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Knud Voss

Poetisk Ouverture

eller

Af H. C. Andersens Barndom

En Studie

With a translation into English by Jørgen Kornerup, page 37.

FORORD

Professor dr. phil. Hans Brix og Mag. art. Leif Nedergaard takker jeg for en Gennemlæsning af Manuskriptet. Uden at have indhentet d'Herrers Skøn turde jeg ikke lade nærværende Studie offentliggøre.

KNUD VOSS

En ikke ubetydelig Plads i H. C. Andersens Erindringer om Barndommen er givet Forholdet til Faderen. I Samværet med ham har Digteren utvivlsomt set den første og rigeste Befrugtning af den medfødte Evne til at danne de mangfoldige, poetiske Billeder, hvormed Barnets og senere Poetens Fantasi altid var svanger. I Levnedsbogen og Livseventyret er fastholdt de Øjeblikke, hvor Fader og Søn gav sig Livets Lykke i Vold. – Naar Læsten var sat til Side efter Dagværket, foredrog Skomageren i Aftentimerne Holberg og de Tusind og een Nætters Eventyr. I saadanne Stunder blev Rumligheden i Drengens Billedverden til. – Og om Sommersøndage gik de to, ofte alene, ud hvor Enge og Skove formede de brede, frodige Landskaber, der endnu lægger sig om den fyenske Hovedstad. Herude har Purken modtaget sine tidligste Indtryk af en landskabelig Idyl, der synes at lade sig genkende i flere af Eventyrene, – og kunde her selv fuldkomængøre Skovturens Poesi: Da »samlede jeg mig Jordbær paa et Græsstraa og gjorde Baade af Siv.«

Tidligt fik dette lyriske Afsnit af H. C. Andersens Liv Ende. I April 1816 døde Faderen. I Eventyret »Rejsekammeraten« er formodentlig Mindet om den dystre Begivenhed det indledende Motiv. Johannes er Digteren selv. »Han laa paa sine Knæ foran Sengen og kyssede den døde Faders Haand, græd saa mange salte Taarer, men til sidst lukkede hans Øjne sig, og han sov ind med Hovedet paa den haarde Sengefjæl«. –

Den 11-aarige Hans Christian stod da tilbage alene med Moderen og Farmoderen. Om ogsaa deres Hengivenhed for Drengen blev en aldrig udtømt Kilde til Inspiration for Digteren, kan de ikke betragtes som fortsættende Faderens dannende Indflydelse paa Sønnen. Dertil manglede de den Indsigt og aandelige Styrke, der maatte være en Forudsætning. Hvor meget de betød, antyder et Par Citater: »Min Fader var ikke uden Dannelse og havde et herligt Hoved, hos min Moder var alting Hjertet«. Og om Farmoderen, der for Andersen stod som et fint, af megen Modgang smerteligt resigneret Menneske, hedder det: »Min gamle Farmoder bar og førte mig til enhver Glæde, der kunde faaes uden Penge«. –

Det er paa denne Baggrund af største Betydning, at den vordende Poet faar Indgang i Hjemmet hos Præste-Enken Madam Bunkeflod. »Jeg var hos dem den meste Tid af Dagen, dette var det første dannede Hus, hvori jeg havde et Hjem . . . Her hørte jeg første Gang Navnet Digter blive udtalt og nævnt med en Højagtelse som noget helligt . . . Her talte man om Vers, om Poesi . . . Her læste jeg ogsaa første Gang Shakespeare«. – Man vil af dette forstaa, at Madam Bunkeflods Hjem blev Faderens værdige Arvtager.

Samtidig fremtræder et tredie Hovedled i Andersens Udvikling – Fattigskolen. Om denne og dens Stilling i nævnte Forbindelse har H. C. Andersen-Forskningen meddelt saare lidt. Det, der er sagt, støtter sig alene til de korte i visse Henseender oplysende Afsnit i Selvbiografierne. Det Materiale, som derudover er til Raadighed for en Undersøgelse, er saavist ogsaa kun fragmentarisk, og kan derfor blot delvis oplyse om den rette Sammenhæng. En naturlig Aarsag hertil er den Kendsgerning, at de færreste Mennesker i Hans Christians Skoletid turde ane Fattigskolens Betydning for Eftertiden. De

fleste Papirer er tilintetgjort. At den imidlertid spiller en saa fremtrædende Rolle i Andersens Liv, som anført, lader sig paa Forhaand ikke mindst se af den Hjertelighed, hvormed Digteren erindrer sig den og betænker den med Gaver. Vist bør det ikke fordølgjes, at Barndommen i Hvermands Minde farves af et venligere Lys, jo større Afstanden fra den bliver, og at Trangen til at give sine Følelser for den et haandgribeligt Udtryk øges i samme Grad. Med Hensyn til H. C. Andersens Forhold til Fattigskolen er vi dog af den Formening, at ogsaa mere end Erindringens Forgylderevne har gjort sig gældende. At søge dette paavist er nærværende Skrifts Hovedtema. –



O m Odense i Andersens Barndom er vi ret vel orienteret af Samtidiges Indtryk, bevaret i Litteratur og Billeder. – Domkirkens Taarn, et Jomfruklosters højtliggende Tagryg og et Par Sognekirkers tunge Murblokke var markante Cæsurer i et Prospekt, hvis lyse Kolorit ved Sommertide domineredes af løvgrønne og Tagtegls blegrøde Farver. Mellem Byportene laa en otte Hundrede Huse. Deriblandt adskillige smagfulde Bygninger, tilpasset efter Borgerskabets Midler i det økonomiske og lokale Bygmestres Forestillinger om Sømmelighed i det arkitektoniske. – Det store Torv i Byens Midte var nylig »anlagt paa den franske Maade«, mens Slotshaven, ligesom Torvet »en behagelig Samlingsplads for Byens Folk« – tværtimod nu havde »afkastet den fordums franske stive Fadder-Klædning og er bleven iført den engelske utvungne Frakke«. – Det mest iøjnefaldende Bidrag til Bybilledets Karakter af Have var Aaen og dens tilgroede Bredder. En uopslidelig Idyl. »Med gamle revnede Piletræer svajende og drejende og Have ved Have, den ene anderledes end den

anden med dejlige Blomster og Lysthuse, glatte og pæne ligesom smaa Dukkestuer«. – Saa meget tør vi formode, at de kalkede Husmures sarte Kulører, Lindene paa Torvet, Hylden i Gaarden og Haverne langs Aaen har dannet en ynderig Helhed, der ved den flere Steder udviskede Overgang mellem By og Land, ejede Pastoralens rustikose Strøg i Tilgift. –

