



THE KINGDOM OF DENMARK
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In 2005 the bicentenary of Hans Christian Andersen will be celebrated worldwide. This event provides an obvious and welcome occasion for a closer inspection of Denmark's great author.

The time has come, not only to celebrate Hans Christian Andersen as a highly acclaimed and renowned children's author, but also to acknowledge him for the many-faceted poet and writer he was. A man of many dimensions, dreams and depths, his visions are still universal for all people today.

The objective of the Hans Christian Andersen 2005 Foundation is to revitalize our approach to Hans Christian Andersen and broaden our knowledge about his work. Consequently, three central aspects: art, education and tourism, will manifest Hans Christian Andersen's unique ability to create an international language that speaks to what makes us truly human: our hearts.

Hans Christian Andersen was a man of the world and reflected mankind's preoccupation with questions about human nature. It is therefore an honour for me to invite you to join the worldwide celebration.

Anker Boye

Mayor of the City of Odense
Chairman of the Board



Hans Christian Andersen

On a beautiful spring day in May 1836, Friday the 13th, Hans Christian Andersen as so often before wrote a delightfully gossipy letter at his Copenhagen domicile to his lady friend Henriette Hanck in his hometown of Odense. Matters great and small revolved from his pen; news from the world of theatre and literature; a little personal tittle-tattle, especially about himself, his plans and his activities. The young literary comet made sure that his old home turf was alert and ready to applaud.

As a young urban dandy he was fatigued, as he wrote, by the throbbing life of the capital. But "today we have finally had a Nordic summer day! I have also fluttered about – and where? In boutiques. Unfortunately, I was unable to acquire the clothes I desired. Raphael (a clothier) was my best solace. "Poet Andersen, Esquire!" he said, "I shall order it from Hamburg, to be yours in a fortnight!" – Poet, Esquire! Is that not a beautiful name in mundane life? "Poet, Esquire", my tailor and cobbler write on their invoices."

← Portrait of Hans Christian Andersen painted in 1836 by C.A. Jensen (1792-1870). The painting was well received at its unveiling and was considered a good likeness. Hans Christian Andersen himself was excited by the work and the event, which he described in a letter: 'The ladies were seated all around with binoculars to witness the poet who in this likeness really appears ingenious!' This letter is on display at Hans Christian Andersen House.

→ Hans Christian Andersen storytelling in the Collin family home. Old Jonas Collin – with the tall hat – had been Andersen's benefactor since 1822. Andersen later became very attached to the family. Fresco by the Danish artist Niels Larsen Stevns exhibited in Hans Christian Andersen House.



The novels will make you famous, the fairytales will make you immortal!

A poet – that is how he saw himself, not as a children's storyteller, by far. Then, in 1836, he had already completed a large and quite ambitious production: several collections of poems, plays, opera lyrics, a travelogue and one on an imaginative journey, a novel about his beloved Italy, an autobiography – kept in the desk drawer for almost 100 years – and two small, inconspicuous booklets with *Fairy Tales Told for Children* written to "win the coming generations", as he said lightheartedly in another letter to Henriette Hanck. Or rather, to see if there was urgently needed money to be made within this genre.

His good friend and spiritual mentor, the physicist and natural philosopher Hans Christian Ørsted – the discoverer of electromagnetism and the first to extract aluminium – had read the novels on Italy and the fairytales and addressed these prophetic

words to him: "If the novels will make you famous, the fairytales will make you immortal!" Andersen's spontaneous comment was one of disbelief – not believing that the fairytales would make him immortal.

To be a novelist was something far more modern and esteemed than writing fairytales for children. "I want to be the first novelist in Denmark!" he wrote on that spring day in 1836 in continuation of the letter. "In my remote existence, these few souls will recognize that I am a true poet. Had I been French or English, then the world would have known my name. Now I wither, and my songs with me; no one hears them in distant, impoverished Denmark."

However, this pathetic and theatrical notion far from reflected the truth. As early as 1836, Andersen could look back at one major success at least.

The Improviser, his first novel to be published in Germany – almost simultaneously with the Danish version in 1835 – was well received. His travelogue *Shadow Pictures* and several of his poems had been published in German translation. So Andersen was already well on his way to establishing his name beyond Danish borders. However, proclaiming that he and his songs would wither away was not just a question of posturing. Beneath the light-hearted and humorous surface of his authorship there is, as several of his contemporaries commented, an undertone of melancholy that borders on bleak resignation and desperation.

