

Interdisciplinary Approach to Hans Christian Andersen: An Interview with Professor Johs. Nørregaard Frandsen

Lyu Hongbo & Johs. Nørregaard Frandsen

Abstract: Hans Christian Andersen is a world-famous fairy tale writer, but he is much more than that. Studies on Andersen can also be diverse and interdisciplinary. Located in Odense, the birthplace of Andersen, Hans Christian Andersen Center at University of Southern Denmark is an international leader in studying Andersen. In this interview, Professor Johs. Nørregaard Frandsen, the head of the center, introduces interdisciplinary approaches to Andersen's works, life and cultural significance. He illustrates the relationship between Andersen and community as well as the ethical values in Andersen's works. He also emphasizes that all studies are based on Andersen's literary works and gives some advice on the future research in Andersen.

Key words: Hans Christian Andersen; literature; culture; community; ethical values

Authors: **Lyu Hongbo** is a PhD. candidate at Central China Normal University, lecturer at School of Foreign Languages, Hubei University. Her research interest deals with world literature and comparative literature (Email: celvhongbo@163.com). **Johs. Nørregaard Frandsen** is Professor, Head of Hans Christian Andersen Centre, University of Southern Denmark (SDU), Deputy Chairman of The National Hans Christian Andersen Foundation, Advisor to the Ministry of Culture and to the municipality of Odense (HC Andersen's hometown). His scholarly interests include Hans Christian Andersen's art, life and cultural significance, and Danish culture and literature in the 19th and 20th century (Email: jnf@sdu.dk).

标题: 跨学科的安徒生研究：尤斯·诺雷加德·弗兰德森教授访谈录

内容摘要: 汉斯·克里斯蒂安·安徒生是世界著名的童话作家，但是他的成就远不止于此，对安徒生的研究也可以是多元化和跨学科的。南丹麦大学安徒生中心坐落在安徒生的出生地欧登塞市，是国际上安徒生研究的领导者。本次访谈中，中心主任尤斯·诺雷加德·弗兰德森教授介绍了对安徒生作品、生平和文化意义的跨学科研究方法，阐述了安徒生与社群之间的关系，以及安

徒生作品的伦理价值。他强调一切研究都立足于安徒生的文学作品，并对未来的安徒生研究给出了一些建议。

关键词： 汉斯·克里斯蒂安·安徒生；文学；文化；社群；伦理价值

作者简介： 吕洪波，华中师范大学博士生，湖北大学外国语学院讲师，研究方向为世界文学与比较文学。尤斯·诺雷加德·弗兰德森，南丹麦大学教授，安徒生中心主任，丹麦安徒生基金会副主席，丹麦文化部顾问，欧登塞市（安徒生故乡）市政顾问，主要学术研究领域为安徒生的艺术、生平及文化意义，十九世纪和二十世纪丹麦文化和文学。

As a guest researcher at Hans Christian Andersen Center at the University of Southern Denmark, Lyu Hongbo participated in the international conference from 5 December to 7 December 2017 with the theme “Hans Christian Andersen and Community,” which was the celebration to the 150th anniversary of Hans Christian Andersen being made an honorary citizen of his native city, Odense. After the conference, she interviewed the organizer, Professor Johs. Nørregaard Frandsen, about the studies of Hans Christian Andersen.

Lyu Hongbo (Lyu for short hereafter): Dear Professor Frandsen, thank you very much for taking this interview. As a participant of the international conference “Hans Christian Andersen and Community” (December 5-7, 2017), I, first of all, would like to express my heart-felt gratitude for your kind invitation and warm congratulation on the success of this conference. I am wondering how you came up with such an interesting topic?