En aristokratisk Atmosfære, fremkaldt af den talstærke fyenske Adel, der paa den Tid i mere end 25 Aar havde søgt til Odense, naar Aarstiden ikke tillod at behageliggjøre Opholdet paa Landgodserne, havde en Overgang i den Grad tiltrukket sig Opmærksomheden i Hovedstadens bedste Kredse, at Københavns Privilegium som Vinterresidens for den danske Landadel var svært truet. – I en højt kultiveret Tone hengav den fyenske Nobilitet sig i Vintersæsonen til megen herskabelig Pragt. Grever og Baroner og Byens højeste Embedsmænd søgte at overgaa hinanden i en Opvisning af brillante Selskaber. Man dyrkede Musik, spillede Teater og samledes i litterære Klubber. Ogsaa i det Ydre satte dette Liv sit Præg. Endnu sent i det 19. Aarhundrede fortalte en Tradition, hvorledes de høje Herskaber begav sig til Thalias Tempel i Ekvipager, forspændte fire eller seks Heste og ledsagede af Forridere og Løbere. –

De spanske Soldaters Ophold i Byen i 1808 og Landets politiske Forhold i Almindelighed omkring Aarhundredskiftet bevirkede, at dette slebne *society-life* i nogen Grad sygnede hen. Man noterer saavist et periodisk Kulturfald ved følgende Avertissement i den lokale Avis: »Odense Teater vil snart blive lukket, da Besøgene hidtil kun have været tarvelige. Derimod have vi atter noget seværdigt, nemlig en stor Dromedar, to Bjørne og tre Abekatte som fremvises«. – Med fornyet Styrke florerede Selskabslivet og

de dermed følgende Fornøjelser imidlertid igen, da Kongens Fætter, Tronfølgeren Prins Christian Frederik ved Nytaarstid 1816 flyttede ind i Odense Slot som nyudnævnt fynsk Guvernør. Prinsen, »der var pragtsyg og havde en afgjort Hang til Selskabelighed«, blev sammen med Gemalinden, den for sin Skønhed, Blidhed og Majestæt berømmede Prinsesse Caroline Amalie et naturligt Midtpunkt i de festende Forsamlinger. Vel betydeligst blandt de mange adelige *maitres de plaisir* var Greve Frederik Ahlefeldt Laurvig til Tranekær. For blot at nævne et Par Exempler paa den Pondus, hvormed han førte sig. Til sine Stalde i »Vinterpaladset« medtog Greven hvert Aar 30 Heste og talrige Køretøjer, og ved flere Lejligheder lod han sit private Kapel divertere Byens Borgere. Det var da med fuld Føje, at Latinskolens Rektor, Ludvig Heiberg, svarede Jens Baggesen, der paa en Rejse til Paris standsede op i Odense med Spørgsmaalet »Skal jeg holde Rast her?« »Introite, nam et hic dii sunt.«

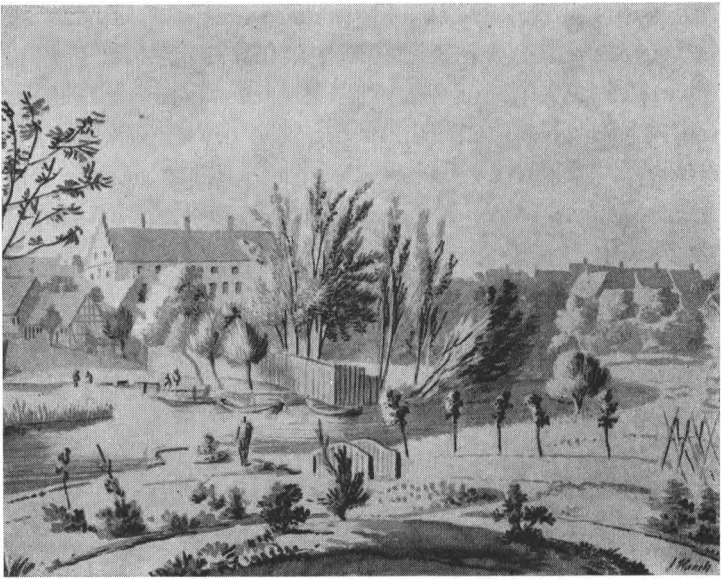
Efter bedste Evne søgte det Borgerskab, der gav sig af med Handel og Haandværk at slutte op i de Fornemmes Rækker. Slutningen af det 18. Aarhundrede betegner en økonomisk Fremgang for nævnte Næringsveje. Og tidligt gjorde denne Fremgang sig synligt gældende. »Adskillige af Byens Indvaanere og deriblandt endog Viintappere, Haandværks-Folk og flere slige af den tredie Klasse . . . have vidst at fremstille sig for Portene af deres Haver i Damaskes eller Sirtses Slop-rokker, med gule Saffians Tøfler og Guld- og Sølvbroderede Nathuer.« (Kostumet er som overtaget af visse Figurer i de Andersenske Eventyr). Vor Hjemmelsmand kan yderligere bevise, at »23 Skomagere, nogle og tyve Skræddere, 31 Bogholdere, ungefær 43 Meklere saa og 4 à 5 Bogbindere, saaledes efter de Stores og Rigeres Exempler ordentlig har deres

Haver uden for Byen, hvor de som oftest smausser og forlyster sig«. – En saadan Flothed havde vel de allerede omtalte Krigsforhold og økonomiske Vanskeligheder i Begyndelsen af 1800-Tallet nedbragt, men Manererne lod sig næppe fuldstændigt underkue. – Hvad endelig angaar de mange Handels- og Haandværkssvende, saa kender vi dem bedst fra deres aarlige Laugsfester og brogede Processioner gennem Byen, saaledes som H. C. Andersen har skildret dem. En Part af de »mange gamle Skikke og Folkefester, der siden ganske have tabt sig, de have vistnok virket meget ind paa mit hele Væsen og givet min Barndom en forunderlig poetisk Kolorit«. –

Retfærdigvis bør vi ikke undgaa den Malurt, der blandedes i dette gode Bæger. En i Byen tiltagende Fattigdom blandt de daarligst stillede lod sig saaledes se ved »Skarer af tiggende Børn og Ældre, der med Kjeppen i Haand og Posen paa Nakken vandre ud af Byens Porte (hver Morgen) for at oversvømme Landet«. En Undersøgelse »Huus for Huus« af Fattigkaarenes Omfang i 1804, Aaret før Andersens Fødsel, resulterede i et uhyggeligt Notat om »den menneskelige Elenighed i sine mange rædsomme Skikkelser.« Omend disse Forhold delvis var forbedrede endnu før H. C. Andersen begyndte sin Skolegang, satte de længe uudslettelige Spor i Bylivet.

Selv for Læsere med blot et ringe Kendskab til H. C. Andersens Eventyr vil det her i grove Træk skitserede Odense, hvortil bør føjes Digterens egen Skildring af Barndomshjemmet, være uadskilleligt knyttet til de Billeder og Stemninger, der er en væsentlig Del af Eventyrenes Poesi. Huse og Haver, Aaen og Træerne, Fyrste og Fattigmand, Soldaterparader og Markedsfester, Teater og Optog, alt er tilegnet med Skoledrengens fintfølende Sanser for atter at udskilles i en billed-

rig Digtning. Dermed skal ingenlunde være sagt, at Milieuet har været Poetens primære Forudsætning. »I sin Kærne er det digteriske Liv en uvilkaarlig og hensynsløs Flora, der skyder frem af sig selv.« Imidlertid er det, som om Andersens Forfatterskab er blevet virkeliggjort ved og i Erindringerne om Barndommen. De er den Jord, hvori denne Flora har hentet sin Næring.