Every tale must end at last

From beginning till end, death plays a major role in Andersen's narrative world; and in the fairytales as well. Just think of *The Little Matchstick Girl*, *The Fir Tree*, *The Little Mermaid*, *The Brave Tin Soldier*, *The Story of a Mother*, *The Red Shoes*, *The Daisy*, *The Old House*, *The Snowman* – one could go on.

This can be illustrated by three examples. The 1845 Christmas tale about the Christmas tree, which never had a chance to live before its life ended, finishes with the words: "However, that was over now – the tree gone, the story at an end. All, all was over – every tale must end at last!" In one of Andersen's most eloquently narrated stories, *What the Wind Told about Valdemar Daae and His Daughters* (1859), the whistling wind creates a lyrical chorus that also conveys the message of the story, "Huh-uh-ush! roar along!" - i.e. that everything goes with the wind. In one of his last stories, *Auntie Toothache* (1872), he writes with a humour blackened by worldliness that everything goes to the bin, even that not intended for the bin.

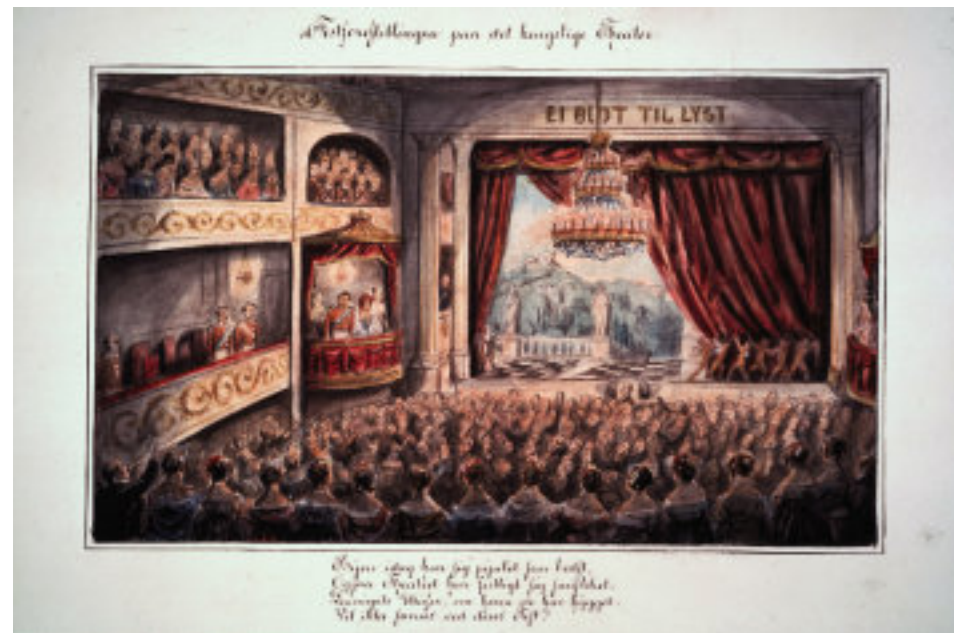
→ In 1848, the German version of Hans Christian Andersen's collected fairytales, *Gesammelte Märchen*, was published with 112 illustrations by the Danish artist Vilhelm Pedersen (1820-59). The fully illustrated Danish version was not published until the following year.





← The manuscript for *The Little Mermaid* was published in 1937 in the third booklet of *Fairy Tales Told for Children*. Sadly, the original manuscripts for *The Little Mermaid* and *The Emperor's New Clothes* were stolen from Hans Christian Andersen House in the summer of 1992.

→ The theatre was a central part of Hans Christian Andersen's life. In his youth he longed to perform on stage. Later in life, he saw many of his plays and opera librettos staged and his status as a writer gave him liberal access to the theatre. Hans Christian Andersen's theatre was the old Royal Theatre built in 1748 to the design of the celebrated architect Nikolaj Eigtved. This picture depicts the premiere of *The Elfin Hill* in 1828. Although intimate and compact, the old theatre actually seated up to 800. The theatre was demolished in 1874 and replaced by the present Royal Theatre.



The hidden script in the heart's book

Andersen's tragic undertone underpins the great humour of his fairytales and stories. There is a depth and width in his outlook on life that renders his art playfully light and bouncy while touching a chord with lasting reverberations. Just as the story goes with *The Little Mermaid*, who dances more gracefully than anyone at the Prince's court, so light and bouncy as a bubble – but she suffered with every step as if her feet were cut by knives; indeed, as the knife she sensed when her fish tail was cut in twain as human legs.

