

The Power of “Faerie” :

Hans Christian Andersen, His Reception, Influence and Appeal¹

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要 約

「妖精」の力：ハンズ・クリスチャン・アンデルセンの人気、影響そして魅力

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最近の批評理論の成果によって、児童文学は特に有害な影響を受けている。最も愛されている児童古典文学でさえひどく批判されてきている。ハンズ・クリスチャン・アンデルセンの童話は、これらの批判されている古典の1つである。たとえば、ジョン・ゴールドウエイトは、アンデルセンの童話には、人をいららさせるようなアンデルセン自身の人格があまりにもでていて、アンデルセンの作品は、英文学に貢献する価値が全くなく、今日読む価値がないと主張している。この論文は、これらの主張を検討し、反論するものである。

アンデルセンの著作に関する評価は、19世紀後半の英国で徐々に低落を経てきているのは確かである。しかしながら、このことは概ね文化的要因によって説明でき、作品は広く読まれ続けた。アンデルセンは、ディケンズ、ワイルド、J. M. バリーといった、種類の異なる作家たちに影響を与える程の多様な文学的技術を持っており、C. S. ルイスのような、より最近の童話作家に影響を与え続けている。「古い家」や「影」といったあまり知られていない童話は、特に影響力を及ぼしていることが判明した。その上、アンデルセンの最も優れている童話は、大人にも子どもにも力強さを与えるものである。「マッチ売りの少女」のように、結びが死で終わっている童話でさえも、慰安を与え、靈感を与え、J. R. R. トールキンが考えているファンタジー（幻想的作品）に要求される最も高い水準の条件を満たしている。

近頃の批判的な意見の風潮にもかかわらず、このような理由から、アンデルセンは英国国内だけでなく、世界中で今日読まれ続け、そして読まれるに値する。

Ever since Jacqueline Rose's *The Case of Peter Pan: Or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984; a seminal book which Macmillan reissued in 1993, as part of its New Cultural Studies Series), there has been a proliferation of attacks on the great classics of children's literature, indeed, on the whole genre of children's literature. Rose rubbishes *Peter Pan* as "one of the most fragmented and troubled works in the history of children's fiction to date" (10). Targets chosen by other critics include *The Water Babies*, shown by Claudia Nelson to be "constantly contradicting its own premises" (151) and *Alice in Wonderland*, in which James Kincaid finds a "bitter exasperation" (294) and "failed magic" (295). If anything, Hans Christian Andersen was even more popular in his own time than the authors of the above-mentioned works. "And Hans Xtian Andersen have you read him? I am wild about him having only just discovered that delightful delicate fanciful creature," wrote Thackeray in a letter of 2 January 1847 (*Letters* 2: 263). Yet Andersen too has fallen under the hatchet. In fact, his fairy tales were being deconstructed before deconstruction was even heard of. It has already become a commonplace of literary criticism that elements of the author's own "boastful, anxious, vain, demanding, sulky, weepy, and accusatory" personality permeate his tales (Goldthwaite 64). G. K. Chesterton was once able to say that the Danish author's stories "were so popular in England as almost to have become English" (342); but these stories have now become distasteful enough for the distinguished critic and biographer Humphrey Carpenter to claim just the opposite: "Andersen's particular form of introspection does not seem to have struck a chord in the British literary imagination" (*Secret Gardens* 4). Such criticisms are both ill-founded and undeserved.

It is true that Andersen's unique and difficult temperament bothered some of his British friends from the very start. Dickens, for example, was only too glad when this eccentric Dane left his home after a prolonged visit. In the departed guest's room, he stuck a card with the words, "Hans Andersen slept in this room for five weeks—which seemed to the family AGES!" (qtd. in Ackroyd 782). But during those early years, this in no way detracted from the popularity of the tales themselves. Here, therefore, I would like to remove the emphasis on Andersen's personality. I will focus instead on the larger cultural factors that contributed to his gradual fall from grace. Then I will argue that, despite this fall, Andersen did in fact have a tremendous impact on "the British literary imagination," among writers both for adults and children. Finally, I would like to explain the enduring power of Andersen's particular brand of "faerie," or, as G. K. Chesterton called it, that "whole fairyland in one head and under one nineteenth-century top hat" (342).

Principal among the factors that adversely affected Andersen's reputation were the ideology shared by his early translators into English; the relegation of British children's literature to a lower status than literature for adults; and the gradual loss of interest in some of Andersen's preoccupations.

It is widely agreed that Andersen's first translators did immeasurable harm to his literary reputation. However, the root cause of this has not been fully explained. It was not just a matter of linguistic incompetence, or even of sentimentalizing the tales to make them more appealing to the Victorian audience. It was more a matter of what was then thought suitable for children in Britain. The first of his translators was Mary Howitt, a Quaker children's writer who had learned just a little Danish during a stay in Heidleberg. Katherine Briggs, a highly respected scholar in the field of fairy tale, has called Howitt "doubly distinguished," because of her authorship of the well-known nursery rhyme, "The Spider and the Fly," and her introduction of Andersen to the British (179). However, Howitt's moralistic little poem was parodied as early as 1865, in *Alice in Wonderland* (see Gray 80), and her collection of Andersen's *Wonderful Stories for Children* (1846) has been severely criticized by Andersen's principal biographer, Elias Bredsdorff. Worse than Howitt's unintentional mistakes as a translator were her deliberate alterations, calculated to bring the stories into Britain in the bland, inoffensive, didactic form of which she herself was such a staunch proponent (HCA 333-34).

