



Det kongelige Bibliotek

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# Life and Works

1805: Born in Odense, Denmark

1819: Arrives alone in Copenhagen

1829: First publication, *Journey on Foot From Holmen's Canal to the Eastern Tip of Amager*

1833-34: First journey to Italy

1835: First collection of *Fairy Tales Told to Children* and the Italian novel *The Improvisatore* that makes him an European celebrity

1875: Dies in Copenhagen of cancer leaving behind a total of 156 Fairy Tales, 1000 poems , 6 novels, several travel books, 3 autobiographies, lots of letters and diaries. He had made 29 travels abroad, and he was translated into nearly a hundred languages

# The Fairy Tale and Romanticism

- The romantic need for history and national identity and its reaction against the enlightenment through myth.
- The fairy tales: the gathering of folk tales and the writing of new fairy tales (history, nation, myth, origin, simple style, naturalness, orality vs. writing, anonymity vs. genius).
- Andersen changes his titles from “fairy tales told to children” to “fairy tales” to “fairy tales and stories”.

# The Fairy Tale as a Poetic Field of Prose Experiments

I find that the fairy tale is the most extensive realm of poetry. It stretches from the blood smoked tombs of ancient times to the picture book of the pious child legend, it absorbs the popular literature as well as the artistic literature; to me it represents all of poetry, and he who can manage must read the tragically, the comical, the naïve, the ironical, and the cheerful into it, and he will have the strings of the lyrical, the childish narrative and the language that depicts nature at his service. (H. C. Andersen, 1874)

# The Prose Breakthrough around 1830

- Prose not verse
- Writing the prosaic, the every day life
- Poeticising the world, the poetry of every day life
- Prose as modern (as opposed to the fairy tale as ancient: being modern is breaking with tradition), the fairy tale torn between tradition and modernity
- Andersen's prose style: revolution in and long lasting impact on Danish literature

# The Tinderbox and the Break with the Style of Art Prose

A soldier came marching along the road: left, right! Left, right! He had a knapsack on his back and a sword at his side, because he had been off to war, and now he was on his way home. Then he met an old witch on the road. She was so hideous, her lower lip hung all the way down to her breast. She said, "good evening, soldier. What a nive sword and big knapsack you have – you must be a real soldier! Now you shall have all the money you could ask for!"

"Well thanks a lot, you old witch, said the soldier.

# Little Ida's Flowers and the Double Vision

“Why do my flowers look so sad today?” she asked again, and showed the student her bouquet of dying flowers.

He looks at them for a moment before he said, “I know what is wrong with them, they have been dancing all night and that is why they look so tired and hang their heads.”

“But flowers can't dance,” said little Ida.

“Sure they can,” replied the student. “When darkness comes and we go to bed and sleep, then the flowers jump about gaily enough. Nearly every night they hold a grand ball.”

[...]

“That is very funny!” little Ida laughed.

“I don't think it's the least bit funny,” said the old chancellor, who had just come into the room and had overheard the last part of the conversation; but he never found anything funny. “Such fantastic ideas are nonsense; they are harmful to a child and boring for grownups.”

# Little Ida's Flowers and the Double Vision

Little Ida's question: Why must living things die?

The Student (and the fairy tale) as the master of a double discourse beyond the reach of Ida as well as the chancellor: He understands the existential urgency of the question and responds with a wild tale.

# The Snow Queen and "Das Unheimliche"

"Well the end was as good as the beginning," said the robber girl, and took each of them by the hand and promised that if she ever came through the town where they lived she would come and visit them. Then she rode away out into the world; and Kai and Gerda walked hand in hand homeward.

It was really spring. In the ditches the little wild flowers bloomed. The churchbells were ringing. Now they recognized the towers; they were approaching their own city and the home they had left behind.

Soon they were walking up the worn steps of the staircase to the old Grandmother's apartment. Nothing inside had changed. The clock said "Tick-tack . . ." and the wheels moved. But as they stepped through the doorway they realized that they had grown: they were no longer children.

The roses were blooming in the wooden boxes and the window was open. There were the little stools they used to sit on. Still holding each other's hands, they sat down, and all memory of the Snow Queen's palace and its hollow splendour disappeared. The Grandmother sat in the warm sunshine, reading aloud from her Bible: "*Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of Heaven as a little child shall not enter Therein.*"

Kai and Gerda looked at each other's eyes and now they understood the words of the psalm.