This not only refers to Andersen and the Mermaid, it was a theme of the times – the fragmented and grieving times that followed in the aftermath of Romanticism when a new reality and modernity in human understanding came knocking on

the door. We find the same preoccupation with hidden suffering as a prerequisite of great poetry with Andersen's contemporary, the Danish philosopher, theologian and poet Søren Kierkegaard.

Kierkegaard went to great lengths in revealing for posterity that he had carried an unspeakable secret: a 'Thorn in the Flesh', a hidden suffering, an inner driving force behind his enormous production. And Andersen, whose Mermaid is, after all, dumb and unable to tell the Prince who she is and thus loses love and life, confides to his lady friend in Odense that there are pages of the heart's book that are so thoroughly stuck together that no one can open them to read the hidden script.

The Fairy Tale of My Life

It may seem surprising that Hans Christian Andersen of all – a great living legend who gave his autobiography the title *The Fairy Tale of My Life* (1855) – should belong to this category. But if you look more carefully at his life, you do after all sense that much lies behind the success that could give rise to the tragic undertone of his portrayal of life in his fairytales and all other works. With his social background, Andersen like no other contemporary Danish writer and few great European writers drew from experience. As a son of a poor shoemaker and a washerwoman in the

town of Odense, Andersen came from the lower end of society. During his early years in Copenhagen, to which he sought in a highly daring, adventurous breakaway at the young age of 14 to pursue a theatrical career, he by and large survived on a subsistence minimum despite the support of benefactors. He struggled for three years (1819-1822) to break into the glamorous world of the theatre as either a singer, an actor or finally, in sheer desperation over all his failures, as a playwright – but all in vain. Three years during which he met more than his measure of both the front and flipside of life in the city.

The difficult school years

Then came the difficult school years paid for by the King's coffers, e.g. the Foundation ad *Usus Publicos* (i.e. for public purpose) benefiting the arts and sciences. They were years of torment. He began grammar school far too late, at the age of 17, and with a background bound to cause trouble: irregular attendance at the charity school in Odense and three years of intermittent private tuition in Copenhagen. Finally in 1828, he graduated from grammar school and had his debut as an author in 1829. For the first 6-8 years of his career, he was so financially restrained that his dependence on benefactors, such as the Collin family, was humiliating. You can tell when you read his diaries that Andersen harboured his bitter experience throughout life, especially from his early years in Copenhagen and his school years in Slagelse and Elsinore. It never quite left him. It remained in his mind, and not least his subconscious mind where it would resurface as nightmares or as elements of poetry.

Who was he? Where did he belong?

His break with his social background – the fact that he left home so early to realise the potential he felt he had and to escape poverty – gave him a fundamental identity problem with which to struggle.

Who was he? Where did he belong? Who would accept him, and as what?

That is what made him the poet able to write *The Ugly Duckling* (1843) about the cygnet that was so ugly and clumsy and completely out of place everywhere until it met its kin and found its true identity. It had been a swan all along but had been unaware. Its surroundings had no idea either, and unable to square the ugly duckling into being just one of them, they harassed it instead. This is what urged him to write novel after

novel on the issues of social identity, among other things. Or write the play *The Mulatto* (1840), one of his great theatre successes – an exotic, colourful drama about an outsider, the Mulatto, who was neither white nor black and who got caught up in the slave uprising.

No being is bound by nature to love me

In fact, Andersen's life was in constant upheaval. It was a life of perpetual unease, both spiritually and geographically. As a person and as a poet, he was always in transit and undergoing change. Privately, he lived in a strange provisional state. He never established his own family – nor did Søren Kierkegaard – and always stayed in boarding-house-like accommodations when not staying at hotels or at Danish manor homes or travelling on one of his many – 29 or 30 depending on how you add them up – journeys abroad, often of long duration. In all, Andersen spent 9 years of his life abroad on travels.

A life created for writing, which towards the end of his career, at least, frantically sought to exchange death and oblivion for fame and immortality.

Immense loneliness was part of the price he had to pay. Amidst the adoration he was subject to, especially from abroad, his solitude was irredeemable. When his mother, whom he rarely visited since breaking up from Odense, died deeply alcoholised at the poorhouse in 1833 while he was in Rome, he wrote to his lady friend Henriette Wulff in Copenhagen, "Now I am completely alone – no being is bound by nature to love me."



