman is then seen to uproot the plant to make coffee from it to sell to the Chemist as a medicinal herb. The countess arrives with a flower carefully sheltered between leaves and seemingly cared for like no other plant in the manor house. This, of course, turns out to be "Fandens Melke-bøtte", the dandelion, and the moral is clear. While belonging to different species and classes, the apple branch and the dandelion are both children in "the kingdom of the beautiful" and, we are told, the Countess will proceed to paint a still life of the apple branch and the dandelion together – those like the Countess who are noble at heart can become like children and despite learned distinctions learn to see things for their inherent and common worth.

If not the best of Andersen's tales, it was by then already an Andersen classic. It is a tale fit for its medium, for family consumption, to be picked up over the year and read aloud. Its temporality and topography fit the "inexpensive illustrated" calendar with its desire to put "common objects" in front of the reader in text and, sometimes, merely suggested images; common objects now elevated to new significance in words and images. The tale's message about the equality of all God's beings, social dynamics and mobility, and suggestive self-cultivation through the avatar of an apple branch fitted the national-liberal mindset of a growing urban class of readers and a rural class with social, political, and industrial aspirations – *Folkebladet's* and Andersen's key audiences.

While the text does not change substantially when later included by Andersen in story collections, I believe that Andersen wrote this tale with its particular medium and potential readership in mind; he recycled already used tropes, characters, styles and sentiments now packaged with a new purpose, in new company, between textual and visual scraps from a na-

tion bend on reasserting its independence, shared values and self-consciousness.

If Andersen's "Der er Forskjel" expounded a sense of national harmony by placing social classes, species of local plants and knowledge within the same frame on a background of crisis and threat from an increasingly more powerful neighbour to the South, ten years later Andersen would turn away from a sentimental, provincial nationalism towards a, perhaps, equally sentimental cosmopolitanism in his tale "Den gamle Kirkeklokke" ("The Old Church Bell"), which was printed in the 1862 issue of *Folkebladet*. Uniquely, the periodical publication of this tale is a recycling of a tale published a few months before in German translation as "Die alte Kirchenglocke" in a commemorative collection celebrating the centenary of the, by then, German national poet Friedrich Schiller.

In addition, Andersen's "Schiller tale" is a further recycling or rewriting of Schiller's own most famous poem at the time "Das Lied von der Glocke" ("Song of the Bell"), which had not only been adapted for multiple dramatisations to musical settings, of which Andersen had seen at least two, but also widely parodied – in particular, its minute description of the founding of a bell became a common target for satire. Andersen's tale does not begin in a Danish garden in Spring but instead takes us into "det tydske Land Würtemberg, hvor Akasietræerne saa deiligt blomstre ved Landeveien og Æble- og Pæretræerne bugne i Høst ved den modne Velsignelse, [der] ligger en lille By, Marbach; den hører til de ganske ringe Stæder, men smukt ligger den ved Neckarfloden ..." <sup>11</sup> ("In the German country of Würtemberg, where the beautiful acacia trees bloom beside the highways, and the apple and pear trees bend down in autumn under the weight of their ripe blessings, there lies the little town of Marbach. It belongs to the class of quite unimpor-

11 H. C. Andersen, "Den gamle Kirkeklokke (Skrevet til 'Schillers Album')." *Folkekalender for Danmark 1862*, vol. 11 (Copenhagen: Lose & Delbanco's forlag): 46–51.

tant towns, but it is located in a beautiful spot near the Neckar ...”).<sup>12</sup>

Marbach, of course, is the birthplace of Schiller, and Andersen’s tale traces his rise from birth, from “obscurity and poverty to fame and relative fortune, stressing the obstacles he encountered along the way.”<sup>13</sup> Schiller’s life in Andersen’s treatment, according to Heinrich Detering, “is idealized as a sentimental lower-middle-class rags-to-riches story which leaves out no clichés.”<sup>14</sup> At Schiller’s birth, the Bell in the Marbach church tower chimes, sending forth his mother’s joy over town and country, and Andersen uses the motif, according to Detering, so that “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.”<sup>15</sup>

While Andersen’s rather kitschy nativity scene of the birth of the German national poet clearly demonstrates a Romantic cult of authorship, the making of his monument from the metal of the ruined and forgotten bell is imagined as an act of worlding that draws together artistic sensibilities across nations:

mange Aar vare gaaede, siden den faldt fra Taarnet,  
nu skulde den smeltes, skulde med i Støbning af et  
stort Hæders-Monument, Skikkelsen af en Storhed for  
det tyske Folk og Land. Hør nu, hvorledes det traf,

12 H. C. Andersen, “The Old Church Bell,” transl. by Jean Hersholt. Available at [https://andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/hersholt/TheOldChurchBell\\_e.html](https://andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/hersholt/TheOldChurchBell_e.html). Accessed on 13/04/2022.