Out roses bloom and fade away,  
Our infant Lord abides always.  
May we be blessed his face to see  
And ever little children be.

There they sat down, the two of them, grownups; and yet in their hearts children and it was summer: a warm glorious day!

# The Little Match Girl and the Poetry of Prose

She rubbed another match against the wall. It became bright again, and in the glow the old grandmother stood clear and shining, kind and lovely.

"Grandmother!" cried the child. "Oh, take me with you! I know you will disappear when the match is burned out. You will vanish like the warm stove, the wonderful roast goose and the beautiful big Christmas tree!"

And she quickly struck the whole bundle of matches, for she wished to keep her grandmother with her. And the matches burned with such a glow that it became brighter than daylight. Grandmother had never been so grand and beautiful. She took the little girl in her arms, and both of them flew in brightness and joy above the earth, very, very high, and up there was neither cold, nor hunger, nor fear—they were with God.

But in the corner, leaning against the wall, sat the little girl with red cheeks and smiling mouth, frozen to death on the last evening of the old year. The New Year's sun rose upon a little pathetic figure. The child sat there, stiff and cold, holding the matches, of which one bundle was almost burned.

"She wanted to warm herself," the people said. No one imagined what beautiful things she had seen, and how happily she had gone with her old grandmother into the bright New Year.

# The Shadow

A fantastic story from 1847 in the manner of contemporary German literature, combining the motif of the double as the darker side of yourself, as in E. T. A. Hoffmann, with the Faust story, the story of selling ones soul to the devil in order to get fame and fortune, in A. Chamisso's "The Fantastic Story of Peter Schlemihl".

# The Shadow as Mixed up Fairy Tale and Romantic Melt Down

From realism to the phantastic

From connection to disconnection between good, beautiful and true

Poetry and lies

The Modern as ruthless, daring and capable



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Villa Borghese  
Edificata nel 1833 Giulio Fieschi

# Walking into a picture

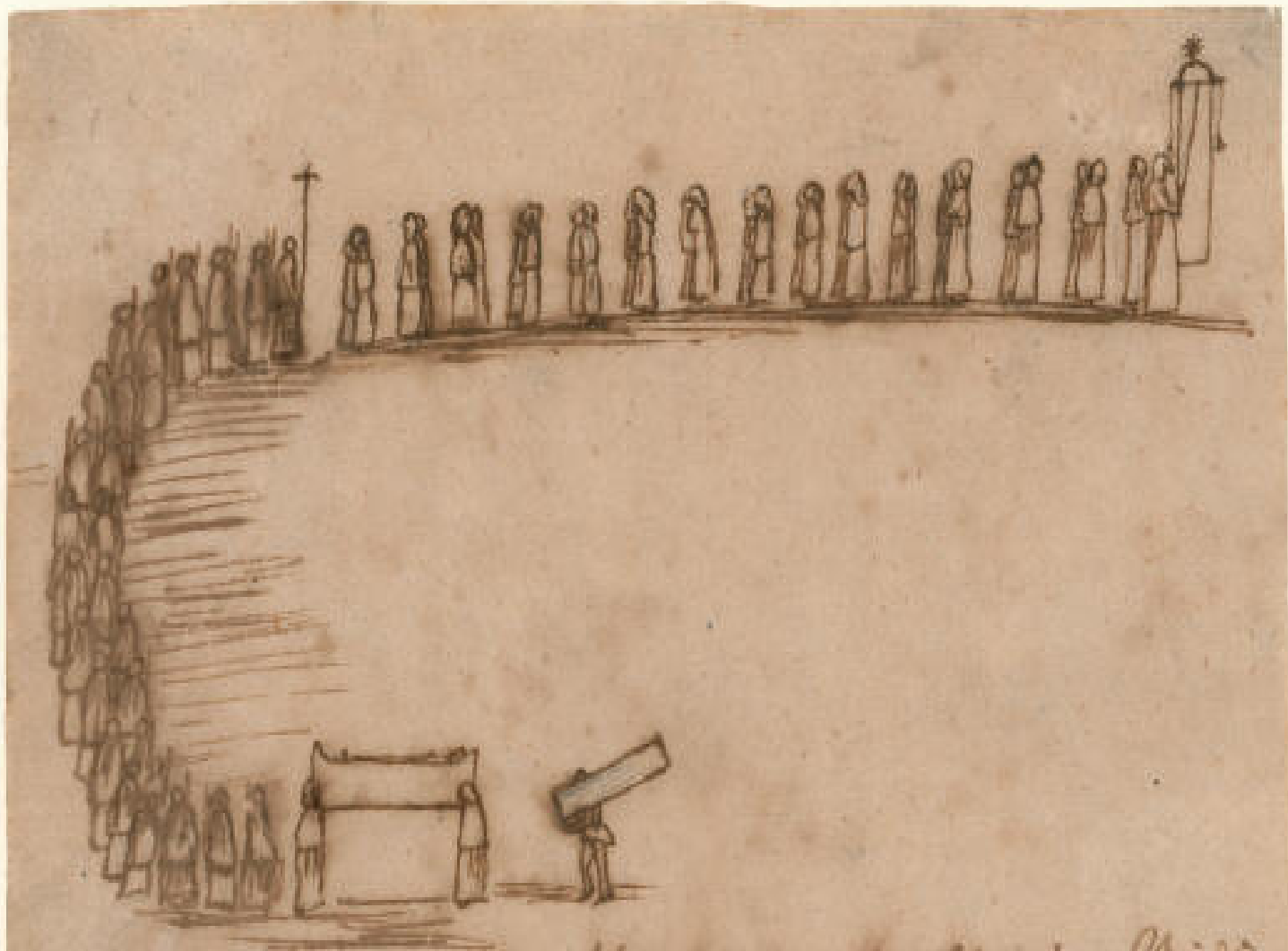
As a child I had a small stereoscope in which all the pictures were cut out of an old book; each picture showed a gothic building, a monastery or a church, and outside there was artificially carved fountains; but on each piece you read the name of the town underneath, and this was on all of them: Augsburg. How often I have looked at these pictures and in my thoughts stepped right into them, but never did I manage to find out what was behind the street corner.

