The Poet, the Pianist, and the Patron: Hans Christian Andersen and Franz Liszt in Carl Alexander’s Weimar

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Weimar under the Grand Duke Carl August was a new Athens. Let us think today of constructing a new Weimar... Let us allow talent to function freely in its sphere.

—Franz Liszt

Since my departure from Weimar, my thoughts have flown there daily... where I felt so serene and so happy.

—Hans Christian Andersen

Few surprises in the history of nineteenth-century music are more dramatic than that of Franz Liszt’s sudden move to Weimar in February 1848. The decision to exchange an epoch-making career as a pianist for the life of a Kapellmeister baffled many of Liszt’s contemporaries and drew criticism from the press. Although few understood Liszt’s motives at the time, hindsight has shown that they were well calculated. With the support of his patron, hereditary Grand Duke Carl Alexander, and the resources available in Weimar and its environs, Liszt initiated what could be seen as one of the most revolutionary events in the history of nineteenth-century music: the creation of what was soon to be called the New German School.

Over the last decade a number of scholars have sharpened our vision of Liszt’s years in Weimar by publishing contemporary accounts of his activities there.¹ Yet as valuable as these accounts have proven to be, they have not fully explained the complex relationship Liszt shared with his patron and the transforming effect his presence had on Weimar’s intellectual/artistic

community. In the following pages, I hope to broaden our understanding of these issues by presenting another collection of contemporary sources yet to be explored—the writings of Hans Christian Andersen. My aim is simply to lay out this familiar Lisztian narrative from a strikingly different angle—to provide a sense of how the cultural transformation at Weimar was perceived by, and affected, an artist of differing sensibilities who eventually was cast aside from the new Weimar. Indeed, Andersen’s story—crucial aspects of which have been published only in the original Danish—provides us with part of a “thicker” cultural context within which we might subsequently view Liszt and his circle.

Andersen first visited Weimar in 1844. He shared a strong friendship with Carl Alexander and over the following twenty years visited the city on numerous occasions. Andersen was in attendance for many of Weimar’s most important cultural events, recording his reactions in his diaries, and he corresponded with Carl Alexander on a regular basis and carefully preserved the Grand Duke’s thoughts concerning the role of the artist in society, the incongruence of art and politics, and the “music of the future.” Andersen and Carl Alexander shared an affinity for the arts. The evolution of their friendship and Andersen’s contact with Weimar’s artistic community reveal much about the city’s cultural climate in the 1850s and its ever-expanding circle of artistic associates. Andersen was an attentive witness to the changes that Liszt’s presence engendered in Weimar. In his letters, diaries, scrapbooks, memoirs, and fairy tales he preserved an intriguing narrative of Liszt’s Weimar years that has never been fully told but deserves to be heard—the story of the poet, the pianist, and the patron.

Andersen’s narrative of Liszt’s influence on Carl Alexander’s Weimar is not a simple one. Indeed, a number of disparate threads must be woven together before the complex story is adequately understood. With this in mind, I shall begin with a description of the narrator, Hans Christian Andersen. But why look to Andersen for information about music? In the first place, Andersen had a musical background. As a teenager he enjoyed a brief career as an opera singer and dancer at the Royal Theater in Copenhagen, and in later years he went on to produce a large number of Singspiel and opera libretti for the Danish and German stage. Additionally, Andersen was an avid music devotee, attending performances around the world. He made thirty-one major European tours during his seventy years, and on each of these trips he regularly attended opera and concert performances, recording his impressions in a series of travel diaries. In short, Andersen was a well-informed listener, and his reflections on the music of his age serve as valuable sources for the study of music reception in the nineteenth century.

Few of today’s readers know this side of Hans Christian Andersen. Although his fairy tales have had a wide and continuing appeal, they represent only a small portion of his prodigious output, an output that has been largely ignored over the last half century. In addition, such movies as Hans Christian Andersen (1952, with Danny Kaye) and Walt Disney’s many adaptations of Andersen’s tales, the most recent being The Little Mermaid (1989) and a scene in Fantasia 2000, have cultivated the general impression that Andersen was little more than a quaint storyteller. No doubt in reaction to this depiction, several German- and English-language scholars have recently published studies that present a darker, more troubled image of him. By offering new readings of Andersen’s fairy tales and presenting psychoanalytical studies of his life, they have created an image that reverts Andersen to the status of the character in one of his best-known tales, an “ugly duckling.” As a reviewer at The New York Times recently wrote, the Andersen portrayed in Jackie Wullschlager’s recent biography, Hans Christian Andersen: The Life of a Storyteller, is a


3In addition to his tales, which were most often written specifically with adult readers in mind, Andersen wrote six novels, four travel books, a number of literary and music critiques, several volumes of poetry, and numerous works for the stage.
“histrionic, effeminate, uneducated gawk working the most painful emotions into great literature.”

Although recent research has indeed given us a fuller view of Andersen’s personality and private concerns, it is still necessary to broaden our view of his creative output, in order to understand better the aesthetic concerns underlying much of his writing and the reception of his works by like-minded contemporaries. In the course of this article I present for this purpose new interpretations of two of his lesser-known tales, *The Bell* and *The Pepperman’s Nightcap*, along with the many firsthand accounts of life in Weimar preserved in Andersen’s letters, diaries, and memoirs. These Weimar-related tales serve as testimonials to the changing cultural climate in Weimar during the mid-nineteenth century. As such they elucidate the complexity of Carl Alexander’s role as patron during these years and the indelible imprint that Liszt’s presence had on those around him.

I

Andersen’s contact with Weimar began in 1844. Traveling through Germany to visit friends and publishers, he accepted an invitation from Baron Carl Olivier von Beaulieu-Marconnay, Lord Chamberlain to the Grand Duke of Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach, to spend a week in Weimar. With Beaulieu as his guide, Andersen visited the homes of Goethe and Schiller, attended the theater regularly, and hobnobbed with the local aristocracy. His first meeting with Carl Alexander took place on 26 June at Ettersburg castle in Eisenach, an occasion he recorded in his diary:

Into the salon entered the hereditary Grand Duke, a young twenty-six-year-old man with a good figure. I didn’t know him, but I could sense right away who he was without anyone telling me. He said a few kind words to me—that he was glad to meet me! . . . He introduced me to his wife, a daughter of the deceased King of Holland. She said a few friendly words to me, and at the [dinner] table the Grand Duke invited me to sit next to her. They treated me very nicely. After [dining] we all went outside the castle to a folk festival. . . . The hereditary Grand Duke and his cavalier danced. They wanted me to dance as well, but naturally I said No!—Then the young Duke led me alone . . . to a place in the garden where Goethe had played in the open air, and where all of Weimar’s famous men had written their names [on a tree]. One side of the tree was covered with bark that had just begun to grow over. Lightning had struck it here—Jupiter must have also wanted to write his name. . . . The young Duke was very charming, I could easily choose him as my friend, if he weren’t a prince! . . . We walked together for an hour and spoke confidentially. In the palace I read fairy tales aloud and was admired. Then we went out under the linden trees. Colored lamps hung from the branches, and there was dancing! Later, we ate supper. I love the young Grand Duke dearly; of all princes, he is the first that really appeals to me. I only wish that he weren’t a prince, or that I were one.

Andersen’s warm reception by Carl Alexander was no doubt facilitated by the poet’s enthusiasm for the Grand Duke’s newest court appointment—the pianist Franz Liszt. Although Liszt was not physically in attendance during Andersen’s first visit to Weimar in 1844, his presence in the city was definitely still felt. Liszt had first visited Weimar in 1841, and in 1842 Carl Alexander had surprised the music world by appointing the virtuosic showman as

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4*New York Times*, 10 June 2001. Although this approach to Andersen’s life and works is not universally accepted by contemporary scholars, it is gaining strength due to the current vogue for identity politics in many academic circles. Andersen’s possible homosexual leaning has become a much-debated topic in recent years, and it should be noted that the points of argument closely resemble those surrounding discussions of Franz Schubert that have appeared in this journal over the past few years. Andersen’s fictional works, like Schubert’s Lieder, have been mined for evidence of emotional instability and repressed homosexual yearning, and his letters to male friends and colleagues have been read from a specifically late-twentieth-century point of view. Consequently, Andersen’s relationships with contemporary artists and patrons have too often been examined through the narrow lens of sexuality alone, with little regard for Andersen’s artistic and/or intellectual interests. The most-noted studies concerning Andersen’s possible homosexual relations have been written by Heinrich Detering: *Das offene Geheimnis: Zur literarischen Produktivität eines Tabus von Winckelmann bis zu Thomas Mann* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1994), and “Intellectual Amphibia”: *Homosexual Camouflage in Hans Christian Andersen’s Works* (Odense: H. C. Andersen-Centret, 1991).

Weimar’s “Kapellmeister in ausserordentlichem Dienst.” Although this appointment received much criticism in the press, the hereditary Grand Duke took pride in this decision, and he eagerly embraced those who shared his point of view.

Andersen was already well acquainted with Liszt when he came to Weimar. He had first heard the pianist at a concert in Hamburg in 1840, and in 1841 the two men had become friends during Liszt’s concert tour in Copenhagen, when he had presented Andersen with a music excerpt for his scrapbook (plate 1). When Andersen visited Weimar in 1844, his admiration for the pianist was no secret: in a recently published travel book called *A Poet’s Bazaar*, he had dedicated an entire chapter to a glowing description of the pianist’s 1840 concert in Hamburg. Even though his private opinions of Liszt could be more nuanced—a point to which I shall return—his public declarations could hardly have been more glowing:

It was in Hamburg, in the hotel Stadt London, that Liszt gave a concert. . . . The salon, and even the side rooms, gleamed with lights, gold chains, and diamonds.

. . . Wealthy Hamburg merchants stood packed together as if an important matter on the exchange were about to be discussed. There was a smile about their lips, as if they had all bought securities and profited immensely. . . .

In our age the musical world has two princes of the piano—they are Thalberg and Liszt. When Liszt entered, an electric shock seemed to pass through the salon. Most of the ladies rose; it was as if a ray of sunshine passed over every face, as if all eyes were greeting a dear, beloved friend! I was standing quite near the artist, a thin young man with long, dark hair hanging around his pale face. He bowed and sat down at the piano. The whole of Liszt’s appearance and movement immediately reveals one of those persons we notice for their individuality alone; the Divine hand has impressed a stamp upon him, which makes him recognizable among thousands. As Liszt sat down at the pianoforte, my first impression of his personality was derived from the appearance of strong passions in his pale face. He seemed to me a demon who was nailed fast to the instrument whence the tones were streaming forth—they came from his blood, from his thoughts. He was a demon trying to play his soul free. He was on the rack, his blood was flowing and his nerves trembling. But as he continued to play, the demonic disappeared. I saw that pale face assume a nobler and brighter expression. The divine soul shone from his eyes, from every feature. He became as beautiful as spirit and enthusiasm can make one! . . .