Johs. Nørregaard Frandsen (Johs. for short hereafter): You are welcome and thank you for your good question! As you know, on the conference there were a lot of very skillful and brilliant scholars from all over the world. We wanted to make it a set-up for possibilities to explain relationships to Andersen and his works. We thought that talking about community would give these possibilities for scholars all over the world. To explain their relations, I think the world today is composed of new communities with the help of the innovative ways of communicating. There are so many innovative ways like Facebook to communicate across nationalities and borders in the world. However, today, we are in a time when there are some dark clouds. I would say, something like a cold war is going on again. A lot of things due to communities are in a way changing. Hans Christian Andersen lived in a time during the 1800s, when European national communities were formed. He lived in and wrote works and travelled around Europe at that time. And some of the topics at the conference were about that. Hans Christian Andersen was a witness

of the modern Europe coming up in a way. The modern Europe was born in Hans Christian Andersen's time. That's one reason to call it "Hans Christian Andersen and Community," since we could comment on Hans Christian Andersen as a historical person, commenting around in a way.

Another reason is that we view Hans Christian Andersen as an artist, one of the world's most famous literary artists, while he always commented on community in a way because he felt lonely all his life. He himself felt loneliness. He never succeeded in love. He was very much in love with different women, for example, Riborg Voigt from Fyn, Jenny Lind and so on. He was very much in love but he never succeeded in finding one companion. He felt himself outside communities. He worked all over his life to go from this proletarian place where he was born in Odense and tried to get up in the bourgeoisie. He tried to get up among the rich one, the one who knew more about the world. He was very famous even when he was alive, so in a way, he went up there. But in another way, he never did it because he never realized to be there. He was always beside reality, the bourgeoisie community, and the Collin family, where Andersen stood beside and looked in. Many stories Andersen wrote, not only fairy tales but also novels, are about communities, about not being a part of the community. *The Match-Stick Girl*, is about community closing down. The only way the poor little girl can do is to look into the community at the very rich table with a duck of the New Year's Eve dinner. She would love to be there, but she was outside. *The Little Mermaid* is claiming a quest and she wants to be in another community. She is in a community of mermaids, but she wants something else. She wants to be in another community, the human being's communities, but she cannot. She offers everything including her life, her tongue and her fishtail to get into another community, which she is dreaming of and meant for. She has a quest that she must be a human being but not possible for her. So, it is about community. To get this topic "Hans Christian Andersen and Community," you can read *The Little Mermaid* or *The Little Match-Stick Girl* or *The Tinder Box* in that theme, because Andersen felt himself outside of everything all over him. He is an outsider and he is writing on that. In all his works, Andersen is in a way talking about community that he always wants but never goes into. Almost every person, every character in his tales is lonely. The Firtree is lonely to get back where the lights were. If you read all his fairy tales, you may find they are about community. Andersen is writing about losing or getting, winning or losing communities.

Thirdly, Andersen was politically in a way related to the topic of community. Though he never was political, he was living during this time when the modern Europe was created with new communities, because the old hierarchy broke down, and a new democratic way of living was politically established where Andersen

lived. Of course, he never commented on politics but he lived at that time, in a way he comments on that through his art. There is a main theme of Andersen, it is how to go into a community and to be accepted. The ugly duckling at last finds his community and knows that it is a swan. Thumbelina is in a wrong environment in a way. There are toads, May-bugs, field mouse and mole, but at last, she goes to the south and there she finds her people, the flower people. So, it is about communities, seeking for community, seeking for to be free from loneliness. These are some of the thoughts behind the theme of “Hans Christian Andersen and Community.”

Lyu: Hans Christian Andersen study is now on the rapid rise, which is evidenced in the rich and multiple perspectives on his works in this conference. Could you please briefly comment on the current studies of Andersen?