Til de mangefarvede Omgivelser kom et nyt og vægtigt Element, da Bystyret, som en Konsekvens af Fattigdommens voksende Omfang, i 1804 lod indrette en Fattiggaard i nogle ældre Ejendomme midt i Odense. Mere end to Hundrede Lemmer fik her anvist Bolig og Beskæftigelse. I Tilslutning til denne Institution aabnedes Aaret efter den Skole, der elleve Aar senere havde Hans Christian Andersen imellem sine Elever. –

Det er af en ikke ringe Værdi for Forstaelsen af Skolens Indflydelse paa Eleverne at vide, at dens første Lærer, J. F. Ahrends, gik stærkt ind for de nye Pestalozziske Ideer. Bl. a. med Rousseau's »Émile« som litterær Forudsætning søgte Pestalozzi og hans Tilhængere som bekendt at fremme den naturlige Udvikling af Menneskets Evner. Imellem de Lærere

herhjemme, som først virkeliggjorde saadanne Forestillinger, er Ahrends, der en kort Tid var knyttet til Prøveskolen i København, for saa at finde Ansættelse i Odense. Her udsendte han efter et Aars Virke en Beretning, et Program for den Form, hvori Skolens Arbejde skulde udføres i Fremtiden. »Hvad der ansees som nødvendige Kundskaber for den mere cultiverede Stands Ungdom . . . troer jeg og at kunde bringe den Fattiges Børn, da Himlen være lovet! gavnlig Kundskab og sand Oplysning ikke hænger af Fødsel eller Klædernes Snit«. Og hertil føjede han Ønsket om ikke at »lukke Naturens store Bog for Barnet, at man ikke skulde lade dets Øje se og dets Hjerter føle de tusinde skønne Under og alle de herlige Scener, som frembyde sig for dets udvortes Sandser«. At øge disses Receptivitet var Formaalet med Læsning og Religion, »der skal være baade for Forstanden og Hjertet«. Man mærke sig de citerede Passager af Ahrends' Beretning, og man vil se, hvor nøje de stemmer overens med Andersens egne Udsagn.

Vi er i den heldige Situation, paa Grundlag af samme Beretning yderligere at kunne danne os et Indtryk af de i Skolen anvendte Læsebøger. Af størst Interesse er her Rasmussens Læsebog. Den udkom første gang 1798 og fandt saa udstrakt Anvendelse, at en Andenudgave udkom i 1826. En saadan Levedygtighed tillader os at formode, at den har været benyttet, da Hans Christian i 1816 blev sat i Fattigskolen. – Læsestykkerne afslører her en Stil, der i flere Henseender synes forbilledlig for Eventyrdigterens. Vi citerer som Prøve Læsebogens »Helene i Haugen«: »Yndige som Morgenrøden gik den uskyldige Helene og spadserede i Haugen og lyttede efter Fuglenes Sang og Lammenes Brægen, og idet hun gik, ophjalp hun enhver liden Blomst, satte Stok til dem, at ikke

Blæsten skulde gjøre nogen Skade, hun aflukkede Ukrudtet om dem og vandede dem. Voxer bliver store, som jeg, sagde imidlertid den yndige Pige: kunde I sige mig, hvad jeg skulde gjøre for at holde eders Blade friske, saa skulde de aldrig falme«. Et andet Stykke indledes med Ord som et Eventyrs: »Det var en dejlig Maaneskins Aften«, og fortsætter i det følgende: »Vi vilde da gaae ud i Haugen, for at plukke os nogle Ribs, men i det samme faae vi Øje paa en Fugl, som sad paa Randen af en Blomsterpotte. Vi saae den, men den saae ikke os, den badede sig i Dugdraaberne og frydede sig i Støvet og Straalerne af den opgaaende Soel, snap sig imellem til Frokost en forbilistende Orm«. – Læseren vil næppe undgaa at erindre sig Andersens mange Blomster- og Dyreeventyr med den samme følsomme Skildring af de med Blomster og Dyr pludrende og puslende Børn. »Den lille Idas Blomster«, »Tommelise« og »Sommergækken« er Eksempler herpaa. – Endelig skal Læsebogens »Skruptudsen« ikke forblive uomtalt. Det indeholder i faa Linier, hvad Digteren bl. a. udtrykker i det mageløse Eventyr af samme Navn.

Man har i H. C. Andersen-Forskningen understreget Digterens Originalitet med Hensyn til Motiver og Stil i den Del af Eventyrene, der ikke har de gamle Folkeeventyr som Forudsætning. Saaledes skriver Vilh. Andersen, at »alle andre Eventyr (end de paa Folkeeventyr beroende) er i Figurer, Handling og Stemning Digterens egen Opfindelse«, og henfører hertil først Blomstereventyret, dernæst Dyreeventyret, hvor »Skruptudsen« nævnes som Exempel. – Det vil af det foregaaende fremgaa, at denne Opfattelse bør modificeres. Baade Figurer, Handling og Stemning i Læsestykkerne, om hvilke vi tør formode, at de har været Hans Christian Andersen bekendt i Skolen, og med hvis Eksistens i Datidens Skole-



bogslitteratur vi i hvert Fald er gjort bekendt, ligger ganske nær Eventyrenes. Intet er da naturligere, end at Andersen, idet han skriver sine Eventyr, vender tilbage til det Sprog og de Billeder, han selv som Barn fik indprentet og med hvis Virkninger paa Læseren han saaledes selv var fortrolig.

Til Skolens øvrige væsentlige Fag hørte Religionsundervisningen. »Ud af sit Hjerte talte han (Læreren) til os om Religionen, og naar han gennemgik Bibelhistorien, vidste han at give den saa levende, at imens jeg hørte blev mig alle de malede Billeder paa Skolevæggens Betræk . . . lyslevende, fik for mig en Skjønhed, Sandhed og Friskhed«. Vi skylder i denne Forbindelse at orientere Læseren om Skolens Lokaliteter: »Det var en gammel Bygning og i selve Læseværelset var alle Betrækkene malede med Billeder af den bibelske Historie, jeg sad ofte og stirrede paa dem, drømte mig saa underlig ind deri.« Med tilstrækkelig Tydelighed fremgaar heraf, hvor megen Værdi Digteren selv tillagde denne Del af Skolegangen. Ogsaa i religiøse Forestillinger er den barnlige, naive Tone og sikre Evne til at danne sig Billeder, som bekendt karakteristisk for Andersen og har vel fundet sin bedste Næring i Skoleaarene.