He who admires art in its technical perfection must respect Liszt. He who is charmed by God-given genius must respect him all the more. The Orpheus of our age has let his tones swell through the world metropolis of machinery, and we have found and acknowledge, as a Copenhagener once said, that “his fingers are truly railroads and steam engines”; his genius even mightier in drawing together the intellectual spirits of the universe than all the railways on earth. The Orpheus of our age made the European business office clink-clink with his tones, and at that moment at least, people believed the gospel: a golden spirit is more powerful than worldly gold. . .

We often hear the expression “a flood of tones” without defining it; and it is indeed a “flood” that streams from Liszt’s pianoforte. The instrument appears to have been transformed into a full orchestra. This is produced by ten fingers that possess an expertise that may be called fanatical when controlled by the mighty genius. It is a flood of tones, which, in its uproar, momentarily reflects every glowing sensibility. I have met politicians who from Liszt’s playing have come to understand how the peaceful citizen could be so affected by the tones of the Marseillaise as to seize a rifle, rush from hearth and home, and fight for an idea! I have seen peaceful Copenhageners with Danish autumn mist in their blood become political bacchants from his playing; and mathematicians have become dizzy with tonal figures and calculations of sound. The young Hegelians—the really gifted ones, and not the empty-headed who only make a spiritual grimace at the galvanic stream of philosophy—behold in this flood of tones the surging progress of science towards the shore of perfection. The poet finds in it his whole heart’s poetry, the ornate costumes for his most daring characters! The traveler, as I can tell you myself, receives tonal images of what he has seen or shall see. I heard his music as an overture to my travels: I heard how my own heart beat and bled at my departure from home. I heard the waves’ farewell—waves that I was not to hear again until I saw the cliffs of Terracina. It sounded like organ tones from Germany’s old cathedrals. The avalanche rolled down from the Alpine mountains, and Italy danced in her carnival dress waving her wand while in her heart she thought of Caesar, Horace, and Raphael! Vesuvius and Actna were on fire, and the last trumpet sounded from the mountains of Greece where

the old gods are dead. Tones I knew not, tones I have no words for, suggested the Orient, the land of imagination, the poet’s other fatherland!

When Liszt had ceased playing, flowers showered down around him. Pretty young girls, and old ladies who had once been pretty girls, each cast her bouquet, for he had cast a thousand bouquets of tones into their hearts and minds. From Hamburg Liszt was to rush to London, where he would throw out new bouquets of tones to breathe poetry into material, everyday life! Happy man, who can thus travel all his life, always seeing people in their spiritual Sunday clothes! Nay, even in enthusiasm’s bridal gown! Shall I meet him again? This was my last thought, and chance would have it that we were to meet on our travels, meet in a place where my reader and I least could imagine—meet, become friends, and again separate.6

This unbridled enthusiasm for Liszt ingratiated Andersen to Carl Alexander and in many ways foreshadowed the poet’s future relationship with the pianist. When Andersen first visited Weimar, Carl Alexander was in the early stages of trying to reestablish the city’s reputation as the “Athens of the North.” During the reign of Carl Alexander’s grandfather, Carl August (1757–1828), Weimar had been the most important cultural center in Germany. Under his patronage, the city had attracted the greatest writers of the day—Goethe, Schiller, Herder, and Wieland had all lived and worked there—and the memory of their achievements was preserved in various monuments. After the death of Carl August, Weimar’s splendor began to fade. The city had become impoverished, and under the rule of Carl Friedrich (Carl Alexander’s father), art had been reduced to little more than an occasional luxury. It was Carl Alexander’s mother, Maria Pavlovna, sister of the Russian Czar, who had kept the city’s flagging artistic interests alive. Inspired by her efforts, the hereditary Grand Duke Carl Alexander hoped to reawaken Weimar’s glorious past. His first step had been to appoint Liszt Kapellmeister in 1842, and judging from his enthusiasm over Andersen in 1844, his proposed second step was to secure a position for the writer as well. During his early days in Weimar, Andersen was hailed as a new Schiller, the local aristocracy even went so far as to tell him that he shared a physical resemblance with the poet. Andersen was wined and dined by the wealthy and feted at Ettersburg castle in Eisenach by the royal family. Carl Alexander praised Andersen on numerous occasions, and it soon became clear that he envisioned the poet as a bright star whose growing fame would eventually illuminate Weimar’s status as an international, artistic hub.

Andersen spent three days in the royal family’s company during his visit in 1844. Much of this time was spent with the hereditary Grand Duke. In Andersen’s description of their final encounter, recorded in his diary on 28 June, we clearly see Carl Alexander’s eagerness to attach Andersen to Weimar:

We drove to Ettersburg, where they produce a journal, and read aloud several selections. Miss Amalie Winter read a love story. The hereditary Grand Duke [read] a novella, probably written by himself. . . . I read The Princess and the Pea, The Emperor’s New Clothes, and Little Ida’s Flowers. . . . The hereditary Grand Duke wanted me to remain longer in Weimar. He took my hand and held it tightly, saying that he was my friend and that he hoped that sometime in the future he could prove it. His wife asked me to return to Weimar and not to forget them. My heart was truly touched.7

Carl Alexander then presented Andersen with a branch from one of the linden trees at Ettersburg—a memento of his time there—and asked him to submit a story to his journal. Moved by this act of kindness, Andersen left Eisenach with a heavy heart and traveled back to Weimar with Beauclieu.

The next day Andersen visited the graves of Goethe and Schiller: “In the chapel the coffins had been moved so that Goethe and Schiller lie next to each other. . . . I stood between them, read aloud ‘Our Father,’ and asked God to let me be a poet worthy of them. . . . Laurel wreathes lay on their coffins. I took a leaf from each one.”8 Andersen left Weimar two days later. As the poet himself later explained in his initial letter to Carl Alexander (29 August 1844), Weimar was now a second home, a friendly haven where enthusiasm for his writing and royal patronage were secure:

Since my departure from Weimar, my thoughts have flown there daily. . . . where I felt so serene and so happy. . . . The evenings I spent at Ettersburg were a beautiful chapter in the fairy tale of my life. I remember so clearly the bright, blissful look in the eyes of you and your charming wife. I remember the Folk Festival on 24 June. . . . the fragrant linden trees with colored lamps, our walk, my dear Grand Duke, through the forest to the tree where Zeus wanted to write his name with a lightning bolt next to Goethe’s and Schiller’s. I remember it all so clearly, and I hope that soon my muse will present me with a poem that is worthy of your Ettersburg Journal. I will not forget, but I wait until I can create something worthy. When I rode out of Weimar, over the

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7H. C. Andersens Dagbøger, II, 401.
8Ibid., II, 402. Andersen preserved these leaves, along with other tokens of his visit to Weimar, in his scrapbook, and referred to them and the linden tree branch in his correspondence.
bridge and past the mill, tears came to my eyes. I was so deeply moved, it was as though I were leaving home, for that is what Weimar became for me during the few days I spent there with my dear friends. If I may tell you, my Grand Duke, you and your loving wife have become embedded in my memory, as good people [als Menschen] you have become rooted in my heart.9

Obviously thrilled by Andersen’s letter, the hereditary Grand Duke quickly responded, echoing Andersen’s description of the visit as “a marvelous fairy tale.” He praised Andersen’s talent for pictorial description and commented at length on the poet’s most recent play, *Horatio*.10 Carl Alexander hoped to produce the play in Weimar, and he was making plans for such an event with the theater director. “If our stage could be the first in Germany to produce your play, it would make me very proud,” he wrote.11

Six weeks later, on 13 November 1844, the hereditary Grand Duke began in earnest his campaign to attach Andersen to his court on a more permanent basis with a letter written from Wartburg Castle (plate 2):

I find a special worth and great pleasure in writing to you from here—to you, who are touched so deeply and warmly by everything. If it is true that the atmosphere within which we think and feel has a powerful influence on our thoughts and feelings, then I know of no better place, far and wide, than this one to think of you and from which to write. If only you knew this place, you would agree with me. You should first realize that with your spirit, with your elves and fairies, you truly belong here. High in the air I sit, and over me I see only the heaven’s blue. Deep, deep under my feet lie the beautiful mountains of the Thuringian lands, southwards they look like huge waves that have been frozen in a green sea by the command of one of your fairies, for the arboREAL hills alternate in tremendously gigantic fluctuations with the darkest, deepest abysses of the forest. Closer to me, where I now sit, towards the west, the deep valleys extend and grant a clearer view of the life and deeds of man. A pretty country road built of basalt winds down here from the hills. Further on, villages glimmer between the meadows. Over toward the north, steep cliffs arise, and above them rises the mountain. To the west, the naked rock is enclosed by a lovely valley that disappears between the immense forests; and before me, at the end of the valley, lies an ancient city with pointed towers and wonderful roofs. It appears imprisoned behind numerous gardens that in the summer cast a colorful, fragrant net over their prisoner. The city is Eisenach, and the castle from which I am corresponding with you is the Warburg, the famous medieval castle from which poetry first descended into the German regions. Only a few steps from my room lies a huge building; three rows of endless squares on slender columns quietly decorate the outside of the courtyards. The upper row belongs to the hall where the German Minnesänger first wrote poetry and sang. The second row belongs to the hall of the old Thuringian ducal court, where its armaments now shine, and to the chapel where Luther preached. The third row of rooms is where Saint Elisabeth of Thuringia calmly administered her blessing, a blessing that lives on in Eisenach today in religious establishments. On the hall where I am living, next to my bedroom, lies the room where Luther translated the bible, and so there is a huge number of historic memories that cling to each stone of this castle. Indeed, was not this place—which breathes such enthusiasm, which served as the cradle of German literature, its child, which then grew up in Weimar—especially made so that one could think about and write to you, my dear friend? Come and inspire yourself here with me in the summer, when the mountain will have produced the sprouting, budding spring as one of its thousand blooms.12

Although Andersen did not visit in the summer as requested, he did continue to send his new patron a steady stream of fairy tales and poems over the next year and eventually returned to Weimar in January 1846. This time he remained for a month and socialized with the royal family on a daily basis. Andersen’s
diary shows that this was a marvelous visit. Constantly praised for his poetic genius, he was made to feel like a respected member at court. As a token of his appreciation for such kindness and hospitality, Andersen presented Carl Alexander with a new fairy tale, The Bell, on 15 January, explaining that it symbolized their personal relationship and mutual artistic goals.