Since Howitt set the tone for subsequent translations, it is worth considering the background to this secret "editing." Howitt's own childhood, which she wrote about in *My Own Story or The Autobiography of a Child* (1845), was typical of its time. It included, for instance, a "stern, grave" grandfather (10); "dark and dismal" cellars under the house where she and her sister were "threatened with confinement" (11); and "not one single boy acquaintance." Boys, she adds, seemed to them a strange species, "with which it was hardly creditable, and by no means desirable, to have anything to do..." (21). The strict standards which she had been brought up to accept went straight into Howitt's own writing. For example, her short story, "Industry and Honesty Rewarded" (1861), is just what its title implies: a piece of old-fashioned Penny Tract indoctrination. The heroine, a poor widow whose only child disappears, is instructed by a priest to endure her sufferings as a means to acquiring virtue and "everlasting joy" (81). The only concession to the age is that a Victorian success story is then added, as a further incentive to virtue: the widow is "rewarded" right here on earth when her son, now a wealthy baron, is restored to her.

This didactic tale, with its message already fully contained in its title, is quite different from anything Andersen ever produced. In fact, it can usefully be contrasted with a tale which Andersen wrote about eight years earlier. In "A Good for Nothing" (1853), Andersen too features a single parent. But this mother is an abandoned mistress, whose son is therefore illegitimate. Struggling to support him, this industrious woman has taken in not only washing but also alcohol. If the "virtue" in this story is not clear-cut, neither is the "reward": hard work, and news of her former lover's death, send the mother to a premature death, and burial in a pauper's grave. As for the son, his fortunes do rise sharply when his father's identity becomes known; he is simply handed over to a respectable family, to train as a mechanic. Reunion of parent and child takes the subtle form of a friend's reassuring the son that his dead mother was not, after all, a good-for-nothing. On the contrary, says the friend, God knows her goodness, which only the wicked world has

failed to recognize. Thus the title of the story turns out to be ironic, and Andersen's piety is spiked with bitter social satire. Whether the writer was thinking here of his own mother and his own struggles is beside the point (Andersen himself claimed that the story concerned another child altogether [Notes 1079]). Much more important are the unflinching realism and moral complexity of the tale, which make it far more impressive than Howitt's.

It is hard to imagine how Howitt could have smoothed out a story with an alcoholic mother at its heart. But she was not required to try. By then, she had fallen out with Andersen (see *HCA* 190-1). "A Good for Nothing" was among a group of tales translated instead by Anne S. Bushby, whose single book of poetry (*Poems*, 1876) was brought out later, by the same publisher (Richard Bentley). Judging by the quality of Bushby's verse, any improvement in translation is likely to have been slight. In fact, Dickens himself criticized Bushby's translation of one of Andersen's full-length works (*HA and CD* 113). Bresdorff's silence on Bushby and some other translators should not, therefore, be taken as endorsing their efforts. Rather, their failings seem to have been overshadowed by those of another, even more influential translator. As early as 1846, Caroline Peachey had prepared an English translation entitled *Danish Fairy Legends and Tales* for another publisher, William Pickering. It is Peachey who earns Bresdorff's worst censure.

Again, this was not simply a matter of poor translation skills, or of cheapening the sentiments in the stories. The fundamental cause was the ideological background which predisposed Peachey to adapt Andersen's work to Victorian standards of writing for children. In a memoir of the author which Peachey added to the second edition in 1852, she romanticizes both Andersen's own early hardships and later success, insisting condescendingly that "even in the atmosphere of the courts he has preserved the heart of a peasant" (xxiii), and commending the tales to her readers as having, "for the most part, a healthful, religious feeling, which may well accord with the more serious thoughts of our holy-day" (xi). Here is the same mix of moral and religious superiority which distinguished not only Howitt but almost the whole children's book industry in early Victorian Britain.

If anything, Andersen was now being served even worse by his English translators. Unlike Howitt, who together with her husband produced 180 or so works for children, Peachey was not even an established children's writer. Her wordiness, and weakness for choosing long words where shorter ones would have been better, can be seen by comparing almost any passage in her translation of Andersen to its equivalent in a modern translation. For example, where Reginald Spink's recent version of "The Ugly Duckling" (1844) runs: "He [the duckling] felt really happy about all the trouble and hardship he had been through..." (213),² Peachey's runs pompously: "The good creature felt himself really elevated by all the trouble and adversity he had experienced ..." (n.pag.). And of course, like Howitt, Peachey silently censors anything in the original which does *not* "accord with the more serious thoughts of our holy-day." Her version of "The Flying Trunk" (1838), for instance, has the merchant's son kissing not the sleeping princess, but her *hand*, and at end of the couple's short wooing scene, Andersen's charming reference to "the stork, which brings sweet little babies" (trans. Spink 139) is replaced by Peachey's

dull and purposely vague "many other such-like things he told her" (n.pag.). These are small examples, but the cumulative effect is to take the freshness and edge off a whole *oeuvre*.

Peachey did go on to produce two children's works of her own, *Casimir: The Little Exile* (1867) and *Kirstin's Adventures* (1871). By then she had managed to achieve more of the "colloquial and pleasant style" which was at last being demanded of children's writers (qtd. in *Catalogue* 23), particularly in the dialogue. But the exoticism of these works barely disguises their dullness, and they are long out of print. Unfortunately, her early heavy-handed bowdlerizations of Andersen have been the chief form in which both she and Andersen have come down to the British public. Collections of Andersen's tales based on Peachey's translations were still being published in the 1970s; incredibly, her version of "The Snow Queen" (1845) was produced as a separate title by the Andersen Press as recently as 1993. In this way, Andersen's literary reputation in the English-speaking world continues to be undermined by translators who were both incapable of being faithful to the letter of his original work, and (even worse) unwilling to be faithful to its spirit.