Johs.: Yeah, I would love to. Because ten to twenty years ago, the studies on Andersen were almost only limited in the discipline of literature, especially focusing on his fairy tales, I wanted with this center and the conference to go one more step. Of course, we are studying Andersen’s works, fairy tales and so on. But we are also making cultural studies of Andersen as a figure and character in the history. The traces that follow Andersen can provide other studies. Andersen is an icon, so by studying Andersen in China or in Europe we in a way study China and Europe. The ways Chinese and Danish are looking at Andersen are quite different. We are building bridges in studying Andersen transnationally. It’s a very interesting study to ask who is Andersen in China, who is Andersen in Denmark, and why. In such a way, we can compare our looks at Andersen in both places or in America or in Italy and so on. That is what Thorsten Bøgh Thomsen studies and the point is exactly to ask who is Andersen in Italy. Of course, it is the same fairy tales, but how widespread is Andersen and Andersen’s stories in Italy. Mads Sohl Jessen is studying on the Russian topic. Andersen is Andersen, and in Russia, too. But what is the meaning of Andersen in Russia. There are a lot of words in Russian, that are in a way, inspired by Andersen. Like in Danish, if we say in politics he has not got anything on, that is in Andersen, a lot of such sayings like “he sure was an ugly duckling.” We use Andersen in our daily language. What Mads and some people around him can see that in Russia people do that too, but they do some other comments. Of course, Andersen is the same in Russia and Denmark, but in another way, he is not. Andersen is a reflection because all Russian, like all Chinese, know about Andersen. We have maybe 10 to 15 fairy tales which are known everywhere. It means that if I can ask a young Chinese, what do you think of *The Ugly Duckling*, when he or she answers me, in a way he or she is talking about being Chinese. That

is what we call mapping. We are trying to see Hans Christian Andersen as part of culture and cultural development. That is the new thing we are doing here. We are not only reading literature but also studying the influence of Andersen because it is international and of global interest. When I know your people's way of living with and loving Andersen, I know quite a lot of you, I mean, in a very positive way. That is something Chinese and Danish can sit down and talk about. We were all children once. We all have the imagination. Andersen studies can be related to questions like how is culture formed and how does it influence imagination and the childhood, and so on. That is my big idea that studying Hans Christian Andersen is in a way studying global bridges and cultural bridges. It is what we have just started now. I think there are only 5 or 10 artists or writers in the world having enormous influence in the world and Andersen is one of them.

Next, let's talk about tourism. We know that Asian people, especially Chinese people, are travelling to Europe and to Denmark because of Hans Christian Andersen. He is a reason to go. And I would say it is great because tourism, serious tourism, cultural heritage tourism, literary tourism, is one of the biggest events where people are coming together, so I think tourism is very positive. It is great that young Chinese go to Europe and we go to China because we can learn from each other and know each other. At Andersen's time, almost no Danes had been to China, so China was only an imagination as a very strange place where there may be dragons, very strange birds, strange fruits and everything was strange. But they admired China and Chinese because from China came the powder, the fireworks, and not least, the silk. The Silk Road, from both the terrestrial and the maritime routes, all the way to China, was the most famous route ever. It organized Europe in a way until around the 15th century. So, China meant everything but as an imagination. No one had ever seen a Chinese, so China was for Danish, a kind of myth. People in Denmark thought China was down there, on the other side of the globe. Today we know that it is not true. Tourism and travelling are bringing us together and we are getting to know each other. That's good for the world and for the global thing. So, I think it is great to use Hans Christian Andersen and his reputation and his art as a reason to go. But we have to do this very seriously. It is not some Disney Andersen, though we all respect Disney, but the real thing. That is why you, a researcher in literature from China, and I are working together to communicate seriously about grounded Hans Christian Andersen for Chinese children, Chinese schools, and Chinese people. That is very important because it is nice that more and more Chinese people are doing it and coming here as tourists. But no matter Chinese or Russian, Italian, Germans and Americans, they have to

know that Andersen is a serious artist. All that demands serious and continuous studying on Andersen's works, because that is where everything starts, and then his reputation and so on. So, I think that is what we are going to do. That is a new way of studying Andersen, including but not limited in literary study, studying his life and his values.