← Hans Christian Andersen often sketched on his travels, and 250 of his drawings still exist. The themes are generally places he visited on his 30 trips abroad. Many of the drawings were later used to illustrate his works. This drawing dates from his first major journey (1833-1834) to France, Switzerland and Italy and encapsulates Andersen's understandable awe when seeing the Simplon Pass between Switzerland and France.



↑ Riborg Voigt – the great love of Hans Christian Andersen's youth. He met her in her home town of Fåborg in the summer of 1830. Although the attraction was undoubtedly mutual, their love was doomed as she was already engaged. Their subsequent occasional meetings inspired him to write the fairytale *The Sweethearts*.

The Sweethearts

The two women he fell in love with – Riborg Voigt and Jenny Lind – both declined him. Riborg was betrothed to another. Perhaps this – in 1839 – only provided the impetus for the young Andersen to become a poet, as a poet should be – someone suffering from unrequited love and expressing it through poetry. He had a leather bag around his neck when he died containing her farewell letter. A strange gesture, for he had not thought of her for many years, and the last poetry he had written about their relationship was the rather cynical story *The Sweethearts* (1843) where she features as the ball that in its youth jumped higher than the spinning top and finally was lost out of sight because it fell in love with a swallow. But the ball fell in



the gutter where it lay seeping for many years. Jenny Lind, 'The Swedish Nightingale', declined matrimony. She only wanted him as a "brother" and called him a "child" when she turned him away. But he had a hard time recovering from falling in love with this artist, otherwise so spiritually akin to him. For many years to follow, a bust of her stood next to a bust of himself in his living room in Nyhavn.

Was his fundamental identity problem – also in bonding with a woman – that he was, in fact, homosexual? Several people have voiced that opinion. The theory has been about since 1901 and is generally pinned to the fact that Andersen regularly forged strong emotional ties with certain men.

← Hans Christian Andersen became infatuated with the Swedish soprano Jenny Lind (1820-87) on her first visit to Denmark. They grew close over the next few years but Hans Christian Andersen remained unsure about his true feelings for her. In 1845, she settled the issue by proposing a toast to 'her brother'. She married the pianist Otto Goldschmidt in 1852. They settled in Leipzig and later in London where Andersen met her again.

Great poet, great toothache

It is, however, a fact that Andersen never had a physical sexual relationship with either a man or a woman. (Having a labile sexual identity is not the same as being homosexual). It would be more correct to say that his feelings had no gender. He was a sexual being, his diaries tell us, but it never came to fruition. He fell in love with women whom he could never think of in sexual terms. But on the other hand, he was sexually attracted to women he would never dare touch for moral and religious reasons – and for reasons of health.

It would be wrong to simply focus on the personal woes in Andersen's life story. After all, he did to a certain degree choose the road he took and to endure the problems mentioned here, and more. He wanted to be a poet and to be immortal, and succeeded in both. In the *words of Satania Infernalis*, toothache incarnate in *Auntie Toothache*, "Great poet, great toothache; small poet, small toothache." That was the price he had to pay, and he knew it.

To set things right

And when it comes to the social misery he fled to become an artist, it stayed with him not only as a bitter memory or dark trauma, it was a reality he sought to convey to his readers again and again. It existed right outside their doorstep, but they closed their eyes to it. That he could and would not do. This is why he had to tell them about *The Little Matchstick Girl* and about the fate of the mother in *She was Good for Nothing*, but also about their own world where *The Shadow* is mistaken for a man, or where a small boy is the first to see and dare say that the emperor bares no clothes. And also why he had to tell them about the soldier of fortune in *The Tinder Box*, who turns things upside down.

Nature, always referred to by Andersen whether in the realm of art or society, always "sets things right". That is what happens in *The Ugly Duckling*, *The Nightingale* and *The Bell*.

I was born in Denmark

But for Andersen himself, nature was not enough. He peered inwards in search of it and out in the world around him and yet further – from his inner voice, his constant drifting and restlessness, his insatiable wanderlust outward towards the journey beyond death in a steady advance towards God.

This is the journey of *The Little Mermaid*, and it was Andersen's own. In constant transformation – also on the other side of the great divide called "the unknown land" in *The Story of a Mother*.

The first line of Andersen's patriotic song *I Danmark er jeg født, der har jeg hjemme*, i.e. 'In Denmark I was born' – 'there' meaning in earthly life. This is how he wanted to view Denmark, although he would occasionally curse the place for not understanding him.