The Bell is a parable about the pursuit of ideal beauty and the harmony of nature and art. It tells the story of a young prince and a poor boy who, intrigued by the beautiful sound of a mysterious, distant bell, set off with everyone else in the village to find the source of its beauty. But the bell is elusive, and eventually everyone but the prince and the poor boy abandon their search.

“Let us go on together,” proposed the prince. But the poor boy with the wooden shoes was quite shy. He pulled at the sleeves of his tunic, which were too short, and said that he was afraid that he could not walk as fast as the prince. Besides, he thought that the bell should be searched for on the right side, where everything great and marvelous is located?13

“Then I suppose we will never see each other again,” says the prince, and the two go their separate ways. The poor boy “walks into the densest part of

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the forest, where brambles and thorns tear his worn-out clothes and scratch his face and legs.” The prince takes an easier path, lined with beautiful trees and flowers and lighted by rays of sunshine. Ugly monkeys mock him, but he pays no attention. As the long shadows of afternoon stretch across the forest, the prince despairs that he will never find the bell, and in an effort to catch a final glimpse of the sun, he climbs a steep hill.

Just before the sun set he reached the summit. Oh, what splendor! Below him stretched the ocean, that great sea that was flinging its long waves toward the shore. The sun stood like a shining red altar where the sea and sky met. Everything melted together in glowing colors. The forest sang, and the sea sang, and his heart sang along as well. All of nature was a grand, holy church, wherein trees and clouds were pillars; flowers and grass were mosaic floors; and heaven itself was the great cupola. High above, the red color had disappeared, for the sun had set. Millions of stars were lighted; millions of little diamond lamps twinkled there. The prince spread out his arms toward the sky, the sea, and the forest—and just at that moment, from the right side of the cliff, came the poor boy with the short sleeves and wooden shoes. He had arrived there almost as quickly by going his own way. They ran to meet each other and stood there, hand in hand, in the midst of nature’s and poetry’s great church. And far above, the great invisible holy bell rang out; blessed spirits floated around them in dance to a joyful hosanna.

This final scene, atop a steep hill overlooking the forest and sea, is reminiscent of the view from Wartburg Castle as described to Andersen by Carl Alexander. The prince in the story is clearly a representation of the hereditary Grand Duke, who as a patron was continuing his search for ideal beauty even when others abandon and mock him. The poor boy in the story is one of Andersen’s many autobiographical representations—as an artist he must follow a more difficult path than his princely patron in the pursuit of beauty. Together, the two characters find what they seek: ideal beauty rings out from on high, uniting rich and poor, patron and artist, nature and art.

Carl Alexander was obviously moved by Andersen’s story. His reaction to it, recorded in Andersen’s diary, shows that he had fully understood its artistic implications: “I read three tales. The Bell made the strongest impression. I told him that the Prince in the story was a reference to him. ‘Yes, I will strive for the noblest and best goals,’ he said and shook my hand. We sat together at the table, and he drank a toast to me.” Two days later Carl Alexander requested a private meeting with Andersen. He had been working on a literary work himself, called Waldeinsamkeit (“Solitude in the Forest”), and he wanted Andersen’s opinion of it. He also wanted to enlist Andersen in his pursuit to attract other artists to Weimar. Jenny Lind was scheduled to arrive in Weimar in just a few days, and he hoped that Andersen, already a close friend of the singer, could convince her to remain in Weimar permanently.

Andersen’s ardor for Lind was no secret. Her clear, unadorned vocal style inspired one of his most famous tales, The Nightingale, in 1842; and he openly declared his love for her when she visited Weimar in 1846. The royal family received Lind warmly when she arrived on 22 January. Andersen’s diary reveals the extent to which Carl Alexander involved him in the wooing of this possible addition to court:

29 January: The hereditary Grand Duke talked with me about Jenny, with whom he is completely preoccupied. He wishes her to become his wife’s companion and live with them.

30 January: At the hereditary Grand Duke’s this evening. He had written asking me to come half an hour early to talk about Jenny. I arrived at 7:30 [and] sat on the sofa with him. He was quite emotional. [He] asked me continually to write about her, but without mentioning names, just “our friend.” He pressed my hands in his.

Jenny Lind left Weimar on 28 January without committing to return on a more permanent basis. Although Carl Alexander was confident that Andersen would eventually convince her to accept a position in Weimar, Andersen himself was doubtful. In a letter to Louise Lind [no relation] dated 2 April 1846, he wrote: “You ask me about Jenny. I hear from her regularly; they would like to keep her in Weimar. In that

14Ibid., p. 305.
15H. C. Andersens Dagbøger, III, 46.
16Ibid., III, 53 [29 and 30 January 1846].
case, I would like to be there too; but it won’t happen.”17 Andersen wrote to Jenny Lind about Weimar on several occasions, but with little success: Lind had no intention of settling in the city permanently. When she finally put an end to the topic, she counted on Andersen to explain her decision to Carl Alexander:

Dear Andersen, if you should write to our high-born friends, tell them, if you should mention me, that I shall remember those few days I spent at Weimar as long as I live. And it is only the truth that I have never found such peace of mind and utter happiness, although I have everywhere and always been kindly received. I like these high-born personages, and that, as you say, brother, not for the jewels and decorations they wear, but for their genuine and honest hearts and souls. I get quite carried away when I think of these people! God’s peace over them and theirs!18

Although Andersen had been unsuccessful in his attempt to attach Lind to Weimar, he was still welcome at court himself and over the next two years became a regular visitor.19 Carl Alexander had grown quite fond of Andersen. In a letter to Liszt dated 3 December 1846, he described the poet’s artistic temperament and unique sense of humor:

Andersen, the fairy-tale writer, was here longer this fall. He divides his life between Copenhagen and Weimar. I love him as a person and as a writer. Although he is no star of the highest class, his flame is pure, and that is rare in our day, when writers no longer make poetry their purpose, but rather their means. No one, almost no one, I tell you, has the conscience of a writer. One day Andersen amused me greatly when he said to me, laughing: “Oh, in Vienna I was once invited to a literary social gathering, there I found two rooms full of poets, and all of them immortal.”20

When Andersen was not in Weimar, he remained in constant contact with Carl Alexander through a steady stream of correspondence, and he continued to send new publications for the hereditary Grand Duke’s approval.21 Carl Alexander remained unrelenting in his efforts to attach Andersen to Weimar permanently. “If Goethe and Schiller could work in Weimar, then so can you,” he told Andersen. “We Germans appreciate you more than the Danes do.”22

II

Since Carl Alexander’s desire to attach well-known artists to Weimar was a common theme in his correspondence with Andersen, discussions of Liszt occasionally arose. Although Andersen and Carl Alexander praised Liszt profusely in their public comments, their private musings about the artist and his music were often less favorable. For example, Andersen’s original impression of Liszt’s 1840 Hamburg concert, recorded in his diary on the very same evening, differed dramatically from the description [quoted at length earlier in this article] he published in A Poet’s Bazaar. Indeed, just a few hours after the concert, on 6 November 1840, Andersen portrayed the virtuoso in a less flattering light:

I went with the ladies through a back door into a magnificent room full of people. . . . The ladies were particularly enthusiastic. The merchants from Hamburg seemed to be hearing the clink of gold pieces in the music—that’s why they were sitting with smiles spread across their lips. I was seeing Liszt face to face! How great men resemble mountains—they look best at a distance, when there is still an atmosphere about them. [Liszt] looked like he had been to the Orthopedic Institute to be straightened out. There was something so spider like, so demonic about him!

19Andersen visited Weimar in 1846 [16 August–3 September] and 1847 [7–12 September].
21In December 1847, he dedicated the epic poem Ahasverus to his new patron. Ahasverus tells the legend of the wandering Jew, who travels through time and across nations sharing tales about the life of Christ and the transgressions of man. Andersen had discussed the poem with Carl Alexander during his visit in 1846, and perhaps he hoped the tale would send a subtle message to his persistent patron. Carl Alexander was unrelenting in his efforts to attach Andersen to Weimar permanently, but the poet, like the character of Ahasverus, felt compelled to continue his nomadic lifestyle.
22H. C. Andersens Dagbøger, III, 175 (1 September 1846), and 43 (10 January 1846).
And as he sat there at the piano, pale and with his face full of passion, he seemed to me like a devil trying to play his soul free! Every tone flowed from his heart and soul—he looked to me to be on the rack. He was Klein Zaches! At the end of the concert bouquets were tossed up to him on stage. (The washroom attendant at the hotel had brought most of them. He asked people to throw them. If something like this had been done . . . in Copenhagen, there would have been quite an outcry about it all being prearranged—for we Copenhagenerers are good at seeing things in the worst light.)

As a letter to Andersen from 16 March 1846 reveals, Carl Alexander also had reservations about Liszt’s music. In fact, one gets the sense that the hereditary Grand Duke was initially more drawn to Liszt’s charismatic personality than his virtuosic music: “Liszt is gone, which makes me sad since his conversation gives me even greater pleasure than his playing, just as one admires a naked demon much less than one wearing a well-tailored jacket, who with his outer appearance alone already impresses. Yet he appears to me as an unclothed demon when at the piano. I shudder when he leads me into the world of tones.” Andersen’s response to this letter expressed a similar reaction to Liszt’s playing. After seeing him in a concert in Vienna, he wrote on 2 April 1846: “In Vienna I ran into Liszt, the witty, unique genius! We were together for a few hours, and I heard him bleed on the piano.”

As insightful as these few descriptions might be, discussions of Liszt were not common in the early correspondence between Andersen and Carl Alexander. This was probably due to the fact that Liszt was rarely in Weimar: during his first six years as the city’s Kapellmeister, he was never in residence more than three months a year. In the spring of 1848, however, this arrangement suddenly changed. Fatigued by years of strenuous concertizing and newly entangled in an adulterous relationship with Princess Caroline Sayn-Wittgenstein, Liszt began to look to Weimar as a private haven. He was intent on gaining respect from Europe’s musical elite as an intellectual musician and saw no better way than to settle down in a stable position and focus his attentions on composing rather than performing. As Liszt’s intentions became clear, and his involvement with Wittgenstein became more intense, rumors began to spread that he had moved to Weimar permanently. Andersen got wind of such rumors in early 1848, and his interest in the matter was clearly expressed in a letter from 13 January to Carl Alexander: “Ernst is in Copenhagen giving concerts. He is much loved by the ladies. Recently I met him at Princess Juliane’s; we talked about Weimar and about you, my dear hereditary Grand Duke. Ernst thinks that Liszt was in Weimar this winter—I don’t believe it.” Carl Alexander responded to Andersen’s query on 25 January, assuring him that Liszt had not yet been there, but that “he was expected to arrive at any moment.” He then went on to say, “I so look forward to seeing him. He is my spiritual champagne.”