Because as human beings, people from different countries can meet and see the same values to be a child, to have imagination, to love, and to know about love. All these are positive things for all people to be gathered around and to be in a harmonious community, which is great. I am an idealist and we are doing something. If we are sitting in Wuhan, or in Washington DC, or in Odense, studying Andersen's literature and only writing articles for each other, we would not open the mind. We are doing serious studies but we have to communicate around the city, the country, Europe, China, and the world. We have to do both. Hans Christian Andersen represents positive values, which you and I need as human beings. We need to recognize the child inside you and inside me, who knows best about the world, the living and the values in living. It is part of the human being. As a human being, everyone should have such values like to be brave to cross borders, to go outside and see what you are curious about. Meeting each other in respect for these values. No matter where you are raised, you have been a child with imagination, with love to your mother, with love to human beings. That is Andersen's stories about. The most original community is your family. The love between you and your mother is very original. Andersen never forgot that. He never forgot the heart, the love for mother to child, which is the first experience in loving other people and the fundamental emotion of human beings. That is part of studying Andersen. People can understand that cross nationalities, cross religions. That is one of my great experiences travelling in China to see that even though Hans Christian Andersen was a Christian and wrote on Christian values, his values can be recognized as belonging to all human beings by you, who come from other culture and different religious traditions. They are human being values. We all can achieve the agreement on this part on the same level. It is transnational, transcultural and trans-religions. These are values deep down in his works.

Lyu: I believe there will be more flourishing studies on Andersen across the world. Among all sessions of the conference, "Ethics and Values in Andersen" seemed to have drawn most attention and aroused heated discussion. What do you think about the ethical power of Andersen's works?

Johs.: I recognized the same thing. It was a thing like sort of a magnet. Everybody

wanted to discuss ethical values and I think it is great that it was discussed and it was very good and powerful discussion. That is because all of us were in the bottom of Andersen's stories and discussing what are ethical values. I think that is healthy and great discussion. I don't think there is one answer to Andersen's values because that is what you read in Andersen and what I read in Andersen. The discussion on ethics and values of Andersen is very important. Really, we are discussing what are ethical values. And we do this in *Thumbelina* and whatever because he makes models in a way and he is so strong in his ethical values. Love is good and evil people are so evil, so we can discuss that. I think that is ethics and values in Andersen. I am very proud that we did that as one of the themes. It was Anne Klara Bom who said we should have that. I think this is one of the coming up themes for international and global research of Andersen because the world today is discussing ethical values. That is the same thing in the beginning of the interview. Today we are in a way close to each other because of travelling around, television and some other technologies. Everybody seems to know everyone. But do we? When it comes to the end, do we? We have to make these discussions on ethical values and that's why I was so proud. After that we exactly were starting this discussion. And I'm sure in about 5 or 10 years that ethical values in Andersen are going to be a very great topic in Andersen research. It did not used to be like that because Andersen was Andersen and you could not discuss his values. But, of course, you can because we are discussing our values in doing that. So, I think that's very important because that's also a way of Chinese and northern Europe, for example, Danish people to get close to each other and to discuss what you think of childhood, and so on. That's to be human being, I think.

But what I heard at the days of conference is that we don't define ethical values in the same way. That was interesting because Professor Nie Zhenzhao and I might have very splendid discussion and in a way we both agree with each other on what is ethical but I am not sure we think the same as for the word "ethical." That's interesting. To get into further discussion on what is the meaning of "ethical," you are very pretty close to who you are as a human being and what you are doing with the next generation. It is about values in school systems. Both of us know Danish or Swedish or Norwegian schools are very different from Chinese schools. But they are all children. So, talking about ethical values in a Chinese first class of 7-or-8-year old children and Danish ones, is very different. That's what we are trying to approve in the Systime project. We provide materials and let both Chinese and Danish children read them, then we have a look at what they are reading and experiencing. I think that will give us a chance to discuss how we as grownups

and educational people are handling and making this thing as a culture. That's the ethical power of Andersen's works. They are values.

Lyu: Do you think it is right if I say that the ethical value is the core and central part of community because in my opinion ethics means a kind of orders, rules and rituals in a certain community or society. That is why we got different opinions on definition of ethics and that's what you said if Danish children and Chinese children read the same fairy tale, they have different understandings and get different values.

Johs.: I think it is very exciting to discuss it. Maybe, but I am not quite sure, ethical values in our culture in Denmark make us very difficult to talk about the nation though the nation has some values that grounded our laws and so on. But all Danish philosophers would say ethical values are in a single human being as an individual. Whereas maybe you Chinese would be more around the community, but I am not sure. That is interesting. You might think more of being in China, but ethical values in Denmark are very individualized, more than in China. But I think you might be culturally breaking up from one China to another much more global China now.