And now – I stood in the middle of the reality of these pictures. I was in Augsburg myself! (My translation, *The Bazaar of a Poet*)

# Italy as a Genre Painting

A number of scenes from the street life, that have by now become more rare, were as by sheer coincidence granted to us. We saw the completely golden laced Dulcamera on her drug cart with servants dressed up for the masquerade given her ballyhoo speech. We met robbers chained to carts pulled by oxen and surrounded by gendarmes. We saw a funeral, the corps uncovered on the stretcher, and the evening glow shone on the cheeks, and the boys ran with cones in which they collected the wax dripping from the candles of the monks. The bells were ringing, the song sounded, the men played Morra, and the girls danced Saltarello to the sound of the tambourine. So festive, I never saw Italy as beautiful as that again. It was the pictures of Pinelli coming to life right in front of me; I saw these pictures in nature and in real life. (My translation, *The Fairy Tale of my Life*)





En Litz, Provinzen fort et unius Minder  
C. d. d. d. 28. Dezember 1833.

# The golden age painting

In the paintings of Italy that the Danish golden age painters do, it is the set up, the meeting between landscape and architecture, architecture and ordinary life, the framing of the motif, the extremely colourful light of Italy, and the gentle exoticism of the folklore that counts. It is a poetic realism in the sense that it artfully selects and organizes items of everyday life of foreign and once classical places.









# Andersen sees things differently

He sees other things or sees things differently than the ruling gaze of the golden age, be it the gaze of the painters or the poets. He does so because he has a strong inclination to describe the world as thoroughly as possible, because his surroundings affect him and mould him to a considerable degree, and because he can't stand still.

# The clash between poetic beauty and the horrors of poverty and body

I present the picture as I have seen it. Five, six Turkish boys, as good as naked, one at least only wears a turban, jumps, as they scream wildly, around a dead horse that, since it has been skinned, lies absolutely bloody and in a recess of this street stretching its four legs up in the air, the naked kid places himself on the dead horse as if to ride it – then jumps around; it is a spectacle! (My translation, *The Bazaar of a Poet*)



# The Rome that is not in the Picture

Whoever has been in Rome is well acquainted with the Piazza Barberina, in the great square, with the beautiful fountain, where the Tritons empty the spouting conch-shell, from which the water springs upwards many feet. Whoever has not been there, knows it, at all events, from copperplate engravings; only it is a pity, that in these the house at the corner of Via Felice is not given, that the tall cornerhouse, where the water pours through three pipes out on the wall down into a stone basin. That house has a peculiar interest to me; it was there I was born. (*The Improvisatore*)