As the continued exchange of letters in 1848 reveals, Liszt’s permanent residency in Weimar had a growing influence on Carl Alexander. On 21 February, he wrote to Andersen: “If you were here you would enjoy Liszt’s presence as much as I do. . . . I spoke with him yesterday about you. You fascinate him. He is surprised how, despite your travels, you can hold on to the child-like quality of your soul. That’s what I love about you.” Carl Alexander then launched into a discussion of divine genius and the power of music over literature:

If one is given a special gift on Earth, then it must be the will of God. For why would one have a special gift without a special purpose? And how can this special purpose be limited to Earth, where it is often

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23Here Andersen is referring to the E. T. A. Hoffmann character.
24H. C. Andersens Dagbøger, II, 46–47.
25Møller-Christensen, Briefwechsel, pp. 48–49.
26Ibid., p. 50. As with the concert in Hamburg, Andersen gave a more vivid impression of the concert in his diary on 8 March 1846: “At half past twelve, I went to Liszt’s third concert—one string snapped after the other. It was hot, and there was a draft. Once again, I heard his fantasy about Robert [Meyerbeer’s Robert le Diable]. He is a stormy spirit who plays with notes— a juggler of notes. I am amazed but not overwhelmed” (H. C. Andersens Dagbøger, III, 73).
27Møller-Christensen, Briefwechsel, p. 111.
28Ibid., p. 113.
29Ibid., p. 116.
misunderstood, and still more often not even recognized? Tell me what you feel about this, for such questions fill one—one does not merely think them. The feeling begins where understanding leaves off, just as music begins where speech is exhausted.\(^{30}\)

In the letters of the following years, Carl Alexander’s growing affinity for Liszt’s music and his interest in the composer’s ideas concerning the future of Weimar became clearer. Now a permanent resident at court, Liszt was able to accomplish many of the tasks that Carl Alexander had once asked Andersen to do. For example, on 24 October 1848, Carl Alexander wrote to Andersen about Liszt’s exceptional organizational skills and his ability to draw other talented figures to Weimar: “For indeed, he brings together a strength of intelligence, a rush of ideas, a breadth of culture, an energy of the will, a uniqueness of individuality” as has “never been seen before.”\(^{31}\)

Plans were also made for an upcoming Goethe festival, an event from which Andersen was noticeably excluded. In a letter dated 17 September 1849, Carl Alexander discussed the upcoming festivities and praised his “Friend Liszt” for his remarkable talent as a music director and genius as a composer. Apparently, the hereditary Grand Duke’s previous reservations concerning Liszt’s music were beginning to wane, for he says later in the same letter: “I commissioned Liszt to write an overture on Tasso. He did it with all originality and all the strength of his spirit [Geistes]!”\(^{32}\) And on 15 March 1851, Carl Alexander reported: “We live here in zealous enthusiasm for science and art. I have just recently taken over the directorship of the huge art exhibition [here] and one in Jena. Liszt continues to carry out incredible things. We have more very important artists who have moved here. In this way we endeavor to make the present at the very least not unworthy of the past.”\(^{33}\)

As Liszt’s influence in Weimar grew stronger, Andersen’s contact with the city’s artistic community weakened dramatically. In March 1848, civil war broke out in Denmark over the country’s German-speaking provinces, Schleswig and Holstein. Fueled by liberal revolts in Germany, the provinces wanted to abandon Denmark and join what appeared to be an emerging united Germany. The Danish government responded by trying to divide the two provinces politically with a new constitution. Displeased, the duchies took the law into their own hands. They formed a provisional government and called on the German states to aid their cause. Soon Prussian troops and volunteers from other German states reinforced the Schleswig-Holstein forces. What began as a civil war quickly escalated into an international struggle. With the outbreak of the Schleswig-Holstein War, Andersen’s contact with friends and colleagues in Germany grew weaker. Travel between Copenhagen and Weimar became difficult, not to mention dangerous. In addition, letters were often lost in transit or severely delayed. Andersen experienced great melancholy during this war. Separated from his friends in Weimar, he feared the consequences that war would eventually bring to his personal and professional relationships. Carl Alexander was less worried, however, and he assured Andersen on 2 August 1848 that true friendship could never be torn asunder by politics: true affection, like true art, was apolitical.\(^{34}\) The battles between two nations could do nothing against the spiritual bonds nurtured in art:

True friendship is like nature; it is true like [nature], unchanged like it, untouched by the bustle of the world. It is the same with us, my friend. What does the battle of opinions have to do with our mutual way of thinking? Have we loved each other for our political opinions? No, truly not. Instead the sympathy of our souls, our minds, our imaginations is what brought us together; they united us and should, I think, through the grace of God, unite us still more. Oh promise me, my dear friend, that the cur-

\(^{30}\)Ibid.

\(^{31}\)Ibid., p. 131.

\(^{32}\)Ibid., p. 142.

\(^{33}\)Ibid., p. 165.

\(^{34}\)Andersen’s own ideas about the relationship between art and politics are revealed in a play he wrote called *Kunstens Dannevirke* [The Bulwark of the Arts]. The title is a reference to the ancient rampart in Schleswig built to protect Denmark against the Germans, and it suggests a mobilization of the arts against the enemy. Andersen reports in his diary that there were “almost three rounds of thunderous applause” ([*H. C. Andersens Dagbøger*, III, 292]) at the premiere on 18 December 1848 at the Royal Theater.
rent opinions and notions of these days will never, never win influence over our friendship. Look up at the heaven, off into the immense world above—how trivial, how contemptible the busy life down here appears. And do we want this busy life to destroy our friendship? Should we let it? Now truly, it is a fairy tale, but a fairy tale that you have not written, and that I find horrible. Therefore, away with politics! And leave me with the cheerful hope that we will see each other again and that you will soon come to us.\textsuperscript{35}

Carl Alexander’s belief in the apolitical nature of art and friendship would later facilitate Liszt in his attempts to get Richard Wagner’s music performed in Weimar. Secure in his belief that music and politics could co-exist separately, Carl Alexander allowed the performance of Wagner’s operas in Weimar when no other city in Germany would sponsor music by the political exile. In fact, Wagner even visited the city secretly in 1849, an event he describes in his autobiography:

I took advantage of a few days’ holiday in August to make an excursion to Weimar, where I found Liszt permanently installed and . . . enjoying a life of the most intimate intercourse with the Grand Duke. Even though he was unable to help me . . . his reception of me on this short visit was so hearty and so exceedingly stimulating, that it left me profoundly cheered and encouraged.\textsuperscript{36}

Carl Alexander also continued to encourage Andersen. In his letters he urged the poet to continue writing and assured him that all would return to normal when the war was over. In almost every letter to Andersen, Carl Alexander begged him to return to Weimar. But Andersen could not. Although the admiration and encouragement he received in Weimar was important to him, he could not forsake his homeland. As Andersen himself explained on 18 August 1849 in a letter to the hereditary Grand Duke: “My heart is completely Danish, but I still love my true friends in Germany. Let there be Peace! Peace! God, let peace hover over the lands!”\textsuperscript{37} When Andersen’s prayers were finally answered and peace was declared in 1850, he summarized his feelings over Denmark’s victory in a letter on 12 July:

\textit{My dear beloved Hereditary Grand Duke!}

\textit{Peace! Peace with Germany! So it rings throughout the land and through my heart. It is truly like sunshine, like a festive Sunday. There are so many who are dear to me in Germany, so many with whom I have exchanged not a single letter, that if I could write to them at this moment, then my thoughts would now fly far and wide from here. Still I can write only to one, and this one is you, my noble friend! May you receive through this letter all of my emotions, my complete joy!}

And so I can again think about visiting you, my neighbor, my brother on the other side of the Elbe, the land where Goethe sang, where Luther preached, where art and science have cast so many rays across the world—the land where I have gained so many good things, so many friends. Peace! Peace with Germany, and should it be recognized there that Denmark simply wanted what was its right—that makes my heart so light. May no more blood flow, and may the beginnings of peace flourish in God.\textsuperscript{38}

Andersen’s correspondence after the war reveals that he was eager to strengthen the artistic bonds between Denmark and Weimar. In addition to collaborating with German composers on new opera projects\textsuperscript{39} and recommending the production of his earlier works in Germany, he suggested plays and operas by other Danes that he thought would find favor on Weimar’s stage. As he wrote to the Grand Duke on 12 July 1850: “An opera by my countryman Salomon has given pleasure, so I hear, in Weimar; that pleases me. If only one knew more Danish operas in Germany, such as Kuhlau’s \textit{Lulu}, Weyse’s \textit{Der Schlaftrunk}, and Hartmann’s \textit{Die kleine Kirsten} and \textit{Der Rabe}; they would surely also give pleasure.”\textsuperscript{40} Carl Alexander encouraged Andersen’s enthusiasm, and in a letter dated 30 October 1851 he related that his efforts to work more with Weimar’s

\textsuperscript{35}Möller-Christensen, \textit{Briefwechsel}, p. 123.


\textsuperscript{37}Möller-Christensen, \textit{Briefwechsel}, p. 139.

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., pp. 155–56.

\textsuperscript{39}Shortly after the war, Andersen tried to convince the German composer Franz Gläser to collaborate with him on an opera entitled \textit{Befrielsen} [The Liberation].

\textsuperscript{40}Möller-Christensen, \textit{Briefwechsel}, p. 156.
theater would no doubt be aided by the fact that his good friend, Beaulieu, had just been appointed theater director: “Hurry up now and send me your ‘Fliedermütterchen.’" Perhaps we can perform it. In the new theater director, Beaulieu, you have a friend upon whose willingness you can build. . . . Beaulieu controls the rudder of art.”

Andersen’s first trip back to Weimar after Denmark’s victory in Schleswig-Holstein took place in spring 1852. Returning from a trip to Italy, he stayed in the city from 19 May until 10 June and visited with Carl Alexander, Beaulieu, and Liszt on a daily basis. Liszt was now permanently ensconced in Weimar, and on 25 May Andersen was given a guided tour of Altenburg, the private home that Maria Pavlovna had given to Liszt and his mistress. Andersen was no doubt impressed by the residence. As Alan Walker explains in his study of Liszt’s years in Weimar: “Visitors to the house could be forgiven for assuming that they were walking through a museum.”