Da Hans Christian, formodentlig kort Tid efter Faderens Død, i April 1816 blev anbragt i Fattigskolen, var den ofte omtalte, men lidet kendte C. F. Welhaven Skolens Lærer. Det store Elevtal, mere end Hundrede, krævede nu yderligere en Lærer, til hvem vi intet kender udover Navnet. – Eftersom Welhaven gav Drengen en Del af det Stof i Hænde, hvoraf Digteren blev til, er det ikke uvæsentligt at søge at danne sig et Indtryk af denne Lærers Personlighed. Han har i Digterens Memoirer faaet et ganske andet Eftermæle end Skolemesteren i Slagelse. Mens Rektor Meisling forfulgte



H. C. Andersen indtil de sidste Stunder i voldsomme Mare-ridt, har det oftest været ham en Lise at mindes Lærer Welhaven. Uheldigvis ved vi kun lidt om denne Mand, og kan blot forestille ham for Læseren ved at præsentere den Familie og det Milieu, han tilhørte.

Faderen, Johan Andreas Welhaven, var Skolelærer og Klokker ved Maria tyske Kirke i Bergen, indvandret fra Nordtyskland. Af dennes tre Sønner blev den ældste Præst i Bergen og optaget som gejstligt Medlem af den svenske Vasaorden. Man karakteriserede ham som »et hjertemenneske især«. Hans Søn igen – en Brodersøn til Læreren og ikke som altid nævnt en Broder, var den norske Digter J. S. Welhaven. Med dette kultiverede Familieskab *in mente* meddeler vi Christopher Frederik Welhavens bekendte Data. Født i Bergen 1788 tog han Examen artium i den stedlige Latinskole 1805. En kort Tid forrettede han Aftensang ved Mariakirken og

dukker derefter op i Odense, da han 1816 indgik Ægteskab med en Datter af Organisten ved Vor Frue Kirke. Sandsynligvis har han virket som Kirkesanger ogsaa i Odense. Det var Skik, at denne tog Organistens Datter til Ægte.

En Side af Welhavens Virke som Lærer er meddelt ovenfor med Andersens egne Ord. Af samme Kilde erfares endvidere: »Han skrev ogsaa selv Vers, Psalmer, stod mig meget højt som Digter, thi jeg kendte ikke til andre lyriske Digte end Bunkeflods Spindeviser«. – »Var det Lærerens Fødselsdag, bragte jeg ham altid en Blomsterkrands og et Digt, sædvanlig tog han det med et Smil, men et Par Gange skjendte han derfor, sikkert var han et ædelt Menneske, men af en heftig Natur«. – Naar Welhaven paatog sig en tilsyneladende saa ubetydelig Stilling som Fattigskolelærer, laa Aarsagen maaske i en for Familien karakteristisk, menneskelig Egenskab. Om Broderen skrev saaledes en gejstlig Foresat: »Om hans store godhet mot fattige och syke er der mange vidnesbyrd«.

Ved C. F. Welhavens Død i 1830 forfattede en gammel Elev de Ord om hans Undervisning, som vi, med Henblik paa H. C. Andersen, her citerer

En ædel Blomst . . .

— —

Uvisnelig dens Krone smiler

Ud over Tidens dunkle Land,

idet det er vor Formening, at ogsaa Fattigskolen og dens Lærer maa indrømmes en fremtrædende Plads, naar Digterens kunstneriske Bo, Arv og Ikke-Arv gøres op.

Om ikke for andet, saa fordi det i et Glimt lader ane Virkeligheden i Skolestuerne, henviser vi til Skolens Inspektionsprotokol med Biskoppens Bemærkninger, der dog ikke an-

gaar den enkelte Elev, og til Listerne over Censorer ved Eksamen. Denne var offentlig tilgængelig, og agtværdige Borgere hidkaldtes som Doms mænd. Om Hans Christians Lærdoms-Standpunkt har vi kun Stiftsprovstens ligevægtige Skudsmaal efter Konfirmationen i Foraaret 1819: »Har meget gode Evner og Religionskundskaber, kan end ej hans Flid roses hans Forhold kan dog ej dadles.« –

Med Konfirmationen var hans Skolegang i Odense tilendebragt. Faa Dage efter kørte han med Postvognen til København efter en bevæget Afsked med Moderen og Farmoderen. »Postillionen blæste, det var en dejlig Solskins Eftermiddag og snart skinnede Solen ind i mit lette barnlige Sind«. – Foran laa de Aar, der skulle bringe Andersen den Erfaring, at først maa man gaa saa gruelig meget igennem. . . Ved et Besøg i Fødebyen ti Aar senere gav han Udtryk derfor i et forsigtigt Billedsprog, utvivlsomt at forstaa i mere end blot bogstavelig Forstand: »Markedsdagen kom, men hvor lidet svarede ikke nu det hele til mine Drømmerier og til hvad denne Dag var for mig som lille. Phantasien maa vistnok have faaet et lille Knæk, den ville slet ikke flagre afsted med mig, men det er vistnok min Skolemesters Skyld (Rektor S. Meisling), der med en Grammatik har knækket mig Svingfjederen.« –

Vi skal ikke afslutte denne Studie uden en Henvisning til den da verdensberømte Digers gentagne Besøg i Fattigskolen. I dens ældede Stuer bragte Minderne ham tilbage til en Tid og et Milieu, vi foran har søgt at opridse, og hvori han fandt, at

*hele Verden for mig laa
som bar jeg Greve-Kjole.*

I BARNDOMSBYEN



*Her løb jeg om med Træsko paa
og gik i Fattigskole;
min hele Verden for mig laa,
som bar jeg Greve-Kjole.*

*Nej, jeg var ingen fattig Fyr
– og Fader ikke heller;
han læste for mig Eventyr,
saa jeg blev selv Fortæller.*

*Til »Nonnebakken« tit jeg gik
hen over »Munke Mose«.
Der var en Glans, en Romantik,
hver Blomst blev mig en Rose.*

*Jeg havde Barnets stærke Tro
og Jakobs Himmelstige,
og jeg fandt Frøekorn, som nu gro
i Eventyrets Rige.*

H. C. Andersen.

NOTER

Af den righoldige Litteratur om H. C. Andersen henviser vi især til de mange Afhandlinger af E. Brandes, H. Brix, V. Andersen, H. Topsøe-Jensen og H. G. Olrik.

Hvor intet andet er anført, er Citaterne hentede fra »Mit Livs Eventyr«, udg. v. H. Topsøe-Jensen og H. G. Olrik, 1950, og H. C. Andersens Levnedsbog 1805–31, udg. v. Hans Brix 1926.

S. 11, 4. L.: Den af Edvard Brandes i Indledningen til Jubilæumsudgaven af Eventyrene, 1930, S. II fremsatte Paastand, at Faderen var et ringe Menneske, har ingen Hjemmel i Virkeligheden. Og C. F. v. Holten forveksler i sine »Erindringer«, 1899, S. 19 fg., Faderen med Farfaderen.