Lyu: Exactly. We are not limited in the ethics of a country or a society but also view ethics as the values and orders across the world and among human beings. And we also think of it from the point of individuals. We would talk about ethical identity of being a mother or a daughter in a core family and as a human being of only a part of the earth and the environment. Indeed, we think more about the country, but the fundamental thing should be the same and we are starting from the individuals because everyone has multiple ethical identities.

Johs.: Exactly, that is interesting. That is why we are in one culture but at the same time we are different.

Lyu: Yes, we are different because we live in distinct cultures. When we make ethical choices, we must consider the unique ethical identity in a certain community.

Johs.: Ethical values are about choices. Our cultural surroundings and cultural history are different. As human beings, we quite agree with what is right and what is wrong. Maybe in different ways we are bound up in our cultural history. We have 150-year-old tradition in northern part of Europe of thinking individual before the society. I do think in Chinese culture it is a different tradition. It is interesting to have these talks because we can know what is different. We of course do agree in the same values. I never met one of my splendid colleagues in China who would

not say yes. Of course, we know the same but there are differences because we are on different cultural status. That is what Mads is also studying in Russia which is another background. From the first day when I visited China in 2010 as the first one from SDU going there I began to search for a scholar studying Hans Christian Andersen. That is the very beginning but now I know so many of you. Especially on this conference one fourth of all participants were from Asia, mainly from China. I met new colleagues and friends studying Andersen from China. And this is the first time ever we have a conference where Western and Chinese researchers on Andersen get together, including some scholars from south America and Brazil.

Lyu: There seems a special relation between Andersen and China. He mentioned China several times in his works and even wrote a Chinese story in *The Nightingale*. You seem to be also interested in Chinese studies of Andersen and co-edited *Hans Christian Andersen in China* (2014). What do you expect for Andersen studies in China in the future?

Johs.: I do expect continuous study going on because young scholars are doing that. At our center, we have visiting scholars including Li Hongye, Li Wenjie, Bo Ling and you. There are a lot of scholars in the field of humanity studying Andersen in universities in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Hunan, Hubei, Nanjing, and Hongkong. Around these bright scholars there are more young people who are doing the studies. You will be the next generation to lift it up. It is growing and I think you are going to spread what you know about Andersen. There will be more qualified translation to help Chinese people get real and good texts and solid and deep knowledge on Andersen and know that he is not only a writer of fairy tales but also wrote more than 1000 poems, novels, plays, travelogues and so on. That is what you are doing and why you are being here. You are studying the more and the greater Andersen. You and your colleagues are making Andersen's study growing in China and we have young scholars here who are interested in your studies. We will continue this cooperation and collaboration. That will make an influence on both our and your studies on Andersen. Because the language is difficult for both you and us, we have to break through this and we are doing that. I think in 10 years there will be at least double up in the number of scholars doing Andersen. I think some Chinese scholars think Andersen is about children's literature. Yes, he is. But he is much more than that. He is ethical and for grownups as well. I think that is a new experience for many modern Chinese scholars that Andersen is much bigger than children's literature. Actually, European and American children's literature are in a way standing on his shoulders. There are a lot of European children's literature

writers referred to Andersen. Astrid Lindgren¹ referred to Andersen all the time and said without Andersen no Astrid Lindgren. James M. Barrie², creator of Peter Pan and Wendy, also referred to Andersen. Lewis Carroll³, living at the same time, and Andersen admired each other. And J. K. Rowling⁴, the author of *Harry Potter*, is so fond of Andersen. So, Andersen is there. Of course, we could study Andersen in children's literature but he is more than that.

Lyu: The first and most important thing we have to do is to let people know more about Andersen.

Johs.: That is the responsibility of scholars of your generation, and that is why I am so proud of you being here. I am very happy Chinese universities are sending young scholars like you to this place. You are here building up a bridge.

Lyu: I will try my best to do it. As you mentioned, Andersen wrote not only fairy tales, but also novels, poems and prose. Even though his works have been translated into more than 150 languages, we have to admit that in most countries, he is best known as a writer of children's literature. Could you please talk more about this phenomenon?