27 May: . . . Lunch at Liszt’s house. Princess Wittgenstein resembles him somewhat—not young, very lively, [she] received me enthusiastically. . . . The princess accompanied me to the table. After lunch I read *The Nightingale* and *The Ugly Duckling*, she applauded and was very taken by each amusing thought. During coffee she smoked a cigar and asked me if I didn’t find it strange to see a woman do such a thing. The daughter, Princess (Marie?), seems to be a friendly little Mignon. Liszt and the Princess [Wittgenstein] asked me to consider their house as if it were my own. They want me to dine with them tomorrow. I asked if instead we could do it on Saturday.

As Andersen reports later on, Beaulieu was irritated by the poet’s desire to visit Liszt again so soon: he thought that Andersen should be socializing with the aristocracy, not spending all his time with the celebrated couple at Altenburg. But apparently Andersen could not help himself. He was drawn to the lively atmosphere in Liszt’s home, and much to his dismay, he no longer felt completely comfortable in the company of Weimar’s aristocratic class. Ever since the war, a growing interest in German
to a disagreement Andersen had with the baron just a few months before. Afraid political sentiments against Danes might be unfavorable in Weimar after the war, Andersen wrote to Beaulieu in June 1851 and asked if it was safe for him to visit. Offended by the question, Beaulieu wrote back and said that if Andersen were so Danish that he could only see the side of Denmark in the war, then as a Dane it would be better if he did not come to Weimar. If this were not the case, however, then he would no doubt be welcomed, as always, as “the dear, brave poet . . . with whom one does not speak about politics.” Andersen responded to Beaulieu shortly thereafter and promised never to discuss politics again: “Time will clear up everything, and I know that the Germans and the Danes will be best friends. . . . Truth and Beauty will build the bridge between us” [see Möller-Christensen, *Briefwechsel*, pp. 314–15].

41 Originally titled *Hyldemoer*, this one-act fantasy play premiered in Denmark on 1 December 1851. During Andersen’s life, the play enjoyed a total of sixty performances, but contrary to Carl Alexander’s interest in the work, it was never performed in Weimar.

42 Möller-Christensen, *Briefwechsel*, p. 169. Carl Alexander’s confirmation of Beaulieu’s friendship with Andersen is likely in response to a disagreement Andersen had with the baron just a few months before. Afraid political sentiments against Danes might be unfavorable in Weimar after the war, Andersen wrote to Beaulieu in June 1851 and asked if it was safe for him to visit. Offended by the question, Beaulieu wrote back and said that if Andersen were so Danish that he could only see the side of Denmark in the war, then as a Dane it would be better if he did not come to Weimar. If this were not the case, however, then he would no doubt be welcomed, as always, as “the dear, brave poet . . . with whom one does not speak about politics.” Andersen responded to Beaulieu shortly thereafter and promised never to discuss politics again: “Time will clear up everything, and I know that the Germans and the Danes will be best friends. . . . Truth and Beauty will build the bridge between us” [see Möller-Christensen, *Briefwechsel*, pp. 314–15].

43 “[The Altenburg] was a treasure-trove of items that Liszt had collected on his tours—including Beethoven’s Broadwood piano, the priceless death-mask of Beethoven, a writing-case that had formerly belonged to Haydn, and jewels and gold medallions received from half the crowned heads of Europe. . . . The main reception-room on the ground floor was dominated by Liszt’s Erard concert grand, while the walls were lined with his music library. A linking room contained all Liszt’s souvenirs from his Glanzzeit—Oriental rugs, mother-of-pearl tables, Turkish pipes, Russian jade, and a silver breakfast service. Pictures of the great composers adorned the walls, as well as two life-size portraits of Liszt and the well-known canvas by Ary Scheffer called *The Three Magi*, whose central figure bears the unmistakable imprint of the musician’s features. On the second floor was the music-room proper. It contained two Viennese grands [by Streicher and Bösendorfer], a spinet that had once belonged to Mozart, and a huge instrument called a ‘piano-organ.’ . . . The library had been placed in an adjoining room, and on its shelves rested many of the books he had acquired in his Paris days, by Hugo, Lamartine, Sainte-Beuve, Lamennais, and others. Also stored there was his unique collection of autographed scores by Chopin, Schumann, Beethoven, Wagner, Mozart, and dozens of composers he had met on his tours across Europe” [Walker, *Franz Liszt*, pp. 76–78].

44 “Beaulieu was not the only one displeased by Liszt’s growing dominance in Weimar. On 21 May Andersen recorded a conversation he had with Eckermann: “He told me about Liszt who lives here together with Princess Wittgenstein, and it is an open secret, he [Liszt] does great harm to the theater, refuses to perform Mozart, who is a thing of the past he says, instead Wagner and other composers of that effect” [H. C. Andersen’s *Dagbøger*, IV, 79].
man nationalism had begun to take hold in Weimar, and Andersen often sensed an increasing prejudice against Danish citizens. Andersen, for instance, no longer felt safe in Beaulieu’s home; in the guest room next to his was a German lieutenant whom he described on 23 May 1852 as “very offensive”: “During the Danish war his head was split open; today here at home he nearly fainted. He complains about the pain. He is lying in the room outside of mine. I am completely imprisoned by him, and the thought occurred to me, what if he goes crazy in the night and comes in to murder me? I can’t lock my door!”

Andersen’s fears may have been exaggerated: no one actually threatened his life during his stay in Weimar. Nevertheless, he was regularly criticized by members of the aristocracy for Denmark’s political position. On 2 June 1852, he even got into a public argument with an officer of the court over the matter.

Andersen was also discovering that Liszt and the princess were more receptive than Weimar’s aristocratic circle to the new direction his most recent tales were taking. A case in point concerns Andersen’s tale, The Shadow, a frightening, existential tale about a scholar who loses his shadow and a shadow who evolves into a man without a soul. When Andersen read the tale to Liszt and the princess on 4 June, both were “enraptured” by it. But a reading for Carl Alexander four days later, “appeared not to please.” Although this contrast in reception might at first seem inconsequential, our own reading of the tale provides insight into the division that was beginning to form between, on the one hand, Carl Alexander’s continued quest, as a patron, to promote art that glorified the human spirit and preserved the past and, on the other hand, Liszt’s desire, as an artist, to explore the sometimes-hidden essence of the human psyche and create “music of the future.” Liszt may even have recognized an element of his own artistic nature in the character of the shadow:

I have been at the Court of Poetry... I also got to know my inner self... I looked where no one could see, and I saw what no one else saw... When all is said and done, it’s a mean world. I’d never want to be human, but for the fact that it’s the thing to be... I saw... what no one was supposed to know, but what everyone was eager to know—ill of their neighbor. Had I been writing a newspaper, it would have been read... They were so afraid of me that they grew very fond of me. The professors made me a professor, the tailors gave me new clothes [I am quite well dressed], the mint-master minted money for me, and the women said I was so handsome! And so I became the man I am.

As we learn from Andersen’s diary, at three o’clock in the afternoon, on Saturday, 29 May 1852, Andersen joined Princess Wittgenstein for tea after a private visit with Liszt and lunch with Carl Alexander. The gathering was quite small—just Andersen, the princess, the “French Minister Talleyrand, a relation to the famous one,” and a Frau Schwendler and her daughter. Andersen recorded that the conversation centered around first impressions of Weimar, painting, and Andersen’s tales. But clearly, the main topic on Princess Wittgenstein’s mind was Liszt’s artistic genius:

The princess has bought in Holland a pretty painting by Schäfer of the three wise men, one of which is a portrait of Liszt. She explained to me that in A Poet’s Bazaar I had placed Liszt and Thalberg together, even though the latter had borrowed everything, and that too was something important. He [Thalberg] was flawless in what he was able to appropriate, but Liszt was the genius. I had to read again: she wanted The Nightingale, but I read The Swineherd and sensed that she was offended by the choice.

It is no surprise that Princess Wittgenstein was insulted by Andersen’s story choice. The Swineherd tells of a foolish princess who, rejecting the beautiful gifts of a prince, offers kisses to a lowly swineherd in exchange for a musical toy. When her father, the Emperor, catches her in the pigsty with the swineherd,

46 H. C. Andersen, Dagbøger, IV, 81.
47 Ibid., IV, 87.
48 Ibid., IV, 88, and IV, 91 [8 June 1852].
49 Ibid., IV, 84–85 (29 May 1852).
he expels them both from his kingdom. But they do not live happily ever after. The swineherd reveals that he is actually the prince in disguise, and after admonishing the princess for her foolish behavior, he abandons her forever. Given the social scandal surrounding the princess’s affair with Liszt and consequent abandonment of her husband, Prince Nicholas Wittgenstein, Andersen’s decision to read *The Swineherd* that day was either a thoughtless mistake or a rather cruel joke. Those listening could not have helped but identify the fate of the fictional princess with the public ostracizing of Princess Wittgenstein. Whatever the reason for his choice of story, Andersen most likely had not intended to offend his hostess in the manner that he so obviously did. As his diary entries reveal, he held the princess in the highest esteem and felt a sense of awe when seeing her in the presence of Liszt. From 31 May 1852: “He and the princess seem to me like fiery spirits blazing, burning. They can warm you up instantly, but get too close and you’ll burn. It is a complete picture to see these two fiery beings and know their story. Between the two of them [sits Maria] the quiet Mignon—that is how she seems to me.”

Apparently, Andersen was equally admired by Liszt and the princess. During a visit on 2 June 1852, the couple presented him with a special gift, “a beautiful page written in Schiller’s own hand with his name underneath.” Princess Wittgenstein then requested Andersen to read *The Nightingale* once again, and this time he indulged her. After finishing the tale she announced to all in attendance that “Liszt was the nightingale and Thalberg was the artificial bird.” She then praised Andersen for his clever tale. Andersen was no doubt put off by the princess’s interpretation of the story—it had originally been written as an idealistic tribute to Jenny Lind and the glory of “natural” music over pure virtuosity—but he was also flattered by the princess’s attempt to compliment him and refrained from correcting her.