S. 13, 4. L.: H. C. Andersen skrev 1860 i sit Testamente: Naar jeg ved Døden er afgaaet, er det min Bestemmelse, at der skal forholdes med mine Efterladenskaber, saaledes som jeg bestemmer i dette Testamente. –

I: Jeg har i Odense gaaet i Fattigskolen paa Fattiggaarden, existerer endnu samme Skole, da til denne eller er den hævet, da til en lignende Fattigskole i Odense giver jeg 1.000 Rdlr. (Tusinde Rigsdaler), disse skulle staae fast, men Renterne af samme, jeg antager, at det bliver omtrent 40 Rdlr. aarligt gives den flittigste Dreng, der i Skoletiden til Hjælp og Opmuntring, samme Legat kaldes »H. C. Andersens Hjælp«. I 1873 tilføjedes: Odense Fattigskole aarligt til Bøger som Præmier til de to flinkeste Dreng 10 Rdlr. – Anderseniana, Vol. I, S. 16 og 104.

S. 15, 12.–15. L.: J. Chr. Hedegaard: Reise fra København til Weile Anno 1796, Udg. 1918, S. 108 og 111. Af samtidig Odense-topografisk Litteratur: C. Molbech: Fragmenter af en Dagbog, 1815. – Anders Kjørbye (Biskop F. Plum): Af Vissenbjerg Sogn, 1826. – H. N. Clausen: Af min Reisedagbog 1818, 1918. – H. v. Buchwald: Erindringer 1827. Om Bybillede og Huse omkring H. C. Andersens Barndom har jeg skrevet en lille Bog: Klassicismens fyenske Borgerhuse 1790–1850, 1953.

S. 16, 17. L. n.: Fr. Ahlefeldt Laurvig: Generalen, III, S. 55 fg. – Om Adelsaristokratiet, se endvidere Hans Hansen: Portrætmalerens Dagbog, 1907.

S. 16, 12. L. n.: Engelstoft: Odense Bys Historie 1880, S. 427.

S. 16, 4. L. n.: Fyens Stifts Adresse-Avis og Avertissementstidende 9. Februar 1816.

S. 17, 12. L.: Generalen, III, 1929, S. 50.

S. 17, 13. L.: Om Greven se i øvrigt: Generalen I–IV, 1927–31. Om Kappellets Koncerter i Byen, se den samtidige lokale Dagspresses Annoncer.

S. 17, 17. L.: A. Thorsøe: Slottet i Odense, 1910, S. 7. Thorsøes Bog hvi-

ler paa Kendskab til et omfattende Kildemateriale og byder paa en fortræffelig Skildring af Atmosfæren omkring Hoffet i Odense.

S. 17, 10. L. n.: Hedegaard: Tanker over Moden og dens Følger, 1777, S. 22.

S. 18, 14. L.: S. Hempel: Odense Bys nye Fattigvæsens Indretning I, 1804, S. 18.

S. 18, 17. L.: Ibid. S. 22.

S. 19, 3. L.: V. Vedel: Guldalderen i dansk Digtning, 2. Udg., 1948, S. 90.

S. 20, 3. L.: H. P. Mumme: Bidrag til Odense Bys Historie, 1857, S. 104 fg. »Om Gaarden nr. 10 paa Overgade«, nuværende nr. 19, se Brandtaxations-Protokol 1801-06, Fol. 7, Nr. 3/4, i Landsarkivet i Odense.

S. 20, 10. L.: Fr. Ahrends: Beretning om Odense Bys Fattigskolevæsen, Egeria II, 1806, S. 183 fg.

S. 21, 2. L.: J. Larsen: Bidrag til den danske Folkeskoles Historie 1784-1818. 1893, S. 256. Her indeholdes yderligere værdifulde Oplysninger om Skolevæsenet i Odense.

S. 21, 6. L.: Egeria, II, 1806, S. 183 fg.

S. 21, 10. L. n.: Thomas Rasmussen: ABC og Læsebog, 1798 og 1826.

S. 22, 9. L. n.: V. Andersen og C. S. Petersen: Illustreret dansk Litteraturhistorie, III, S. 545 fg.

S. 24, 13. L.: Af Opmaalingsprotokol for Odense Købstad 1828, No. 1, Fol. 90, Matr. 10 (Landsarkivet i Odense) fremgaar det, at de nu forsvundne Skolestuer paa den Tid og formodentlig ogsaa 10 Aar før laa i Forhuset ud mod Overgade og ikke i den Del af Ejendommen, hvor man har anbragt Mindepladen om Digterens Skolegang.

S. 24, 17. L.: Se C. Svanholm: H. C. Andersens Ungdoms Tro, 1952, S. 179.

S. 24, 19. L. n.: Naar Hans Christian Andersen kunde søge denne Skole uden egentlig at sortere under Fattigvæsenets Forsorg, er Aarsagen, at Skolen ikke blot benyttedes af Fattigvæsenets Børn, men ogsaa af andre, hvis Forældre sad i smaa Kaar, saa de kun vanskeligt kunde betale Skolepenge. J. Larsen: Bidrag til den danske Folkeskoles Historie, S. 256.

S. 24, 6. L. n.: Se Odense Skolekommissions Arkiv. Landsarkivet.

S. 25, 6. L. n.: Angaaende Welhaven-Slægten Historie henvises til: Delgobes Samlinger i Statsarkivet i Oslo. J. F. Lampe: Indbydelsesskrift til den offentlige Examen i Bergens Kathedralskole 1869 - og »Norske Slægter«, 1915, S. 233. - Jeg skylder det norske Statsarkiv og Hr. Rektor J. Steen,

Kathedralskolen, Bergen, min bedste Tak for de 2 førstnævnte Henvisninger, endvidere takker jeg Forfatteren Hr. Josef Petersen for en Oplysning om den rette Sammenhæng i Welhavens Familieskab.

S. 25, 9. L.: Almindeligt Litteraturrexicon v. R. Nyerup og J. E. Kraft, 1820, S. 548.

S. 25, 10. L.: Francis Bull og Frederik Paasche: Norsk Litteratur Historie, Oslo 1932, III, S. 381.

S. 25, 2. L. n.: Delgobes Samlinger, Statsarkivet, Oslo.

S. 26, 1. L.: Personalhistorisk Tidsskrift, 3. Rk. III, S. 214.

S. 26, 17. L.: Norsk Litteratur Historie III, S. 381.

S. 26, 19. L.: Fyens Stifts Adresse-Avis og Avertissementstidende 24. September 1830. Se Anderseniana, Udg. af H. C. Andersen Samfundet, Vol. I, S. 102.

S. 26, 20. L.: Anderseniana, II, 1, 1950, S. 222.

S. 26, 2. L. n.: Inspektionsprotokol for Forstandernes ugentlige Inspection, 1816–19, 1. Bd. do. for Fattigvæsenets Skole 1812, Odense Fattigkommissions Arkiv. Brev til Commissionen for Almueskolen, udateret. Odense Skolekommissions Arkiv. I samme Arkiv Brev dateret 15. Maj 1818 med Bestemmelser vedrørende Tilrettelægningen af Undervisningstimerne. Alt i Landsarkivet i Odense.