Still, there was a certain fey quality about Andersen's imagination (nicely suggested by Thackeray's words "delightful delicate fanciful"), which even the worst translation could not obscure. A famous cartoon of Andersen came out in *Punch* on 10 January 1857, entitled "Homage to Hans Christian Andersen"; and the affectionate message under it, purporting to be from a child, suggests that his stories were more welcome in the British nurseries of the period than those of the Brothers Grimm. Ironically, in the long run, this too worked to Andersen's disadvantage.

It is well known that the Romantic poets (especially Wordsworth and Coleridge), and novelists like Dickens and Thackeray, gradually over-rode the objections of John Locke and the stricter Evangelicals, and persuaded Victorian parents to let fairy tales into the nursery (e.g. see Watson 14 ff.). Some women novelists like Mrs Wood and Charlotte Yonge, inheriting the same prejudice which caused Howitt and Peachey to 'retell' Andersen, continued to find opportunities in their works to criticize fairy tales. Little by little, however, the need for children's imaginations to be stimulated in this way was recognized.

Yet even well into the twentieth century British educationists were still saying that the Grimms were unsuitable for children: "The traditional fairy-tales, particularly Grimm's tales, are not suitable for junior children, for the frightening elements are sometimes very strong" (Tudor-Hart 134). On the other hand, Andersen's greater charm and the relative absence of gory episodes in his more literary productions was in itself a problem. For, as the special needs of children were increasingly acknowledged, as educational reform gathered pace, and as children's writers began to draw up the parameters of their art, the line between children's and adult's literature became stricter in Britain. The "young person" who was so much in the novelist's mind from Samuel Richardson onwards was now being catered for by a whole different literary industry, characterized by

just the kind of qualities shown by Howitt and Peachey. This is something that still infuriated C. S. Lewis about a hundred years later: "children read only to enjoy," he wrote in 1958; "juvenile taste is simply human taste" (40-41). Yet, inevitably, a late Victorian author who could be labelled as a children's writer, and whose books could safely be given as prizes at Sunday School, was no longer considered suitable for adults.

At that time, of course, very few readers would have realized the extent to which Andersen's translators had been *forcing* his work into this category. And as we have seen, even after the more faithful translations had started appearing, critics like Briggs were still ignorantly applauding the earlier ones. It was this kind of ignorance that caused Andersen to be not only "pushed ... into the nursery" (*HCA* 9), but more or less locked up there.

There was another problem. Unlike the Grimms, Andersen did not set out to collect folklore; from the start, he was working first and foremost with his own imagination. As a result, he had some favorite preoccupations. Among them were child death, sibling attachment, and lovesickness. Like the mother's difficulties (including the alcoholism) in "A Good for Nothing," these can all be traced back to his own life. This is neither surprising nor reprehensible. The same can be said of any artist and his themes. Indeed, the whole industry of literary biography has grown up from this premise. But, as in the case of "A Good for Nothing," there were probably other sources besides his own personal experience. For Andersen's preoccupations were widely shared with his early readers. However, and perhaps inevitably, the correspondence between his own sensibility and that of the age as a whole gradually began to wane. In other words, and even in his own lifetime, some of his stories became dated.

"The Story of a Mother" (1847) now seems one of the most dated. This is because it belongs to the period of high infant mortality rates, when bereaved parents were consoled with the idea that early death has spared their child from the sins and sufferings of the world. The sorrowing mother in this story makes her way at great cost to "Death's big glass-house" (trans. Spink 333), only to decide in the end that the risks of misery on earth are so great that her little son should after all be given over to Death. The piece was included in *A Christmas Greeting to My English Friends* (1847), one of two volumes dedicated to Dickens, and Dickens would no doubt have approved of it. After all, he had voiced very similar sentiments when consigning Little Nell to death in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), only a few years before. As for Andersen, he particularly congratulated himself on "The Story of a Mother" and another story about child death, "for they have given many grief-stricken mothers consolation and courage" (Notes 1084). But as child mortality rates in Britain decreased, and religious piety too, such stories found a less sympathetic audience there; like Dickens's treatment of Little Nell's death, they were increasingly criticized for sentimentality. One cannot blame this on Andersen's translators.

Similarly, as families grew smaller, and the cloistering of large bands of children in upstairs nurseries became a thing of the past, the subject of sibling attachment also ceased to have a special appeal. Here, the downtrodden third brother of the true folktale

would prove to be a more enduring configuration, suggesting as it does the rivalry with the two powerful parents that every child is liable to experience to some degree (see Bettelheim 106). However, Andersen only took nine of his many stories from the folk tradition, and of these only one ("Clod-Poll," alternatively entitled "Simple Simon" or "Jack the Dullard" [1855]) has such a configuration. Elsewhere, as Bredsdorff says, he tends to idealize the brother-and-sister relationship (*HCA* 17)—although the example Bredsdorff gives is not very good, since Kay and Gerda in "The Snow Queen" are not brother and sister at all, but the children of neighbouring families.

A better example would be "The Wild Swans" (1838), the story of selfless Eliza who risks pain and death to release her eleven brothers, who have been turned into swans by their wicked step-mother. She must gather nettles in the graveyard to weave into special shirts for them, without explaining why she is doing it. This is, in fact, one of Andersen's nine folk tales; however, as he himself said, even these tales were told in his own way (Preface 1070), and Bredsdorff explains the ending here is all Andersen's (*HCA* 310). The girl succeeds in the task of transforming her brothers, but only when she is on the point of being burnt to death as a witch. Andersen describes how she is then surrounded by innumerable roses, which blossom magically from the bonfire beneath her. There is a religious element here, especially in the white rose that shines above her like a star. However, the point of this description is not just to draw attention to her purity, but to glorify the sisterly love which almost turns her into a martyr.