Andersen’s diary reveals that during his visits with Liszt, he learned a great deal about Richard Wagner. Andersen did not know much of Wagner’s music before visiting Weimar in 1852. Although he had heard a performance of the overture to *Tannhäuser* in Leipzig in 1846, he had never heard a complete opera by the composer. In an effort to interest Andersen in Wagner, Liszt gave him a copy of *Lohengrin et Thanhaüser* [sic] (1851)—his study of Wagner’s early operas published the year before—along with tickets to performances of both works scheduled for the following week. Andersen accepted the gifts enthusiastically. As a poet, he already held Wagner in high esteem, and he was eager to acquaint himself with his music. But as Andersen’s diary entries after each performance reveal, his initial reaction to Wagner’s music was less than favorable. On 29 May he wrote: “There was a full house for *Tannhäuser*. The text, good; the performance on the whole better than expected. The music competent with regard to idea, but lacking in melody. What Carl Maria Weber or Mozart couldn’t have done with it!” On 5 June he wrote down a similar impression of *Lohengrin*: “*Lohengrin* is well written, and the music is grand, but without melody. A barren tree without blossoms or fruit.”

On 9 June, the day before Andersen departed Weimar, he visited Liszt and the princess a final time. As Andersen’s description of this meeting tells us, Liszt was interested in producing some of Andersen’s stage works in Weimar, and he wanted to collaborate with the poet on a set of songs: “Went to Liszt, who was more than welcoming and friendly. He entrusted me to write to Hartmann about [our opera] *The Raven*, which he would like to produce—asked me for a couple of my poems for composition, in order to link even further our names to Weimar.” En route home to Copenhagen, Andersen wrote a letter of thanks.

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51Ibid., IV, 86.
52Ibid., IV, 87.
to Liszt on 14 June 1852 and enclosed a set of poems that he thought might be appropriate for Liszt’s music:

Dear, admired Dr. Liszt!

My deepest thanks for all the kindness and friendliness you extended to me during the beautiful days in Weimar. Here are my Lieder. Choose the ones that please you best. I would be pleased with whatever musical baptism [Tönen-Taufe] they may receive.

Yours most faithfully,
H. C. Andersen

Once back in Copenhagen, however, Andersen quickly discovered that Liszt’s interest in his work was not as enthusiastic as he had hoped. When Andersen tried to contact the composer about future plans for their collaboration, he apparently received no reply. In a New Year’s Eve greeting written to Carl Alexander later that year, Andersen asked: “How is he [Liszt]? I haven’t heard a single word from him! The good Beaulieu has completely forgotten me as well.”

Carl Alexander did not respond to Andersen’s query. No doubt one reason for this was because his relations with Liszt were not at their best. Over the last year Liszt had become unhappy with his position in Weimar, most especially with his lack of power at the theater. Liszt was eager to produce more operas and concerts, and he was tiring of the dominance that poetry and spoken drama obviously had over music. After a failed performance of Wagner’s *Flying Dutchman* in February 1853, Liszt expressed his complaints in a letter to the hereditary Grand Duke:

Because of the parsimonious treatment to which music is subjected here, I consider it impossible to continue my activity in a manner worthy of the renown that its sovereigns have bequeathed on Weimar, to say nothing of the character and reputation I aim for on my own behalf. Your Royal Highness may therefore think it natural that I henceforth abstain from regular participation in a situation that remains too far below the efforts made recently to revive the Weimar theatre... I am not in a position to request—still less to demand. I have only to safeguard the honour of the art which, in this case, is blended with your service. The experience of recent years has demonstrated, even in the eyes of those least able to look ahead, how legitimate were my requests. And were I ever to desist, I would be acting in the same way as those ill-considered mediocrities whose easy and convenient acceptance of the situation destroys art.

In truth, there was little that Carl Alexander could do at the moment. The court’s finances were strained, making productions of elaborate operas almost impossible. In addition, Carl Alexander’s father, Grand Duke Carl Friedrich, had recently been ill, and this too led to instability at court. Concerned by Liszt’s remarks, Carl Alexander replied on the same day:

I have just read your letter, my dear Liszt. Accustomed to find loyalty and frankness in you, ever since I was first acquainted with you, I am delighted to have garnered fresh proof of it on this occasion. You are, I hope, just as much accustomed to finding goodwill in me, guided by sincere friendship. Therein lie the excellent conditions for collaborative work. We set ourselves to it, do we not, and we do not despair if, while we are fighting, all our desires are not realized at once in this life—which is nothing but a combat.

Liszt’s reaction to this letter is not known. If he had been considering abandoning his post in Weimar in 1853, his plans were put to a halt with the death of Grand Duke Carl Friedrich in July. Liszt was out of town when the Grand Duke died, but he rushed back on receiving the news. As Liszt later explained on 17 July 1853 in a letter to Princess Wittgenstein, Carl Alexander had welcomed him with open arms and had begun immediately to discuss plans for the future. The official inauguration of his new reign as Grand Duke would begin on Goethe’s birthday, 28 August—“a significant date” wrote Liszt, “if they really wish to keep the meaning.” It was at this point that the Grand Duke made Liszt Weimar’s arbiter of taste. “The
Word must now become Deed!” he told his Kapellmeister. Liszt wasted no time in his takeover of the city’s artistic activities.61

During these months of transition Carl Alexander did not correspond with Andersen. He failed to answer Andersen’s queries concerning Liszt and Beaulieu, and when Andersen wrote to him a second time five months later, Carl Alexander did nothing more than dash off a brief note apologizing for his silence. Andersen had not even been told about the death of Carl Friedrich; instead he had read about it in the paper. When he sent his condolences to the new Grand Duke in late July, he received another brief reply. No mention was made of plans for the future, nor was Andersen invited to the celebrations scheduled for 28 August. Only in a Christmas greeting, dated 13 December 1853, did Carl Alexander return to discussions of his plans for the future:

I am filled up with projects and endeavors. I want to build a museum: therein will be placed the beautiful, colossal statue of Goethe that we brought from Rome and that Steinhäuser62 finished, and a monument for my grandfather should be raised before that. I am also establishing a conservatory of music and the Goethe Foundation,63 which like a secret treasure has already risen to the surface of its concealing waters a couple of times. Yet another duty is this: [work on] the Wartburg is developing more and more into a wonderful whole, the purpose of which is more as the bearer of memory than as a restoration.64

III

Andersen did not visit Weimar in 1853. During his absence the divisions in taste and social etiquette that he had already sensed between Weimar’s artistic and aristocratic circles grew wider. Toward the end of the year Liszt formed the “Society of Murls,” an informal organization made up of the many young musicians who had come to Weimar over the last few years to study with him. As Alan Walker has explained, Liszt was known as “Padischa” (president) while his adherents were the “Murls.” The invented name “Murl” combined two German nouns, “Mohr” (Moor) and “Kerl” (fellow), whose inner meaning emerges from the familiar German saying “Einen Mohren kann man nicht weisswaschen” [You can’t whitewash a Moor]. Simply put, a “Murl” was one whom the Philistines, in this case Weimar’s conservative aristocratic class, could not “whitewash to their colorless ways.”65

When Andersen returned to Weimar in late June 1854, he met many of Liszt’s young Murls. No doubt he longed to be admitted into their inner circle. In effect, Liszt had become their patron: all of them received free music instruction, and many were given housing at Altenburg as well. Liszt was also a strong proponent of the Murls’ creative efforts, doing everything in his power to help further their careers. By this time, of course, Wagner’s music was seen as a touchstone for creative energy. In its broadest sense, membership in the Society of Murls meant adherence to the aesthetic ideals of what Liszt called Zukunftsmusik, the music of the future. Seeking to prove himself worthy of Liszt’s new cause, Andersen declared his allegiance to Wagner’s music on 29 May during a visit to Altenburg. As he later explained in his diary: “I was applauded because when Wagner’s overture to Tannhäuser was booed in Leipzig, I alone applauded.”66

Nevertheless, Andersen was never taken seriously by this young group of artists. During his four days in Weimar, he spent most of his time with Beaulieu and Carl Alexander. Although Danish-German politics were still a bone of contention, the Grand Duke and his wife did everything they could to make Andersen feel welcome. On the morning of Andersen’s departure, Carl Alexander asked him to submit a story to the Weimarisches Jahrbuch, a newly founded publication that he assured Andersen was “outside of politics and religion.”67 Interpreting this as a sign of continued

62The sculptor Karl Steinhäuser.
64Möller-Christensen, Briefwechsel, p. 190.
65Walker, Franz Liszt, p. 228.
66H. C. Andersens Dagbøger, IV, 155 (29 June 1854).
67Ibid., IV, 156 (1 July 1854).
support, Andersen thanked his patron and left Weimar with a renewed sense belonging.

Andersen’s place in Weimar’s artistic future, however, was anything but secure. Shortly after Andersen’s departure in 1854, Liszt concluded that his irreverent Society of Murls needed more administrative strength. With the hope of carrying his fight against the Philistines across Germany, he established the Neu-Weimar-Verein [the “New Weimar Association”]. This was a more formal organization than the Society of Murls, and it was not limited only to musical issues. Visual artists, poets, musicians, and dramatists were invited to join, and the primary goal of the association was to form a united front in Weimar against conservative tastes everywhere. According to the business papers of the Verein, the first meeting was held on 20 November 1854. Twenty-one local members attended the first meeting, six out-of-town members were listed in absentia. Liszt was elected president and Hoffmann von Fallersleben, vice-president.68 Notably absent from the membership list were Andersen, Carl Alexander, and Beaulieu. The reason for their exclusion was quite simple: this circle represented Weimar’s past, not its future. As Liszt often explained, a fight against conservative tastes meant a fight against the conventions of the past. He elaborated on this idea in 1860:

> If, when I had settled here [in Weimar] in ’48, I had wanted to ally myself with the *posthumous* party in music, to share in its hypocrisy, to embrace its prejudices, etc., nothing would have been easier for me because of my previous ties with the chief bigwigs of that school. I should certainly have won more consideration and courtesy from the outside world. The same newspapers that have taken it upon themselves to heap on me a mass of stupidities and insults would have outdone each other in praising and fêting me to the hilt, without my having to go to much trouble. . . . But such was not to be my fate; my conviction was too sincere, my faith in the present and future of art too fervent and firm, for me to be able to put up with the empty formulas of the objurgations of our pseudo-classicists, who do their utmost to proclaim that art is being ruined.69

After his visit to Weimar in 1854, Andersen returned to Copenhagen and did not contact Carl Alexander again until December. Perhaps he was waiting until he could fulfill the Grand Duke’s commission for a new story. As he explained in a letter dated 23 December: “I have only written a few small works, and one of these, a small picture, could be appropriate, I think, for the Weimar journal, the appearance of which Your Royal Highness spoke to me about and within which you also should be able to grant me a place. Here is the picture. If it appeals [to you], I would be pleased to publish it. Soon another will follow.”70 It is not known which story Andersen included with this letter. Carl Alexander, however, replied warmly on 31 December 1854:

> You are correct in calling it a picture. Similarly I call it a very successful one. It is true and simple, hence beautiful. The form is pleasing, because it presents the soul in a very enjoyable manner. In addition, it is excellent due to a charming specialty of your talent: your fairy tale character [Märchenhaftigkeit]. I will see how I can incorporate “the picture” into the *Weimarerische Jahrbuch*.71

But Andersen’s submission never appeared in the journal. Although Carl Alexander had been the one to solicit the submission, he had little editorial control of the journal. Since the foundation of the Neu-Weimar-Verein in November, control had been placed in the hands of Liszt, who appointed as editors two of his most loyal allies in Weimar, Hoffmann von Fallersleben and Oskar Schade. Maintaining the mandate of the Neu-Weimar-Verein, Fallersleben and Schade rejected Andersen’s tale, which no doubt appeared to them to be an unwelcome link to Weimar’s earlier, Philistine days.