S. 27, 2. L.: Annoncer i den lokale Dagspresse.

S. 27, 6. L.: H. Topsøe-Jensen og H. G. Olrik i Kommentarerne til »Mit Livs Eventyr«, ovennævnte Udgave.

S. 27, 13. L.: Vi tiltræder ikke de af Tage Høeg i »H. C. Andersens Ungdom«, 1934, fremsatte Synspunkter om Andersens Barndom, men henviser til H. G. Olrik: Hans Christian Andersen, 1945, S. 11, og til C. Svanholm: H. C. Andersens Ungdomstro, 1952.

S. 27, 19. L.: Kjøbenhavns-Posten 17.–18. September 1829: Brudstykke af en Udflugt i Sommeren 1829.

S. 27, 5. L. n.: Anderseniana, Vol. I, S. 40.

S. 27, 2. L. n.: Ibid., S. 108.

NOTER VEDRØRENDE ILLUSTRATIONERNE,
der alle er Prospekter af Odense

S. 15: Akvarel af J. Hanck, ca. 1815. Foran Aaen, i Baggrunden Domkirken. (Fyens Stiftsmuseum, Odense).

S. 20: Laveret Tuschtegning af J. Hanck, ca. 1815. I Baggrunden til venstre Det adelige Jomfrukloster. (Nationalmuseet, København).

S. 23: Laveret Tuschtegning, 1817. Udsigt mod Domkirken fra Kirkeruinen ved Graabrødre Kloster. (Nationalmuseet, København).

S. 25: Laveret Tuschtegning, 1818. (Nationalmuseet, København).

Knud Voss

Poetical Overture

or

From Hans Christian Andersen's Childhood

An Essay

PREFACE

I am much obliged to Professor dr. phil. Hans Brix and Mag. art. Leif Nedergaard for their reading of the manuscript. Without having obtained these gentlemen's judgment, I would not have dared to have the present essay published.

KNUD VOSS

A not insignificant part of Hans Christian Andersen's memoirs about his childhood has been devoted to his relations to his father. Associating with the father has undoubtedly given him the first rich inspiration of his natural talent for forming the manifold poetical pictures with which the child's and later on the poet's imagination was always pregnant. In the biography and the history of his life those moments have been maintained, when father and son abandoned themselves to the happy adventures of life. When the last had been put aside after a day's work the shoemaker would relate Holberg and tales from the Arabian Nights. On such occasions the spaciousness of the boy's picture world came into existence. And on summer Sundays just the two of them would walk outside the town, where the meadows and woods had formed the broad fertile landscapes which still are to be seen round the Funen capital. Here the boy received his earliest impressions of a landscape which can be recognized in several of the tales, and here he himself would complete the poetry of the picnic: Then "I picked strawberries on a blade of grass and made boats from rush."

To this lyrical epoch in Hans Christian Andersen's life an end was soon put. In April 1816 his father died. In the tale "The Fellow-traveller" the recollection of the gloomy incident is presumably the opening motive. Johannes is the poet himself. "He was lying kneeling on his knees in front of the

bed kissing the dead father's hand and weeping bitterly, but at last his eyes closed and he fell asleep his head resting on the hard board of the bed."

11-year old Hans Christian was thus left alone with his mother and grandmother. Even if their affection for the boy was a never ceasing source of inspiration to the poet, they are not considered as carrying on the father's creative influence on his son. They wanted both the knowledge and the mental faculties for this purpose. How much they meant to him, are indicated by a few quotations, "My father did not lack general education and was in possession of a bright head, with my mother it was always the heart". And about the grandmother who to Andersen seemed to be a refined, by much adversity sadly uncomplaining woman, he writes, "My old grandmother took and carried me to all pleasures obtainable for no money."

It is on this background of the greatest importance that the future poet gains admittance to the house of Madam Bunkeflod, the widow of a vicar. "I spent most of the day in their company, this was the first house of education in which I had a home. Here for the first time I heard the name of poet being pronounced and mentioned like something sacred . . . Here people talked about the art of versification, of poetry . . . Here also for the first time I read Shakespeare". It will be understood from this, that the house of Madam Bunkeflod became the father's worthy heir.

At the same time a third principal link in Andersen's evolution appears, – the school of the poor. Information of the latter and its attitude in the connexion mentioned gathered by the Andersen research is very poor. What has been told originates only from the brief and in certain respects enlight-

ening passages from the autobiographies. The material otherwise available for investigation is certainly only fragmentary and may therefore but in part illustrate the real facts on account of the truth that only a very few people from Hans Andersen's schooldays would guess the value of the school of the poor in future. Most papers have been destroyed. That it, however, plays a so important part in Andersen's life, as stated, is beforehand realized especially from the cordiality, that reminds him of it and makes him bestow gifts upon it. We certainly do not want to conceal that in everybody's memory childhood is coloured by a more pleasant light, the later in life you bring it to memory, and – that the want to give one's feelings towards it an effectual expression is equally increased. As for Hans Christian Andersen's relations to the school of the poor, we are, however, of the opinion that indeed more than the gilding power of memory has asserted itself. An attempt to demonstrate this is the main subject of the present essay.

About the Odense of Andersen's childhood we are quite well informed by impressions of contemporaries, handed down in the shape of literature and art. The steeple of the cathedral, the wide ridge of the roof on a ladies' convent and the heavy buildings of some two or three parish churches were marked features of a view, where on summer days the colours were dominated by the green of the trees and the red of tile roofs. Between the city gateways stood around eight hundred houses. Among those several elegant ones, adapted to the means of the bourgeoisie and the master builders' ideas of architectonic decorum. – The big marketplace in the centre had recently “been laid out in French way”

whereas now the palacegarden, like the market-place “a pleasant rallying-place for townsmen, had thrown off the former stiff French ceremonial dress and put on the unconstrained English coat”. The most conspicuous contribution to the gardenlike character of the city was the river and its overgrown banks. An imperishable idyl. “The old gnarled willows swinging to and fro, garden by garden, one different from the other with lovely flowers and arbours, smooth and pretty like small dolls’ houses.” We venture to think that the soft colours of the plastered house walls, the limetrees in the market-place, the elders in the yards and gardens along the river, have made up a graceful whole possessing in addition the rustic touch of the pastoral, at the in several places indistinct transition between town and country.

An aristocratic atmosphere brought about by the great number of Funen nobilities, who in those days for more than 25 years had been going up to Odense when the season did not permit to the comfortable stay on their estates, had for a while to such a degree attracted the attention of fashionable circles in the metropolis that the privilege of Copenhagen as a winter residence for Danish noblesse was severely threatened. During the winter season Funen Nobility in a highly cultured fashion gave itself up to much luxurious splendour. Counts, barons, and the highest city officials in addition tried to surpass each other in their display of brilliant parties. They went in for music, had dramas played, and gathered in literary clubs. To the exterior, too, this life added its colouring. As late as during the 19th century a tradition told how high masters and mistresses went to Thalia’s Temple in equipages drawn by four or six horses and escorted by housemen and runners.