It was exactly this kind of devotion, whether towards a brother or another man, which was expected and even demanded of the Victorian "Angel in the House." Even the motif of sewing, so symbolic of women's "proper" activities, is typical: little Polly in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853) fits the pattern when she too gets sore fingers from hemming a handkerchief for her widowed father. At first, even when there was a tendency to break away from this pattern, the impulse to martyrdom was still there. Thus George Eliot's Maggie Tulliver, who hates to do patchwork, actually dies trying to rescue her beloved brother Tom from a flood in *The Mill on the Floss* (1860). But again, as the reign wore on, and the figure of the more assertive "New Woman" emerged in Britain, this kind of self-sacrifice began to seem not beautiful and noble, but positively unhealthy.

Stories in which Andersen expresses hopeless romantic yearning through female characters came to be just as out of tune with the later Victorian sensibility as his stories of early death or idealized siblings.

An example here is "The Rose Elf" (1839), which tells a story similar to that of Keats's poem, "Isabella, or The Pot of Basil," in which a young woman mourns over her murdered lover, and keeps his head in a plant-pot. (Andersen wrote that his plot came "from an Italian folksong" [Notes 1073]; the ultimate source would have been Boccaccio's *Decameron*.) In Andersen's version, jasmine blossoms grow from the plant, which is watered by the young woman's tears. Between them, the rose elf and the little spirits which inhabit these blossoms avenge the crime and reveal the perpetrator, but only after the poor girl's death of a broken heart. The fairy elements help to distract the reader from this episode, but, as Keats had found after composing his own poetic version, such a nar-

rative allowed for too much “mawkishness” (qtd. in Gittings 180).

This kind of tale was less likely to be criticized during the period when the patriarchal idea of a “weaker sex,” which is subject to invalidism and nervous disorders, flourished. Evidence of such an attitude to women is found in the heroines of major Victorian novels from *Wuthering Heights* (1847) to *Daniel Deronda* (1876), and even afterwards. But it was challenged with increasing success, as can be seen in *Daniel Deronda* itself, when George Eliot’s Gwendolen Harleth determines not to pine over Deronda’s marriage to another woman, but to recover from her disappointment and live usefully in spite of it. Against such a background of cultural change, it is easy to see why stories like “The Rose Elf” went out of favour.

Thus, even as early as mid-century, vitriolic attacks foreshadowing John Goldthwaite’s began to appear in Britain. Howitt herself was perhaps the first to dismiss him as an “egotist” (qtd. in *HA and CD* 112). Andersen was aware of his declining popularity. When his later work was less warmly received, he complained: “Those people who read my stories when they were children have grown older and lost the fresh spirit with which they once approached and absorbed literature” (Notes 1087). Nevertheless, before concluding this section, I should point out that Andersen’s most powerful tales did survive—even when they happened to fall into the categories discussed above. Obvious examples are “The Little Match Girl” (1846), in which the bare-footed child’s dead grandmother lifts her to heaven from the cold city street; and “The Little Mermaid” (1836), in which the mermaid’s sisters sacrifice their long hair to try to get her back again, and in which the mermaid herself suffers terribly from hopeless love.

In fact, whatever his critics have said, Andersen continued to have a tremendous influence on other writers—and not just through a handful of his best-known tales.

As his dedications to Dickens suggest, Andersen himself did not intend his audience to be limited to children. Nor was it. Despite the fact that his work was increasingly consigned to the nursery, many other eminent Victorians besides Thackeray expressed great enthusiasm for it: Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s last poem, inspired by Andersen’s visit to Italy in 1861, extols him as a “seer” with “a poet’s tongue”—“a man of men” (“The North and the South”). Thus Andersen as well as the Grimms had an important *general* effect “on all Victorian literature,” in that even the major novels “are moulded by fairy-tale themes and structures” (Wullschläger 101). Like the drenched girl who knocks on the city gate in a storm at the beginning of Andersen’s “The Princess and the Pea” (1835), the plainly dressed Jane Eyre wins the hero by her extraordinary sensitivity; like the ungainly chick in “The Ugly Duckling,” Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* is one of many plain or tomboyish young heroines who turn into beauties.

As for Thackeray himself, he adopts a very similar narrative persona to Andersen—shaking his head over the follies of his characters and sighing (slightly mockingly) with them over their disappointed loves. If this stance is egotistical, it is something the two writers share. The later chapters of *Vanity Fair* (1847-48), written after Thackeray’s first enthralled acquaintance with Andersen’s work, show something more than this general

similarity. For example, Lord Steyne's residence is described as Andersen might have described it, with its elaborate architecture hiding the unhappiness of its occupants; while Becky Sharpe is memorably depicted as a siren with a fishy tail, the product of an under-sea world as horribly evil as that inhabited by the sea-witch in Andersen's "Little Mermaid." There is something of Andersen, too, in the long-suffering Dobbin's famous criticism of Amelia as unworthy of his great love. Like Andersen's "Swineherd" (1842), the clumsy Dobbin has indeed turned out to be a prince in disguise, and Amelia deserves some home truths for failing to respond adequately to him.³ After this, fairy tale devices came to dominate Thackeray's plots more and more, with heroes like George Esmond in *The Virginians* (1859) being rewarded for their struggles by sudden changes of fortune. Thackeray made fun of the fairy tale genre in *The Rose and the Ring: A Fireside Pantomime for Great or Small Children* (1855), but his serious novels were deeply permeated by it.