Johs.: Yes. Even in Denmark, it is a quite new experience that Andersen is more than a writer of children's literature. Going 50 or 70 years back, most researchers and scholars in Denmark would say he is for children but he is interesting for others. Today we know that Andersen is not only for children but also for all mankind and for all ages. I think that experience is becoming much stronger today that Andersen did not write for children specially. He wrote for all human beings.

Lyu: Did that change happen in the recent 20 years?

Johs.: Yes, I think so. The previous head of the center, Professor Johan de Mylius was in fact one of the first to point out that Andersen is much more than children's literature. The famous American literary scholar, Harold Bloom, pointed out the western literary canon and selected 10 or 15 works representing western society's

1 Astrid Lindgren (1907-2002) was a Swedish writer, best known for several children's book series, featuring Pippi Longstocking, etc.

2 James M. Barrie (1860-1937) was a Scottish novelist and playwright, best remembered today as the creator of Peter Pan.

3 Lewis Carroll (1832-1898) was an English writer of world-famous children's fiction, notably *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its sequel *Through the Looking-Glass*.

4 J. K. Rowling (1965-) is a British novelist, philanthropist, film producer, television producer and screenwriter, best known for writing the *Harry Potter* fantasy series.

values, like Shakespeare, but he did not mention Andersen. When he was asked why Andersen was not there, he said Andersen is for children so he cannot be in the western canon. Harold Bloom was very influential and that was 20 years ago. Maybe his recognition for Andersen only for children made some of us speaking very loudly, “No, Mr. Bloom, Andersen is not only for children.” Klaus Müller-Wille is one of the first to break through and says that Andersen’s fairy tales, novels, poems are in a way about uncanny thing. Andersen wrote a lot of things in shadow, the dangers outside things. In fairy tales, they are called shadows. There is always something surrounding happiness and ethical values. It is like a quarrel between light and darkness. Andersen did not write tales just with canny and cozy things, but dangerous things.

Lyu: This new perspective of studying Andersen does not only focus on protagonists but also the potentially mysterious dangers around them.

Johs.: Exactly. We are in a new era studying Andersen. He is becoming greater and bigger. Of course, we deeply respect Andersen as for children but he is so much more than that at the same time. I think that is important.

Lyu: What impressed me most on the conference and during my visit at the center is the various approaches to study Andersen. In 2015, you and other members of H. C. Andersen Center published a book titled *Hans Christian Andersen’s Magic Trunk*, with a subtitle “Short tales commented on in images and words.” Among the fifteen tales collected in the book, there are well-known fairytales like *The Little Matchstick Girl* and *The Swineherd*, as well as some less known tales. Is there any special reason for you to collect these 15 tales?

Johs.: This book was made originally a Danish edition. It was the first year of Hans Christian Andersen Festival and it was six years ago. In August 2005, the first great Hans Christian Andersen Festival was held in Odense and I had the opportunity to be one of the founders. We made this book as a gift for all children in Class Eight on Fyn island. These students are about 15 years old. We thought all kids in Fyn need a book on Andersen, and it should be a book where we comment very shortly and precisely on his fairy tales, trying to give small analysis and make it clear for the young ones to see what are Andersen’s works and tell them a way to read them. Then we asked some young artists to make new pictures as illustration to each tale. One of the best is *Princess on the Pea*, created by a 21-year-old artist, presenting a modern girl as the princess. I love this marvelous work. These images represent modernism. These young artists were free to do what they wanted. At last they presented not

only paintings but also pencil drawings, collage, even embroidery. The fascination and imagination were contributions of young artists. This is the story of the book and behind the book. This book is a gift to about 10,000 children to celebrate the first Hans Christian Andersen Festival and used for one month in class. It was a kind of educational work we did. We did not publish this Danish book at once. We did it one year before the festival. All these fifteen tales must be short because we firstly put them in a local newspaper. Every article here was put in the newspaper with illustration. Three months before the festival, the students had the book.

Lyu: Andersen's works have been illustrated by many people of different generations and you built a bridge between Andersen and arts of the young generation.