Although Andersen was dismayed by this rejection, it did not alter his resolve to maintain a working relationship with the city’s new artistic elite. In September 1855, Andersen arrived in Weimar for an eleven-day visit, the primary purpose of which was to deliver his opera libretto, *The Raven*, to Liszt and Beaulieu.

70Möller-Christensen, *Briefwechsel*, p. 195.
71Ibid., p. 196.
On 6 September, he recorded his first meeting of the visit with Liszt:

Liszt came, and The Raven was discussed. I showed him many of the most beautiful sections. He flipped through the pages and said it was worthy, and it was decided that it would be produced. We then talked about Little Kirsten. He looked at it, found it to be fresher and now preferred it instead. A translation was needed: I offered to supply one with the help of Beaulieu. We began everything right away, on the same evening.72

Andersen and Beaulieu worked on the translation for four days straight, completing it on 9 September. Liszt was apparently happy with their work. After reading the new libretto, now entitled Klein Karin, he “sincerely promised to take care of the music and the work’s performance.”73 Klein Karin, with music by J. P. E. Hartmann, received its premiere in Weimar on 17 January 1856, and records show that reception of the opera was lukewarm. (Liszt himself was not present: he was in Vienna for a centennial celebration of Mozart’s birth.) A critic for Signale printed a laconic: “sie gefiel” (it pleased).74 In a letter to Hartmann shortly after the premiere, Andersen gave a more detailed description: “I can tell you that in Weimar all the music folk were quite pleased with the work, but the complaint has been made that the city was too small-minded to digest properly an artwork that was so new, so fresh in nature, without pepper and excessive salt.”75 Liszt wrote some kind words to Hartmann after the premiere, and Andersen mentioned this on 17 May 1856 in a letter to Carl Alexander:

I am very happy that Hartmann’s beautiful music to Klein Karin has been performed for the first time in Weimar. Liszt wrote a warm and quite pleasing letter about this tone poem [Tondichtung], which will now also be performed in Mannheim: the score has been ordered. Since this music becomes more and more pleasurable each time one hears it, I really hope that it will gradually pave the way. The folk character of the melody, which Hartmann showed so superbly, gives the whole work its meaning.76

In the same letter, Andersen made it clear to Carl Alexander that his ties to Denmark, and his recognition there, were growing ever stronger. In his response, Carl Alexander praised the poet’s touching description of artistic life in Copenhagen, explaining that Weimar had also begun to take on a national character. He then invited Andersen to revisit Weimar, to witness the city’s thriving artistic culture. Andersen arrived in June 1856 for a brief, five-day visit. This time, however, instead of staying with Beaulieu or Carl Alexander, he checked into the Erbprinz Hotel. As Andersen relates in his diary, he was nervous about seeing the Grand Duke again, especially since their correspondence had fallen off over the last year. Much to his relief, however, the Grand Duke welcomed him with open arms: “The Grand Duke hugged me and kissed me on both cheeks. Tears came to my eyes. It occurred to me that I, the poor shoemaker’s and washerwoman’s son, was being kissed by the Czar of Russia’s nephew.”77

Andersen’s diary entries from this visit reflect that the city’s artistic culture was now split into two distinct factions: those connected to the aristocracy and concerned primarily with preserving the literary tradition of Weimar’s golden age; and those surrounding Liszt’s “new Weimar” centered primarily on the “music of the future.” During Andersen’s short stay, he socialized almost exclusively with the “old” faction, whose contempt for Liszt and the changes that he had wrought was no secret. On 26 June, after spending an evening at Ettersberg with the royal family and friends, Andersen recorded the main topic of discussion: “Schobart talked about Liszt, that he was no blessing for Weimar or the duke; talked about the princess, who has now been wiped out in Russia, without rank, without property.”78

On the last day of his visit, 27 June 1856,
Andersen decided that he should call on Liszt at least once before departing. But when he went to Altenburg, he was told that Liszt was out taking a walk. Instead of waiting for the composer’s return, Andersen made his way back into town and spent the afternoon gossiping with Beaulieu’s wife:

Talked with Frau Beaulieu about [Liszt]. The relationship with the Princess Wittgenstein is a scandal. She has not been able to renew her Russian passport and has been cast out of Russia. The daughter, who apparently is now under the protection of the Dowager Grand Duchess, has everything, and so the mother must now live off [her]. Consequently she refuses to leave her [mother], and this is why the engagement with Talleyrand was broken off. The Dowager Grand Duchess gave [Marie] a room at the castle with Duchess Fritsch and said that she could visit her mother as often as she like, but the mother is not allowed, in her current status, to socialize at court. “Where my mother cannot come then neither will I!” said the young girl, and when lightning struck the old castle where Duchess Frisch [sic] lived, [Marie] ran to her mother and remained there. That was nice of the daughter. Liszt says: “I do indeed want to marry the princess—she wants that as well—but we are not allowed to do so. What should I do then? I cannot leave her alone, now that she has nothing! If it becomes too oppressive for us, we’ll travel to India. I can easily support a wife there with my playing.”

Now when Johanna Wagner was recently in Weimar, Liszt was in ecstasy. The princess grew jealous and said horrible things, that she wanted to hang herself. She used the Princess Marie, sending her to kneel down before Liszt and say: “Don’t make my mother so unhappy! Don’t leave her!” Poor little princess. As they say, she is growing up among musicians.

The opening line of Andersen’s diary entry for 27 June, his final day in Weimar, shows how happy he was to be making his escape from the city: “What news this day brings!—Departure!” Unlike his earlier visits to Weimar in the 1840s, when he had lamented leaving the city he called his “second home,” his visit in 1856 was characterized by bad weather, bothersome stomach aches, and a recognition that he was no longer an esteemed guest at court. Indeed, Andersen’s correspondence with the Grand Duke over the next year reveals that his final visit to Weimar, in September 1857, was made under duress. Carl Alexander had scheduled a centennial celebration of his grandfather’s birth for the first week of September, and he wanted Andersen to participate. Andersen at first responded to the invitation on 9 August, while visiting friends in Dresden. While he knew that the Grand Duke “would always feel friendly” toward him, he explained that he had no time for a visit: “The Royal Theater begins its season on the first of September, and I have business that I definitely must be there for! To come to Weimar every year—I was there last year and the years before—could easily cause one to grow tired of me. Hence it is much better to be needed and not to become too intrusive.”

As might be expected, an insulted Carl Alexander sent back an angry missive on 16 August 1857, demanding Andersen’s presence at the festivities:

You wrote to me on the 9th of this month that “you know: I will always feel friendly towards you.” How is it, — if I may ask—that you know this so well? And who told you that it will always remain that way? Life is grounded on reciprocity, that is on [giving] reciprocal access into [each other’s] character. Whoever does not do this for the other one, loses the relationship to him. This seems to have been your intention. When you corresponded with me regularly, you knew that it was important to me, because otherwise I would not have answered you. But now you write no more. You know your presence is dear to me, and yet you do not come. You know my wish is to see you at the September festival in Weimar, and you send me excuses in place of notification of your arrival. And now, in addition, you assure me that I will always feel friendly towards you. I will not always feel friendly, I tell you, if you continue to treat me like this, and if you do not come to Weimar the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th of September. This festival is of far greater importance than the annual, recurring opening of your Copenhagen theater, and your business with it, believe me, can be put off for six days. Therefore I await you in Weimar, for God’s sake. Otherwise I will declare war against you.

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79Ibid., IV, 215–16 (27 June 1856).
80H. C. Andersens Dagbøger, IV, 215.
81Møller-Christensen, Briefwechsel, p. 208.
82Ibid., p. 209.
Andersen quickly acquiesced to the Grand Duke’s “invitation,” and he made it clear in his response that the final day of the festivities, scheduled for 5 September, would be especially important to him:

In The Fairy Tale of My Life I remarked that the 5th of September is a meaningful day for me. Every year I celebrate it in tranquility. On the 5th of September I came to Copenhagen for the first time, a poor child. That was when my fight and struggle began. On the 5th of September, coincidentally, I first crossed the Alps into Italy, and there through [my novel] The Improvisatore, I founded my international reputation as a poet. . . . On the 25th anniversary of my arrival in Copenhagen, I celebrated the occasion at the table of my beloved King Christian VIII. If I may say so, the king stood by me then as a friend, sympathetic and good, [and] spoke of [my] achievements and enduring reputation. Now I shall also spend my tranquil celebration once with you, my dear, noble Grand Duke, with you, whom I revere more than you can imagine. It will be a new pleasure for me—a time to remember.83

Andersen arrived in Weimar on the evening of 2 September 1857, just in time for the festivities that were scheduled to begin the following day. The first event took place in the royal vault. At six o’clock in the morning, the court and all invited guests assembled around the tomb of the old grand duke, where they decorated it with flowers and said a prayer. At nine o’clock a thanksgiving service was held in the Herder church, followed by a festive procession to the Fürstenplatz, where Carl Alexander laid the foundation stone for a statue to his grandfather. A eulogy was offered and the ceremony concluded with a performance of “Weimars Volkslied,” a new anthem composed by Liszt for the royal family. An evening of entertainment in the Court Theater, featuring works by Goethe and Schiller, brought the day’s festivities to an end.