The same can be—and has been—said of Dickens, but most scholars focus on the influence on him of his childhood reading. Q. D. Leavis, however, pays attention to the adult writer's connection with Andersen. Instead of recalling the novelist's relief after his guest's departure, and dismissing the whole thing as rather a comic interlude, Leavis suggests that Dicken's familiarity with Andersen's work made a valuable contribution to his art.

For example, Leavis notes Dickens's "rapture at, and confessed constant re-reading of, Andersen's tale "The Old House" (131-32). This is not one of the popular tales at all. It is a story in which a young boy becomes fascinated by a delapidated old house opposite his own, and at length pays two visits to the lonely old man who lives there, taking him a little tin soldier for company. Leavis suggests that Andersen's ability to recapture his little hero's consciousness in this story inspired the opening chapters of *David Copperfield*. Indeed, "The Old House" appeared in *A Christmas Greeting to My English Friends* before it even appeared in Denmark, and in the year which followed (1848) Dickens began to turn his mind increasingly to his own childhood past. He would begin the novel which was to be "his favourite child" at the end of February 1849, and write with a new inwardness of *David Copperfield's* very earliest memories of his first home. Critics have long wondered how Dickens came to achieve this inwardness, insisting that he must have read the Brontës—despite his own disclaimers (see Ackroyd 837). But if any literary explanation is needed, surely his avowed enjoyment of "The Old House" provides a much better one.

Another likely and specific (rather than general) example of Andersen's influence can be found in George Eliot's work. Eliot would almost certainly have come across Andersen's "Ib and Little Christina" (1855) at some point, especially in her role as aunt to her sister's young children. Despite her formidable intellect, Eliot recognized the value of children's books, and in *Middlemarch* draws a very pleasant picture of Mary Garth telling fairy stories to the younger Vincy children. Perhaps it is not surprising, therefore, that there are some striking similarities between Ib's story and Silas's in *Silas Marner* (1861). In both works, an older man's years of loneliness and desolation are banished by

the happiness of caring for a child. Andersen's story ends like this:

It is as warm and comfortable as if it were summer; sunshine is here, the kind that shines from a child's eyes. Though it is October, the lark still sings in the little girl's laughter. Here lives gaiety and winter is far away. Little Christina is on Ib's knee; he is both father and mother to her. Her real parents have disappeared, as dreams do to a grownup. The little farmhouse is cosy and neat...

They say Ib has a tidy sum put away, gold from the earth; he is rich, and he has his little Christina. (Trans. Haugaard 478)

The ideas of the golden child and "gold from the earth" are intimately linked by Eliot as well: Silas's foster-child Eppie is seen as a recompense for a hoard of coins which has been stolen from under his floor. And Eliot's ending is similarly bathed in sunlight and joy. Since she herself explained in a letter written on 24 February 1861 that the novel came to her as "a sort of legendary tale" (*Letters* 3: 382), there is a strong possibility that Andersen provided at least some of her inspiration for it.

Andersen's influence on later *children's* authors is even less debatable. Here he could pass on his skill in humanizing animals and animating and giving speech to inanimate objects. Both devices were already familiar from nursery rhymes and earlier fairy tales, like those translated from Perrault's *Mother Goose* collection in the early eighteenth century. Small-scale ventures in this line had been tried more recently, too. Howitt's own best-known (and only enduring) creative work was the moralistic poem mentioned above, "The Spider and the Fly," and before delivering its homily, this poem starts, "Will you walk into my parlour?" said the Spider to the Fly" (1834). But, as G. K. Chesterton observed, Andersen's gift for this sort of thing was on a different scale, at once greater and more entirely natural:

Those of the English who were then children owe to Hans Andersen more than to any of their own writers, that essential educational emotion which feels that domesticity is not dull but rather fantastic; that sense of the fairyland of furniture, and the travel and adventure of the farmyard. His treatment of inanimate things as animate was not a cold and awkward allegory; it was a true sense of a dumb divinity in things that are. (342)

All this inevitably provided a strong new challenge to the established tradition of the heavily didactic full-length children's book. Margaret Gatty's use of animals and plants to present little moral lessons in her popular *Parables from Nature* (1855-71) was a deliberate attempt at compromise: she greatly enjoyed Andersen's tales, but (in keeping with the new critical climate) found them superficial (*HCA* 362, n. 25). However, authors and parents alike were now awakened to the possibilities of a more imaginative and entertaining approach to children's literature.

This did not mean that serious subjects could no longer be broached in it. What Gatty failed to realize was that such subjects could now be explored rather than offered

to children in a series of “messages.” In Lewis Carroll’s two *Alice books* (1865 and 1871), for instance, it is through her encounters with fantastic creatures and situations like those found in Andersen’s stories that the young heroine begins to discover her identity and act independently. For instance, the caterpillar which presents Alice with her first challenge is reminiscent of the snail in Andersen’s “The Snail and the Rose—Bush,” which interrogates a rose about her life: “you haven’t done a scrap for your inner development Can you justify this?” (trans. Spink 401). As his last proof of Alice’s growing self-confidence, Carroll shows her acting decisively against a threatening soup-ladle. Again, Andersen’s stories contain a possible source, an episode in which some kitchen implements get out of hand (“The Flying Trunk”). This episode ends with Andersen’s shopping basket complaining,

Is this a proper way to spend the evening? Wouldn’t it be better to set the house to rights? That would put everybody in his place, and I’d be in charge of the whole pack of you! You’d see a change then!
(Trans. Spink 143-44)

It could almost be Alice herself talking. Carroll makes use of the meter of Howitt’s famous poem in the Mock Turtle’s song, but, as mentioned above, he was really parodying it. A much more important source of inspiration here was the author whom Howitt had first introduced to the British nursery, and then rather cruelly savaged.