Johs.: These art works are quite original. It is very important to put those absolutely unknown tales in this book to let the children know them. After that we translated it into English and let more people know more about Andersen.

Lyu: Andersen's works are now considered as an essential part of the world literary classics. What makes his works universal?

Johs.: That might be a very long talk but I would not do that. There are three points I am going to talk. One is that Andersen might be the first literary artist in the world who had both children's and grownups' perspectives. He was the first to see children as part of grownups' world because in a way he is pointing out that inside the grownup, either good or evil people, there is a child, a voice and imagination bound to what one wants to experience as a child. He was the first one to do that.

Then Andersen broke down the old fairy tale's genre and built up a new one. This new genre really makes him unique in the world. He was the first one ever to break through. Of course, E.T.A. Hoffmann¹ in Germany and Lewis Carroll in England and some others also did that but Andersen did that consequently. He broke down the old genre and created a new one. We call it fairy tales but it is not. In a way it is Andersen fairy tales. The common genre of fairy tale is like the pattern of *Little Red Riding Hood*, which is about a young girl had very good times then she was brought out and walked to her grandmother's house but then she left her road and the wolf came and then after all she came home again. This broke

1 E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776-1822) was a German Romantic author of fantasy and Gothic horror, a jurist, composer, music critic, draftsman and caricaturist. He is also the author of the novella *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*. Hoffmann's stories highly influenced 19th-century literature, and he is one of the major authors of the Romantic movement.

Andersen up. The little girl never gets to her grandmother in a way. The endings are open. You are not safe and you never know what would happen because the protagonists are from outside and now in a new world. There they have to find qualities and ethical values. They are doing that by heart. In the Holy Bible, there is a very famous quotation by Paul, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” Of all great values, the greatest value is love and love conquers all. Love is the greatest. That is Andersen’s place in literature. Love conquers everything. To get into communities, for Andersen, he had to break up. He could not write in the unfit form on them but to make the fairy tale a new genre. This new genre makes him unique in the world, being a leading figure of many authors and literary artists like him to break through traditions.

Andersen is one of the first looking into the new world. Because in his living time, from 1805 to 1875, Europe was growing up to a new age of industrialization. There was a new industrial Europe, a world with electromagnetism, steam engines, industrial factories, travelling people, old hierarchies breaking down and democracies spreading around. He commented on all he saw during his travelling. He was a witness of the modern Europe coming up. All of these were handled by Andersen in a new genre. When he was an elder, he in a way was in regret with the genre of fairy tale identifying that it is not fairy tale and not for children but are stories. In 1835, he began to publish fairy tales for children, but then he found himself stuck into that, and when he was about 60 years old he said “I am writing not fairy tales, not for children. I am writing stories.”

He broke through to new genre. In this new genre, his way of writing is very recognizable. His language is very colloquial and Andersen is good at telling stories in an extremely straightforward way. “There came a soldier marching down the high road — one, two! one, two! He had his knapsack on his back and his sword at his side as he came home from the wars.”¹ At the very beginning of *The Tinder Box*, one can easily know how does a soldier look exactly and what a soldier is doing. He has been to the war and now he is back home. Andersen has enormous such introductions to stories. He is a genius in opening a story. Directly and so simple. “The Emperor of China is a Chinaman, as you most likely know, and everyone around him is a Chinaman too.” (*The Nightingale*) How simple it could be! I often view this as the simplest in the world. That is unique.

Lyu: Do you think he is writing in the logic of a child?