13 Herbert Rowland, “Confluence and Crosscurrents: Schiller’s ‘Das Lied von der Glocke’ and Hans Christian Andersen’s ‘Die alte Kirchenglocke’.” Originally published in *Anderseniana* in 1996. Available at <https://odensebysmuseer.dk/artikler/confluence-and-crosscurrents/>. Accessed on 13/04/2022.

14 Heinrich Detering, “H. C. Andersen’s ‘Schiller Fairy Tale’ and the Post-Romantic Religion of Art,” transl. by Sabina Fazli, *Romantik* 01 (2012): 49–66, p. 55.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 56.

underligt og deiligt gaaer det dog til i denne Verden! Oppe i Danmark, paa en af de grønne Øer, hvor Bøgen groer og hvor der er de mange Kjæmpegrave, var der en ganske fattig Dreng, der havde gaaet i Træskoe, baaret Mad i et gammel Klæde til sin Fader, der gik og snittede paa Holmen; det fattige Barn var blevet sit Lands Stolthed, han huggede i Marmor Herligheder, saa at Verden undrede sig derover, og ham var det just, der fik det Hædershverv at forme i Leret en Storheds, Skjønheds Skikkelse, der kunde støbes i Malm, Billedet af ham, hvis Navn Faderen havde nedskrevet i sin Bibel: Johan Christoph Friedrich.<sup>16</sup>

(Many years had passed since it fell from the tower; and now it was to be melted down, to become part of the casting of a great monument, a statue in honor of one of the German people's great men. Now listen to how it all came about. Strange and beautiful things do happen in this world! Up in Denmark, on one of the green islands where the beech tree grows and there are many ancient Viking graves, there once lived a very poor little boy who wore wooden shoes and used to carry the meals, wrapped up in an old piece of cloth, to his father who worked on the wharves, carving figureheads for ships. This poor child had become his country's pride; he carved out of marble such wonderful things that they amazed the whole world, and to him the noble task was given to shape from clay a majestic and beautiful figure that would be cast in bronze, a statue of him whose name his father wrote in the Bible, Johann Christoph Friedrich.)

16 Andersen, "Den gamle Kirkeklokke," p. 50.

Though not mentioned by name, Andersen is here, of course, referring to Thorvaldsen and his statue of Schiller, which Andersen had seen in Stuttgart in 1855 where it was erected in 1838, possibly, according to Joep Leerssen, as the first public monument to a writer in Germany.<sup>17</sup> Thorvaldsen's monument in marble and Andersen's commemorative tale should be seen in the context of a century that witnessed a "wave of commemorations that passed over Europe," where cultural heroes such as famous authors were used as guarantors, according to Ann Rigney and Leerssen, "of the nation's continuity and sense of achievement" – as central to the formation of modern nations understood as what Benedict Anderson has termed "imagined communities".<sup>18</sup>

Just as Andersen recycles Schiller's lied as material for his commemorative tale in honour of the poet, so, Andersen imagines, another world-famous Danish artist could have recycled the bell – the bell that first chimed in the poet's heart – in casting a statue that would complement the poet's work and make it chime not only across Germany but across borders as world literature proper.

*Folkebladet's* printing of the Danish version of Andersen's tale at the end of 1861, together with an illustration of the Stuttgart monument, further bridges "the gap between German and Danish cultures", which is a central ambition of Andersen's tale itself.<sup>19</sup> As in the tale "Der er Forskel", Andersen overcomes initial differences, here national ones between German and Danish cultures, by narrating a borderless, interdependent world

17 Joep Leerssen, "Schiller 1859: Literary Historicism and Readership Mobilization," in J. Leerssen and A. Rigney, eds. *Commemorating Writers in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Nation Building and Centenary Fever*. Houndmills: Palgrave, 2014, pp. 24–39.

18 Ann Rigney and Joep Leerssen, "Introduction: Fanning out from Shakespeare," in J. Leerssen and A. Rigney, eds. *Commemorating Writers in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Nation Building and Centenary Fever*. Houndmills: Palgrave, 2014, p. 9.

19 Detering, p. 49.

of arts and letters. It is a world shaped by translations, recycled aesthetic experiences, where the old, the overlooked and demeaned are recycled into new visual and textual materials and forms that insist on Danish-German harmony and a world republic of print.

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