The effect of the Spanish soldiers' stay in the city in 1808 and the general state of political affairs in the country at the turn of the century was that to some extent this refined society-life languished. A periodic decline of culture is noticed by the following advertisement in the local paper: "The Odense Theatre will soon be closed as hitherto the attendance has only been slight. On the other hand we shall have something worth seeing again, namely a big dromedary, two bears, and three monkeys on show." The social life and the ensuing amusements, however, flourished with renewed vigour, when around New Year 1816 the King's cousin, the successor Prince Christian Frederik moved into Odense Castle as recently appointed Governor of Funen. "Being very fond of display and decidedly addicted to parties" the Royal Prince together with his, for her beauty, mildness and majesty celebrated, spouse, Princess Caroline Amalie became a natural centre of the festive assemblies. Most important among the noble *maitres de plaisir* was Count Frederik Ahlefeldt Laurvig of Tranekær. Just to mention a few illustrations of the grandeur, with which he made his appearance. To his stables in the "winter palace" he annually conveyed 30 horses and several carriages, just as on several occasions the count's private orchestra of 11 musicians was heard in town. It was with perfect justice the headmaster of the grammarschool, Ludvig Heiberg in answer to Jens Baggesen, the poet, making a halt in Odense on his way to Paris, quoted: "Introite, nam et hic dii sunt." –

To the best of their ability the middle-classes, being occupied with trade and handicraft, tried to join in the ranks of Society. The end of the 18th century marks an economic step forward for both occupations mentioned. And soon after

this progress asserted itself visibly. "Several of the citizens, and among these even vintners, craftsmen and their equals of the lower middle-class, have displayed themselves in their front-gardens, wearing damask or print dressing-gowns, yellow morocco slippers, and night-caps embroidered in gold and silver." (A costume exactly like that of Hans Andersen's tales). Our informant is furthermore able to prove to have seen "23 shoemakers, some 20 tailors, say 31 book-keepers dressed in manner and besides 4 or 5 book-binders, according to great and wealthy peoples' examples having their gardens outside the city, most often over-eating and diverting themselves."

Such extravagance had been reduced by war time and economic difficulties during the beginning of the 19th. century as already mentioned above, but it was hardly to be completely suppressed, yet. – As for the many commerce apprentices and journeymen, we know in detail their annual guild festivals and gaily coloured processions through the city such as Hans Andersen has portrayed them. Part of the "many old customs and public rejoicings, later on entirely disappeared, have had, I daresay, a great influence on my whole nature and given to me a childhood of wonderfully poetical colouring."

Justly we ought not to omit the bitterness mixed into this cup of sweetness. An increasing poverty among the poorest citizens was making itself known by "troops of begging children and old people, every morning walking out of the gates, carrying a stick and a shoulder bag, to flood the country". And in 1804 – the year before Andersen's birth – a house-by-house investigation into the extent of poverty resulted in a gloomy report on "human misery in its many and terrible shapes." Although these conditions had been

partly bettered even before Andersen started school, they still left their indelible mark on the life of the city for a long while.

Even to the reader with but little knowledge of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales this rough plan of Odense will be inseparably bound up with the pictures and the feelings, that are an essential part of the poetry in these tales, to which must be added the poet's own description of his early home. Houses and gardens, the river and the trees – prince and pauper, military parades and market-days, theatre and processions, they have all been imbibed by a schoolboy's thoughtful senses, later to be poured out in strikingly beautiful poetry. So saying must by no means be interpreted in the way that the surroundings have been the poet's primary inspiration. "In its heart poetical life is an involuntary and inconsiderate flower, that grows out all by itself." It is, however, as if Hans Andersen's authorship has been realized by and in the memoirs of his childhood. They are the soil, from which the flower has drawn its nourishment.

Onto the varied surroundings a new and important element was added, when in 1804, as a result of increasing poverty, the town council had a workhouse established in some old premises almost in the centre of Odense. Here more than 200 paupers were given accommodation and occupation. A year later, in connexion with this institution, that school was opened which eleven years later counted Hans Christian Andersen among its pupils.

It is of no little value for the understanding of the influence of the school on its pupils that its first teacher, J. F. Ahrends,

went in strongly for the new Pestalozzian ideas. Rousseau's "Emile" being their literary basis Pestalozzi and his supporters, as you may know, tried to encourage natural development of congenital human talents. In this country Ahrends was one of the first teachers to realize such ideas, and after a short course at the experimental school in Copenhagen got an employment in Odense. After a year of activities in this city he published a report, a curriculum in fact. "I think I shall be able to impart to the poor children the knowledge considered necessary for the youth of more cultured classes, as thank Heaven! useful knowledge and true education depend neither on birth nor on the cut of one's clothes. To this he added that he did not want "the Great Book of Nature to be closed from the child, or to prevent its eye from seeing and its heart from feeling the thousands of beautiful wonders and all the lovely scenes that present themselves to its outward senses. "To increase these children's susceptibility was the purpose of reading and scripture, that were "meant both for the brains and the heart." Please notice the passages quoted from Ahrend's report, and it will be seen how well they agree with Andersen's own statements.

Furthermore we are in the happy situation, by means of the same report, to be able to form an idea of the readers used at school. Of greatest interest is Rasmussen's reader. It was first published in 1798, and was used to so great an extent that a second edition appeared in 1826. This longevity allows us to conclude that it has been used when young Hans Christian Andersen in 1816 was sent to the school of the poor. Selected passages disclose a style that seems in several respects to have been used as a model by the poet. As an example we quote the reader's "Helene in the Gardens." – "As beautiful as the rising

sun innocent Helene was strolling in the gardens, listening to the singing of the birds and the bleating of the lambs, and so walking she encouraged each little flower, and supported it, so that the wind should do no harm, she picked the weeds around them, and watered them. Grow and grow up, like me, said the graceful girl: were you able to tell me how to keep your leaves fresh, never should they fade." Another passage starts in the language of a fairy tale, "It was a lovely moonlit night," and goes on as follows, "We should have liked a walk in the garden to pick some red currants, but at that instant we caught sight of a small bird, a most beautiful bird, sitting on the edge of a flower-pot. Being seen by us, but not seeing us, it was bathing in the dew drops, rejoicing in the dust and the beams of the rising sun, now and then snatching a worm creeping past." – The reader can hardly help thinking of Andersen's many flower and animal tales with the equally tender-hearted description of prattling children, busying themselves with flowers and animals. "Little Ida's Flowers", "Thumbelina" and "The Snowdrop" are examples hereof. Finally "The Toad" from the same reader shall not go unmentioned. This tale contains in a few lines what among other things the poet expresses in the marvellous tale, bearing the same title.