The next day, 4 September, was the highlight of the festival. Early in the afternoon, a statue dedicated to the poet Wieland was unveiled, followed by a second performance of Liszt’s new anthem. Shortly thereafter, guests were invited to a square outside the theater. Here a crowd of onlookers gathered, while members of the royal family took their places on a platform in front of two large, draped statues. At a pre-arranged signal, Carl Alexander approached the statues and cut the cords holding the veil, revealing two shining bronze figures of Weimar’s greatest poets, Goethe and Schiller. According to an eye witness, the crowd burst into spontaneous cheers that one “never heard the like of again.”84 Andersen was also moved by the ceremony:

When the veil fell from the statues of these two masters, I saw one of those acts of fate that seem poetically intended. A white butterfly flew over the heads of Goethe and Schiller, as if not knowing upon which of them it should alight—a symbol of immortality. After a short flight about, it rose in the clear sunshine and vanished. I told this little incident to the Grand Duke, and to Goethe’s widow and Schiller’s son.85

That evening works by Goethe and Schiller were again performed in the theater.

When Andersen awoke on 5 September, he no doubt anticipated something would be said officially about his own contributions to Weimar, for he had pointedly explained to Carl Alexander the symbolic importance the day held for him. But neither Andersen nor his work were mentioned. Instead, the day was dominated by a large concert not only conducted by Liszt but also featuring a selection of his works. At a lecture given before the concert, Liszt described the event as “a dogmatic display of Zukunftsmusik.”86

Andersen was put off both by this celebration and by the implications of Liszt’s speech—along with the music itself. He left the theater directly after the performance, avoiding the party at Altenburg, and went back to his room, confiding to his diary: “[Liszt’s music] was wild.

84Mit Livs Eventyr, in H. C. Andersen’s Samlede Skrifter, vol. 1, supplement, p. 20. A similar description is found in Andersen’s diary: H. C. Andersen’s Dagbøger, IV, 286 [4 September 1857].
85Franz Liszt’s Briefe, III, 97.
melodious, and turbid. At times there was a crash of cymbals. When I first heard it, I thought a plate had fallen down. I went home tired. What a damned sort of music.”

He wrote a more detailed description the same evening in a letter home to his close friend, Henriette Hanck: “I read [your letter] over again in the theatre, as otherwise the music would have killed me. Everything was Liszt. I could not follow this wildness—this, as I think, thoughtless composition. They played with the cymbals, and I thought a plate had dropped. But the audience was in raptures, and it rained wreaths! It is a strange world!” Andersen left Weimar the following day, never to return again. As he later explained in The Fairy Tale of My Life, he was unsympathetic to the direction that Liszt’s music was taking:

Liszt composed the music for the celebration at the theater: it brought out a storm of applause, and he was called out. It did not move me. . . . It was like wave after wave of dissonances that rise to form a harmony, but it did not move me. I felt vexed with myself that I could not respond as the others did. [It was] unpleasantly embarrassed about Liszt. . . . The next day he invited me to dinner. He received a company of his friends—all certainly admirers. I felt that I could not honestly fall in with the common applause. It grieved me, and I formed a hasty resolve to travel the same day from Weimar.

Andersen had a ticket for a performance of Tannhäuser that Liszt was scheduled to conduct on 6 September, but he did not remain in town long enough to use it. Unable to bear another moment of Liszt and his fawning admirers, he bade farewell to Carl Alexander (who begged him in vain to spend a day with him at Wartburg) and took a one o’clock train to Cassel. Andersen apparently did not inform Liszt of his early departure, and he never saw the musician again.

IV

Although Andersen’s departure from Weimar in 1857 marked the end of his relations with Liszt, his association with Carl Alexander continued for several years. Perhaps in an effort to explain his sudden departure from Weimar, and his consequent rejection of Liszt’s Zukunftsmusik, Andersen wrote the fairy tale The Pepperman’s Nightcap en route back to Copenhagen and mailed it to the Grand Duke shortly thereafter. Carl Alexander had always advised Andersen to use his tales to express his deepest anxieties, and in this case he obviously followed that advice. Although the story has multiple levels of meaning, the basic narrative concerns a “pepperman” (the Danish nickname for an old bachelor) named Anthony, who lives alone in a small hut in Copenhagen and sells spices. Weary from a life of hard work and heartbreak, he lies in his cold cot, crying into his woolen nightcap and thinking of happier days. In his youth, Anthony lived in Eisenach, the son of a wealthy merchant. At that time he was in love with the mayor’s daughter, a brave girl named Molly, who played at the foot of “Venus Mountain” and was never afraid, as was Anthony, of “Lady Halle” who tempted “the noble knight, Tannhäuser.”

Lady Halle in [Venus] Mountain was reputed to be beautiful, but her beauty, so one said, was an ominous, seductive beauty. The most beautiful was Saint Elisabeth, the patron saint of the land, whose good deeds, known through sagas and legends, had sanctified so many places. A painting of the pious princess hung in the church above a silver lamp. But Molly did not resemble her at all.

In their youth Anthony and Molly planted an
apple seed, and after several months, two green leaves sprouted out.

“They are Molly and I,” said Anthony. “How delightful they are, and so unique!”

Soon a third leaf appeared.

“Who does that stand for?” thought Anthony. And then came another and another. Day after day, and week after week, until the plant became a tree.⁹²

Eventually, the tree produced two apples, one for Molly and one for Anthony. The future seemed secure, until fate took a turn for the worse. Molly went away to live in Weimar, while Anthony was forced to move to Copenhagen. Anthony never forgot his love for Molly (which was like that of “Tristan and Isolde”), and he pined for her for three long years. When he finally earned enough money to travel to Weimar,

He received a hearty welcome, a glass full of wine, pleasant company, grand company, a cozy room and a good bed. Still, his reception was not what he had expected. He could not comprehend his own feelings, nor the feelings of others. But it is easy to understand! A person can be welcomed into a house or family without becoming one of them. . . . This is what Anthony felt when Molly spoke to him.

“I am a straightforward girl,” she said. “I will tell you that myself. Many things have changed since we were children together; everything is different, both inwardly and outwardly.”⁹³

Realizing that he was no longer the center of Molly’s life, Anthony left Weimar in anger, never to return. Several years later, when passing through Eisenach, he noticed, much to his surprise, that the apple tree that he had planted with Molly was still flourishing and bearing fruit. Only a single branch had been broken off. It lay dead and barren on the ground. At the sight of the tree, Anthony’s anger subsided, and in the years that followed he looked back fondly on his early days with Molly. At the story’s end, Anthony lies on his deathbed, alone and forgotten.

Now and then he seemed to feel sensations of hunger and thirst—Yes, he felt them! But no one came to take care of him. No one wanted to come. He thought of those who had suffered from starvation, of Saint Elisabeth when she wandered the earth . . . that highly esteemed lady who visited the poorest villages, bringing hope and relief to the sick. Her pious deeds filled his mind with light. In this way, the saint lived in the thoughts of poor Anthony. She was a living reality who stood before him at the foot of his bed. He wiped his brow and looked into her kind eyes. The fragrance of roses spread through the room, mingled with the sweet smell of apples. He saw the branches of the apple tree spreading above him. It was the tree that he and Molly had planted as little children.

The fragrant leaves of the tree fell upon him and cooled his burning brow, to his parched lips they seemed like refreshing bread and wine. And as they rested on his breast, a peaceful calm stole over him. . . .

“I will sleep now,” he whispered to himself. “Sleep will do me good. In the morning I will be upon my feet again, strong and well. Glorious! Wonderful! The apple tree that was planted in love, now appears before me in heavenly beauty.”

And he slept.⁹⁴

The next morning, Anthony was found dead in his hut, clutching the woolen nightcap. “Where were the tears he had shed? . . . They were still in the nightcap. Such tears can never be washed out, even when the nightcap is forgotten.”⁹⁵ After Anthony’s burial, the nightcap is passed around, from one owner to another. No one keeps the cap for long, because each person who puts it on is tormented by painful visions. “The old thoughts and dreams” of Anthony still remained inside. Anthony was gone, but his memories lived on.

Carl Alexander had little to say about Andersen’s tale. In his letters he offered a few indifferent compliments, but did not mention the story’s symbolic meaning. It is generally assumed that in the character of Anthony, Andersen portrayed himself, while Molly no doubt represented the Grand Duke. Those familiar with Liszt’s output during the late 1850s might suggest that the presence of Saint

⁹²Ibid., p. 150.
⁹³Ibid., p. 153.
⁹⁴Ibid., pp. 156–57.
⁹⁵Ibid., p. 157.
Elisabeth represents the composer. Liszt was working on a new oratorio, *The Legend of St. Elisabeth*, during Andersen’s last visit to Weimar, and it is tempting to view Elisabeth and “Lady Venus” as symbols for Liszt and Wagner. The apple tree is no doubt a metaphor for the artistic community that blossomed in Weimar in the 1840s. Although it was Andersen who had originally planted the seeds for a “New Athens” with Carl Alexander, Liszt eventually became the protector of the tree when Andersen’s connections, like the lone branch, were broken off.

Andersen never gave a formal explanation of *The Pepperman’s Nightcap*, but he alluded to the story’s inherent meaning in a letter to Carl Alexander on 22 May 1858. Frustrated by the Grand Duke’s refusal to comment on the story, Andersen sent a translation of a review that had been published in Copenhagen—one that obviously pleased him: “*The Pepperman’s Nightcap* is filled with a deep melancholy, in which the poet cautions us about the insecurity of all earthly hopes, and points to renunciation as a balsam. For [renunciation] alone makes it possible for us to tolerate life and to never give up the idealism of youth.”

Until now, this explanation of *The Pepperman’s Nightcap*, as a renunciation of earthly hopes in the search for idealism, has been overlooked. Instead, scholars have interpreted this tale as little more than a story of unrequited love. Yet the tale has a deeper, intrinsic meaning that stretches beyond the confines of personal affection. Although the friendship shared by Andersen and the Grand Duke is mirrored in the characters of Anthony and Molly, the prominent allusions to music by Wagner and Liszt, portrayed in the characters of Lady Venus and St. Elizabeth, imply an aesthetic message that has little to do with Andersen’s personal feelings toward his patron. *The Pepperman’s Nightcap* represents the final chapter in this article’s story of the poet, the pianist, and the patron. Written as an allegory concerning the foundation and evolution of an artistic community in the nineteenth century, *The Pepperman’s Nightcap* describes Andersen’s involvement with the foundation of Carl Alexander’s Weimar and the city’s eventual transformation under the leadership of Liszt.

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96“*In 1854 the Austrian painter Moritz von Schwind completed a series of frescoes based on the life of St. Elisabeth of Hungary*” in the halls of Wartburg Castle. Inspired by the saint’s life story and connection to Weimar, Liszt began work on a dramatic choral-orchestral work. “*In 1855 he commissioned Otto Roquette to supply a libretto, the first parts of which he received in 1856 and began to set in 1857*” [Derek Watson, *Liszt* [New York: Schirmer, 1989], p. 105].