1 All the quotations of Andersen’s tales are from Jean Hersholt’s translation presented on the webpage of Hans Christian Andersen Center. http://andersen.sdu.dk/vaerk/index_e.html

Johs.: Exactly. I wonder, too. Because it is so simple then it is very complicated. We have to find out what is behind the simplicity. What is behind the soldier coming marching in *The Tinder Box*. The ugly witch came up and said, “Good evening, soldier,” and then magic is opening. Later, “he cut her head off.” So easily and without any more explanation. Children readers would say, “Ok, she lost her head and let us go on.” It is genius to do that. *The Nightingale* is a very deeply complicated story but the children would say it is not complicated but very easy to understand. “In the garden the rarest flowers bloomed, and to the prettiest ones were tied little silver bells which tinkled so that no one could pass by without noticing them.” It is funny that the flower has to have a bell then you do not miss it. “The Emperor’s palace was the wonder of the world. It was made entirely of fine porcelain, extremely expensive but so delicate that you could touch it only with the greatest of care.” In Danish language, the word “Chinese” and “china” refer to porcelain. The china world is like a glass world. In the story of *The Nightingale*, Andersen is building up a porcelain world in Europe. In the dictionary at Andersen’s time the word “china” and “Chinese” both means a country and people from that country but also porcelain. The second meaning is “fragile.” That gives the fairy tale a new meaning. It implies the artificial world and the emperor’s heart. It is a metaphor.

Lyu: In his fairy tales, Andersen always juxtaposes everyday life with magic or supernatural power. What do you think of the relationship between his imagination and his love of travel, science and fine arts?

Johs.: That is a nice question. Andersen lived during the Romantic era and Romantics had the idea that there was spirit filled in and governing everything. There were some power lines making the world being together. It is not religious but a way of scientific idea from this time. It was a great idea that no Greek thinking Platonism in a way is from Plato. Andersen in that matter was a romantic, so for him science and imagination, fine arts are the same thing. An interesting thing is that Hans Christian Ørsted, a Dane too, living at the same time with Andersen, was a great scientist who described electromagnetism as the first one in the world. It was the technology that makes it possible to make motors on the electricity and it was the first global communication system, telegraph, which linked America and Europe. The telegraph was built through all Russia to China from Copenhagen in Andersen’s time. They were good friends and they both saw science and poetics as in a way the same thing exploring imagination, exploring the power of the world and the spirit. Andersen was very interested in science and loved to write about

science. He loved to discuss with Hans Christian Ørsted about what is science. In 1862, when people put the first telegraph cable from France to the northern part of America, Andersen showed great interest in this new creature and wrote a fairy tale about it, which is called *The Great Sea-Serpent*. It is a story of an enormous “snake” in the bottom of the ocean. One fish said, “It has no scales! It has no skin! I don’t believe it will ever bear young ones!” but a little fish said, “Perhaps that enormously long, thin serpent is the most wonderful fish in the ocean.” Andersen often discussed science matters. He loved science because he saw it as the same as the fine art in a way.

Andersen also loved travelling. He was fascinated by every new thing. His first travel is very famous with the train in the eastern part of Germany from Magdeburg to Leipzig. He travelled for the first time in 1840 with the train and wrote about it in the travel book called *En Digters Bazar (A Poet’s Bazaar)* (1842). It was the first travel book. He was so impressed that this machine could carry and walk at the speed of 30 kilometers per hour. He was so interested in everything about travelling. At the same time, he was scared. But he still always travelled around. He was a seeking man never satisfied with community which he was in, but always searching on his way from one community to another and he said I never got there.

Lyu: For Andersen, science is the result of imagination. He could see both the optimistic and pessimistic sides of technology. He can feel the potential dangers of it and the unease in an unfamiliar environment. Thank you very much for taking this interview!

Works Cited

- Andersen, Hans Christian. *En Digters Bazar*. København: Forlagt af Universitets-Boghandler C. A. Reitzel, 1842.
- . *The Complete Andersen*. Trans. Jean Hersholt. New York: Heritage Press, 1949.
- Bloom, Harold. *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994.
- Frandsen, Johs. Nørregaard, Sun Jian and Torben Grøngaard Jeppesen. Ed. *Hans Christian Andersen in China*. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2014.
- Kryger, Lene and Johs. Nørregaard Frandsen. Ed. *Hans Christian Andersen’s Magic Trunk*. Odense: UP of Southern Denmark, 2015.
- 聂珍钊：《文学伦理学批评导论》。北京：北京大学出版社，2014年。
- [Nie Zhenzhao. *Introduction to Ethical Literary Criticism*. Beijing: Peking UP, 2014.]