In the Andersen research the poet's originality has been emphasized as regards the motives and style of those of the tales that are based on old popular legends. Thus Vilh. Andersen writes that all other tales (but those based on popular legends) in regard to figures, plots and morals, are of his own invention, and refers first of all to the flower tales, and then to the animal tales, where "The Toad" is mentioned as an example. From the preceding it will appear that this inter-

pretation has to be modified. Both figures, plots and the mood from selected passages, – of which we venture to think, that they have been familiar to Hans Andersen already at school, and the existence of which in contemporary literature we have been acquainted with at any rate – are very much like the fairy tales. Nothing seems to be more in the nature of things, than if Hans Andersen, writing his tales, returned to the language and the pictures, with which he himself was familiar since his childhood.

To the rest of the school's essential subjects belonged the religious instruction. "He (the teacher) talked to us from the bottom of his heart about scripture, and, going through the Bible history, he would render it so vividly that, while listening, in my imagination all the painted pictures hanging on the walls of the schoolroom acquired a life-like beauty, truth and freshness." – In this connexion we shall have to inform the reader of the school's accommodations". It was an old building, and in the schoolroom itself pictures from the Holy Scripture were painted on all wall-papers, I often sat staring at them, dreaming myself into them in a strange way." – It will appear quite clearly from these words how much the poet ascribes to this part of his education. Also concerning religious ideas this infantile, naive manner and sure ability of forming images, as you may know characteristic of the poet, are likely to have found their first nourishment during his schooldays.

When in April 1816, most likely shortly after the death of his father, young Hans Christian Andersen was sent to the school of the poor, the teacher was the often mentioned, but little known C. F. Welhaven. The great number of pupils, now more than a hundred, demanded one more

teacher, of whom we know nothing but the name. Since Welhaven was the one to give the boy part of the material from which the poet was made, it is of no little importance to try to form an idea of this teacher's personality. The name he left behind him in the poet's memoirs was quite different from that of the Slagelse schoolmaster. Whereas the latter, Meisling, haunted Andersen in violent nightmares till his last hours, it has usually been a solace to him to recall his teacher Welhaven. Unfortunately we know little about this man, and may only describe him to the reader by introducing his family and his surroundings.

His father, Johan Andreas Welhaven, was a teacher and sexton at the German Maria Church in Bergen, having immigrated from North Germany. Of his three sons the eldest took holy orders, and was admitted to the Swedish Vasa-order as a clerical member. He was characterized as "a man of feeling in particular." His son – the nephew of the said teacher and not as always told a brother, – was the Norwegian poet, J. S. Welhaven. Bearing in mind this cultured ancestry we give Christopher Frederik Welhaven's data known. He was born in 1788 in Bergen, and passed his examination at the local grammar-school in 1805. For a short while he performed evening prayers at the Maria Church, and then appeared in Odense, when in 1816 he married the organist's daughter. Probably he has also worked as a parish-clerk at the Church of Our Lady in Odense, as it was common practice for a parishclerk to marry the organist's daughter. –

One side of Welhaven's activities as a teacher has been dealt with above in Andersen's own words. Again, from the same source we learn, "He also wrote verses and hymns, highly admired by me, for I knew no other lyrical poems

than Bunkeflod's "spinning-ballads". – "On the teacher's birthday I would give him a garland and a poem; generally he accepted it smilingly, but sometimes he scolded me for it, – surely he was a noble character, but of an excitable nature." When Welhaven undertook an apparently insignificant position as a teacher at the school of the poor the reason may have been a human quality, characteristic of the family. About his brother a clerical writes as follows, "Of his great kindness to the poor and sick there is much evidence." –

At C. F. Welhaven's death in 1830 an old pupil wrote the words about his instruction, which we, considering Hans Andersen, will quote

A noble flower . . .

– –

Undying, its crown is smiling

Beyond the dark land of time,

as it is our opinion, that the school of the poor and its teacher must be admitted a distinguished position, when the poet's artistic estate – as to what is heritage and what is not – has been assessed.

If only to get a glimpse of real life in the classroom, we refer to the inspector's conduct-book with the bishop's comments, that do not, however, concern the individual pupil, – and to the list of external examiners. This list was open to the public, and respectable citizens were summoned to act as judges. We only have the archdeacon's balanced report about Hans Christian's standpoint after the confirmation in the spring of 1819: "Has quite good abilities and religious knowledge, if his diligence cannot be praised, yet, his conduct cannot be blamed." –

After being confirmed his school attendance in Odense was brought to an end. A few days later, after taking a tendered leave of his mother and grandmother, he went to Copenhagen by mail-coach. "The post-boy blew his horn, it was a fine sunny afternoon, and soon the sun was also shining into my light and child-like mind." Ahead of him were the years that were to unveil the fact, that first you have to suffer terribly . . . On a visit to his native town ten years later he expressed his thoughts in a carefully figurative language, undoubtedly to be understood in more than its literal meaning: "Market-day was here, but how little it all corresponded to my dreams, and to what this day meant to me as a boy. I daresay my imagination must have suffered, it was not willing to flutter along with me at all, but that, I suppose, was the fault of my schoolmaster (Meisling in Slagelse), who had broken my flight-feather with all his grammar." –

We shall not finish this essay without a reference to the now worldfamous poet's repeated visits to the school of the poor. In its aged rooms the memories would bring him back to a time and to such surroundings which we have tried to outline, and where he found that

*the whole world was at my feet
as were I dressed in a count's robes.*

NOTES

P. 39, l. 8: In 1860 Andersen made his will. When I have departed this life it is my will, that my effects be treated as I decide in this will.

I: In Odense I have attended the school of the poor under the work-house; if the same school still exists, I bequeathe to it 1000 Rdlr. (₧100), or to a similar institution; these are to be held in trust, whereas the interest of the said amount (I presume, it will be about 40 Rdlr. (₧4). is to be given to the most diligent boy of that school as a help and encouragement, the same scholarship to be called "H. C. Andersen's Hjælp". In 1867 was added: To the Odense school of the poor per annum for books and prizes for the two cleverest boys: 10 Rd. (₧1). – *Anderseniana*, Vol. I, p. 16 and 104.

P. 39: About the town and houses around the child Hans Christian Andersen I have written a small, illustrated book, *Klassicismens fyenske Borgerhuse 1790–1850*, 1953.

P. 41, l. 28: The reason why Hans Christian was able to attend this school without exactly being under the orders of the public aid authorities, is that the school was not only attended by children under poor relief, but also by those whose parents were in narrow circumstances, so being unable to pay the school fees.

All the illustrations are views of Odense from the time of Hans Andersen's childhood.

POETISK OUVERTURE er udsendt af A/S Hagen & Sørensen, Odense
litografiske Anstalt, i Anledning af Firmaets 50-Aars Jubilæum den
1. Oktober 1954.

Papir: De forenede Papirfabrikker.

Reproduktion og Tryk: A/S Hagen & Sørensen.

Indbinding: Carl Nielsens Bogbinderi.

Bind: Originalklip af H. C. Andersen.

Typografi: Viggo Naac.