As well as humanizing animals, pots, pans, toys and so on, Andersen liked to bring abstract concepts to life. This tendency, and the fact that it was often coupled with his religious sentiments, also gave a clue to children’s writers. It made him a particularly potent influence on one of Lewis Carroll’s friends, George MacDonald. Of MacDonald’s three children’s novels, the one which owes most to Andersen is *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871), a fantasy about a dying child who is taken to heaven by the powerful North Wind. MacDonald must have known Andersen’s “The Wind’s Story” (1859); the ending of “The Little Match Girl,” where the loving spirit of the match girl’s grandmother makes her last dramatic appearance, must surely have been in his mind, too:

Granny had never before been so beautiful and so big. Lifting the little girl on to her arm, she flew with her in radiance and glory so high, so very, very high. And there was no cold, no hunger, no fear: they were with God. (Trans. Spink 301)

MacDonald’s North Wind is not a grandmother, of course (although this author was very fond of the grandmother figure); but she also has a strong feminine presence. Like the match girl’s “Granny,” she visits and at last bears away to happier climes a suffering working-class child, whose cold corpse is left below. Humphrey Carpenter praises MacDonald as a children’s writer for “creating an alternative religious landscape which a child’s mind could explore and which could offer spiritual nourishment,” and points out that he was “almost unique in it.” Then Carpenter adds casually, “Hans Christian Andersen had done something of the same” (“George MacDonald” 383). Surely, a stronger connection should be made here, so that Andersen’s pioneering literary efforts in this area are properly recognized. These efforts would bear more fruit in the twentieth cen-

tury with C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956), which in turn has had a considerable influence on more recent writers like Madeline L'Engle.

There is still one earlier author, however, who was very directly indebted to Andersen. Extraordinary though it seems, the young, brilliant and fashionable *fin de siècle* aesthete, Oscar Wilde, found a soul-mate in the poorly educated, socially inept and strikingly ugly Danish writer. The two writers' tones of voice are sometimes quite indistinguishable. This is most obvious in Wilde's fairy stories, where, like Andersen, he often uses animals, plants and inanimate objects to express the affectation of officialdom, the limited world-view of the literati, and (above all) the bitter-sweet and often unrecognized sacrifices of the truly sensitive soul. It is the sense of victimization that binds the two writers' work most closely. At first sight, Wilde's "The Remarkable Rocket" (1888) about the self-important firework whose only impact is on a silly goose, reads most like one of Andersen's tales. But here Wilde seems to be mocking himself, something which Andersen only rarely does. Closer in spirit to the Andersen of, say, "The Steadfast Tin Soldier" (1838) are "The Happy Prince" and "The Nightingale and the Rose" (both 1888). In these well-known works, Wilde presents the theme of self-sacrifice through a statue and two birds whose hearts are moved by human suffering, but whose efforts to alleviate it pass unrecognized in an ungrateful world. Both Andersen's tin soldier and Wilde's statue are thrown into fires in the end; but, much as the former melts to a heart-shaped lump, so the latter's lead heart survives, to be taken (together with the dead swallow) straight to God. It is worth pointing out that Wilde's stories are taken very seriously by the critics; they are not usually scorned for their sentimentality or "egotism."

Wilde's version of "The Little Mermaid," which he entitled "The Fisherman and his Soul" (1889), is more elaborate and finally less successful than Andersen's. It shows the constraint that the fairy tale form was beginning to put on him. However, another hint from Andersen pointed the way forward. In a different connection, Q. D. Leavis has praised "The Shadow" (1847), a story of Andersen's in which a man's shadow eventually takes over his life and kills him (133). Again, it is not a particularly well-known story. But it seems highly likely that Wilde used the idea in "The Fisherman and the Soul," where the fisherman's shadow represents his soul, and has to be cut off when he enters the mermaid's world. The shadow/soul then begins to live a life of its own, becoming corrupt like Andersen's shadow. In the end, it is responsible for the fisherman's death. No doubt both stories express something of their authors' darker psychological depths, the sense they both seem to have had (which is common enough anyway) of another unmanageable self. Perhaps because it allowed Wilde to express his own worries about his homosexuality, from now on the theme of split identity would particularly fascinate the later author. It would emerge most forcefully in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), his powerful novella for adults. This illustrates perfectly Andersen's seminal influence on another important writer.

Before leaving the topic of Andersen's legacy to children's writers, it is worth noting that one more famous shadow was to be cast—literally—in literature for the young. It is in a work written in the Edwardian period. When Peter Pan finds himself confronted by

Mrs Darling, and flies away from the Darlings' window too hastily, he leaves his shadow behind: Barrie is giving Mrs Darling (and the readers) a sign that "the Neverland had come too near and that a strange boy had broken through from it" (23). Just as Nana expects, Peter returns to look for the shadow; and when he does so, and Wendy manages to reattach it to him, the border between the reality and fantasy is completely breached. The Darling children are now free to follow Peter Pan out of the window. This chapter of Barrie's novel is entitled "The Shadow," and while this particular shadow never acquires a life of its own, or becomes sinister, it is clearly just as much a sign of a deeply split psyche as Andersen's and Wilde's.⁴ Deprived of his own mother's love by a family tragedy, Barrie himself had yearned for the kind of maternal care that makes Mrs Darling roll the shadow up neatly and put it away in a drawer, and Wendy sew the shadow back on again. For all the doubts Barrie expresses about female entrapment (see Nelson 170-72), what he shows most clearly in this work is that its famous hero, and all the Lost Boys of Neverland, need to have "just a nice motherly person" around, in order to be whole and happy (94).

It may be true, as even one of Andersen's most avid admirers accepts, that he "never stopped telling his own story" (Spink 100); he himself would have been the first to admit it. "Most of what I have written is a reflection of myself. Every character is from life. I know and have known them all," he said (qtd. in Spink 70). But if so, like the many authors who have found inspiration in his work, he transmuted them into art, and that is what matters. Surley it is only art, and art of considerable originality and vigour, that could have fed so productively into another country's culture.

Several of Andersen's skills, such as the freshness of his style, the liveliness of his dialogue, his realism and his ability to animate the inanimate, have already been mentioned (or implied by comparison) above. However, one of his gifts has not been discussed, and it is an important one. While recent British critics complain that he is self-pitying, and too fond of drawing victims, they seem to forget what happens to these victims. Invariably, in some way or another, they rise, and overcome their difficult circumstances. It was Chesterton who noticed this quality in Andersen's tales, praising their author too for showing that "the dignity of the fighter is not in his largeness, but rather in his smallness" (342). The empowerment of the child is a constant demand of modern children's literature theorists, and in one way or another it is the whole bent of Andersen's work.

Perhaps the best example occurs in "The Ugly Duckling." It is rather unlikely that this story encapsulates the author's own autobiography, as so many have suggested: it was one of his early works, and it was only with the publication of the 1845 booklet (in which it appeared) that his popularity really began to spread (see Notes 1074). Be that as it may, Andersen shows the "duckling" surviving not just by chance, but largely by his own efforts. He is bound to turn into a swan eventually, of course—but only if he does manage to survive. First, he flutters away from the farmyard where he is being bullied. Then, when the wild ducks notice him at the marsh, he greets them as best he can. After lying low during the wild goose shoot which follows, "he scampered away from the marsh

as fast as his legs would carry him; over fields and meadows he ran, though there was such a wind that he had hard work fighting his way against it" (trans. Spink 207). It is the "duckling" himself who finds his way through a crack into a cottage for shelter, and the "duckling" again who decides to venture out "into the wide world" where he eventually sees some swans (trans. Spink 210). After further adventures, he discovers his true identity as a swan only when he takes the last-ditch decision to "fly over to the royal birds" and put himself at their mercy (trans. Spinks 213). These are not the acts or decisions of a passive creature.

Goldthwaite claims that only one of Andersen's tales has "survived the twentieth century," and that it has done so only as a result of a "Hollywood extravaganza" (63). It is an odd claim to make, when stories like "The Emperor's New Clothes" and "The Nightingale" are so much a part of the collective consciousness. Moreover, it is hard to know which film Goldthwaite has in mind here: "Thumbelina" alone was screened twice in the eighties, and Walt Disney's 1989 Oscar Award-winning *Little Mermaid* was so popular that it was re-released in time for Christmas 1997, and at the time of writing is widely available on video for Christmas 1999. However, from his choice of the word "extravaganza" rather than "animation," it seems likely that Goldthwaite is referring to the 1952 Samuel Goldwyn classic, starring Danny Kaye. *Hans Christian Andersen*, which retells Andersen's own life story, received six Academy Award nominations. In that case the single tale might be the "The Ugly Duckling," which provides one of the best-known musical numbers from that film, and has achieved something like nursery rhyme status. The story is told, or rather sung, to a little boy who is being ostracized because of his baldness. The child has been ill, and Andersen/Kaye offers it to him as encouragement. The ploy works. Reassured about his essential worth and future prospects, the bald-headed boy goes off cheerfully to rejoin his fellow-pupils. It could be that this is exactly the kind of purpose for which the tale was intended, just as "The Story of a Mother" was intended to offer consolation to bereaved parents. At any rate, common experience suggests that this is how the story is usually read.

Whatever their author's intention, such stories do have an encouraging effect. To take another example: suppose Goldthwaite had "Thumbelina" in mind—either the popular musical number from the same movie, or one of the later screenings (the latest was in 1994). "Thumbelina" is another success story, in this case, featuring a girl-child, and one of tiny dimensions—doubly heartening for the young and powerless child reader. The main storyline of the original tale is simple. Thumbelina's happy existence is interrupted when an ugly toad carries her off to be his son's wife. The fishes take pity on her, and help her to escape over the waters on a leaf, after which she herself harnesses the leaf to a butterfly. Further adventures follow: Thumbelina is captured by a cockchafer, abandoned in the woods, taken in by a field-mouse, and expected to marry the field-mouse's neighbour, a dull, scholarly mole. But through such experiences the tiny girl learns resourcefulness. In the woods, for example, she lives successfully by herself all summer and autumn, gathering honey and drinking dew, and making herself what shelter she can when the cold weather strikes. Moreover, she never once loses her good na-

ture. In the end, she faces a difficult choice, torn between gratitude to the kindly field-mouse, and the offer of a swallow to take her away from the heartless mole. "Very well, I'll come with you," she tells the swallow at last (trans. Spink 46); and that is her salvation, because it is as a result of this decision that she (quite literally) meets her prince. Not surprisingly, the story is now being read as a story of specifically female empowerment (see Mori 223).⁵ Hence perhaps Roger Ebert's criticism of the 1994 animation, Dan Bluth's ironically entitled *Hans Christian Andersen's "Thumbelina,"* for its "vapid ... passive heroine" (n.pag.). The original heroine is not passive at all.

What then of the stories which end rather differently, in death? The French critic Isabelle Jan has written interestingly on "Hans Christian Andersen or Reality," and the reality she discusses is not only in the details of his descriptions, seen so unerringly and freshly from a child's point of view, but also in his treatment of death. Having admitted that "his unhappy endings ... are ... traumatic for small children" (53), and having accepted too that the orthodox consolations of the Christian afterlife are absent, Jan then points out that nevertheless Andersen's view of death is a positive one. She does not refer to the kind of old-fashioned consolation doled out to mothers in "The Story of a Mother." Rather, looking at the best of the tales ending in death, Jan notes a "splendour at the moment of vanishing" (54). She refers among others to three famous stories—"The Little Match Girl," "The Steadfast Tin Soldier" and "The Little Mermaid." The fact that all three death-endings come so immediately and vividly to mind as to need no illustration here, is enough to prove Jan's point. What adult does not know how each of these three figures die, and who considers their deaths to be wretched? In 1946 the famous Scandinavian-born children's book illustrator, Gustaf Tenggren, changed the text of the first of these stories, so that the little match girl is left "sleeping in a luxurious bed rather than freezing to death" (Hoyle 91). Quite apart from the touch of bathos here, the much more realistic ending of Andersen's story is also much more memorable. And when death becomes, as it does in Andersen's original story, "synonymous with ... luminosity," it is something not only memorable but also inspirational: "No one knew what beauty she had seen, or in what radiance she had gone with her old granny in to the glad New Year" (trans. Spink 301). Here and elsewhere (another good example can be found in "The Angel"), Andersen sees death as a kind of consummation "which ensures the continuity of the species and the permanence of life. Through death the living become light and merge into the universe..." (Jan 54). The fact of death might indeed be hard for small children to face; 6 for them, Tenggren's ending, or Disney's predictable last-reel rescue of his little mermaid Ariel (see also the Disney tie-in children's book, Calmenson n.pag.), might be more comforting. However, for older children and adults, who can follow Andersen in seeing beyond it, the "real" endings are much more profoundly encouraging.

Jan is talking about reality in Andersen's world, or rather about his "conquest of reality" (42). For, at points like these, the realistic is subsumed into the visionary. Simple fantasy has been raised to a higher level, to the level at which, as Tolkien believed, it can console us and deny "the universal final defeat" of death (68). This is what C.S. Lewis would achieve, again for children, in the moving finale of his *Chronicles of Narnia*:

in *The Last Battle*, Lewis's child heroes and heroines are reunited with their parents in a world beyond this one, a world in which all evil has finally been destroyed. To condemn such art as morbid or sentimental is to misunderstand it entirely. Furthermore, Jacqueline Rose's claim that the whole tendency of children's literature is some kind of perverse conspiracy to entrap the child is given the lie by such genuinely liberating denouements. In this context it is worth noting that Jan, who is able to respond so sensitively to these denouements in Andersen, has been particularly praised by Catherine Storr (a practicing psychiatrist as well as a children's author herself) for speaking "always with the voice of common sense, learning and perceptive appreciation" (9). Perhaps these are the qualities which too many modern critics of children's literature have lost.

Of course, it is not only readers of "common sense, learning and perceptive appreciation" in the west who have responded to Andersen's writings. As far as I know, their popularity in Japan remains unchallenged. Goldthwaite, who turns his eyes from everything of value in the tales, and concentrates instead on what he calls Andersen's "sentimental religiosity," comes to a remarkable conclusion: "In the end, his gift of fairy tales must be read as a cautionary fable on how not to write them" (64). I hope this essay has gone some way towards making nonsense of that comment. Perhaps it also helps to explain why the factors that militated against Andersen's literary reputation in Victorian Britain, and the attacks of certain prominent critics of our own times, have not prevented people from all over the world from continuing to enjoy these timeless works.

Notes

- 1 This article is an extended version of an essay entitled "Hans Christian Andersen and the Victorians," which appeared in translation in *Literature, Culture and History in Victorian England: A Festschrift for Professor Matsumura* (Tokyo: Eiho-sha, 1999, 68-89).
- 2 Spink's translations have generally been used in preference to Haugaard's. However, they could not be used throughout, because Spink has translated only the more popular of Andersen's tales. Besides, as here, I sometimes need to refer to earlier translations. To avoid confusion, I have specified the translator every time.
- 3 Significantly, Geoffrey Tillotson finds an allusion to Andersen's "The Snow-Queen" in a letter "justifying the 'dissatisfying' ending of *Vanity Fair*" (208). The letter in question is that of 3 Sept. 1848 (*Letters* 2: 423 f.).
- 4 Hence Jacqueline Rose's claims, quoted in my opening paragraph. However, this is probably part of the book's enduring appeal, because it speaks to a similar conflict in readers of every age. The fact that Peter is visibly torn between the outside world/adventure/independence and so on, and his yearning for safety and shelter, argues against the view of the book as completely nostalgic or "child-entrapping." Barrie wrote about the book later, in his diary, "Desperate attempts to grow up but can't" (qtd. in Coveney 258). The effort invested in the "attempts" should not be ignored.
- 5 I am grateful to Tamiko Nishimura, of my children's literature seminar of 1998/9, for bringing Professor Mori's work to my attention.
- 6 Nicholas Tucker, himself a psychologist, comments that Andersen "wrote some fairy stories that almost all children find immediately appealing, but his haunting and melancholy parables like

The Little Mermaid may be liked and understood more by older children" (155). This is in a chapter entitled "Literature for Older Children (Ages 11-14)."

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