↑ Exhibition on the man Hans Christian Andersen. Stereoscope with photographs of Hans Christian Andersen. Photo: Jakob Boserup, 2003. Odense City Museums

→ The birthplace of Hans Christian Andersen. Photo: Wermund Bendtsen. Odense City Museums



Odense, Denmark – home and points of departure

Do we understand him better today? Since 1905, he has certainly found a 'home' in his hometown, Odense. The house in Hans Jensens stræde – the centre of the Hans Christian Andersen Museum – is a point of departure for much of the information made available on his life and work, a position shared with the Royal Library in Copenhagen and the Hans Christian Andersen Centre at the University of Southern Denmark in Odense.

He has no less than two homes in Odense, since his childhood home in Munkemøllestræde is a museum as well. Both places have been transformed up to the bicentennial of his birth in 2005 and reflect the changing approach in Andersen research and in the way his works are received today. Up until 2005 and beyond – in a world totally different from that of Hans Christian Andersen – we are still able to experience him and his work as something that speaks directly to us, no matter

our language or cultural background. Andersen transverse all borders in time and place. This is why such great effort is being made in relating this story – organised by the Hans Christian Andersen 2005 Foundation with the kingdom of Denmark and the hometown of Odense as points of departure, and with the entire world as a stage. So many poets are immortal but Andersen is universal. This is, after all, the most enchanting thing about him.

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Hans Christian Andersen, 1805-1875

1805 Hans Christian Andersen was born on 2 April in Odense. Place of birth unknown, although oral tradition cites the corner house at Hans Jensensstræde/Bangs Boder (part of the current HCA-Museum) as his place of birth. The first permanent family address was in Munkemøllestræde in 1807 – Andersen's childhood home until 1819. His father was a poor shoemaker and his mother a washerwoman.

1812 His first visit to the theatre in Odense where the boy's imagination was given form and direction.

1816 The father died of a disease contracted during his military service in the Napoleonic Wars (1812-1814). His mother remarried in 1818.

1819 A few months after his (Lutheran) confirmation, HCA travelled to Copenhagen to try his luck at the Royal Theatre. Supported by benefactors, whom he soon found, but still subsiding in deep poverty, he spent three years trying to gain foothold at the theatre as a dancer, singer and actor respectively. His benefactors provided some private tuition, but his school attendance in the Odense Charity School had been irregular and lacking in benefit.

1822 When all attempts at gaining footing had proved unsuccessful, HCA submitted some plays in desperation, which were rejected. However, the Theatre Director did recognise some talent, and HCA was offered a Royal Scholarship to attend the Slagelse Grammar School. Member of the Theatre Board and Deputy of Finance, Jonas Collin, took upon himself to be his guardian.

1826 HCA followed suit when the principal of the Slagelse Grammar School, Simon Meisling, in whose home HCA lived, moved to Elsinore. Under the impression of the repressive conditions at Meisling, he wrote his famous poem, *The Dying Child*.

1827 Collin reacted to HCA's complaints over his treatment by Meisling and took him out of school. HCA moved to Copenhagen and was tutored privately until graduating from grammar school. The same year, HCA published several poems in the leading periodical 'Kjøbenhavns flyvende Post'. *The Dying Child* appeared in a newspaper in Danish and German versions.

1828 HCA matriculated at Copenhagen University. One year later, he passed *Examen Philologicum et Philosophicum*, which was the entry exam to the university proper.

1829 Official debut with his first work of prose, the E.T.A. Hoffmann-inspired fantasy *Journey on Foot* and with the first theatre play, the vaudeville *Love in Nicolai Tower*. Both were a success.

1831 *Fantasies and Sketches*, HCA's most influential collection of poems from his youth. Travels to Germany where he met the poet Ludwig Tieck in Dresden and Adelbert von Chamisso in Berlin. On return the same year, he published his travelogue *Shadow Pictures*.

1832 HCA wrote the lyrics for a ballad opera, an opera and his first autobiography, *Levnedsbogen*, which however remained unpublished and unknown until 1926.

1833-34 A scholarship allowed HCA to travel through Germany, France and Italy destined for Rome where he joined the Danish artist colony and became a close friend of the sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen.

1835 He published his first novel, *The Improviser*, which is based on his experience in Italy, and the two first booklets of *Fairy Tales Told for Children*. The following years, he wrote several plays and a couple of novels. His novels were soon translated into German, Swedish and Dutch, and one even into Russian.

1837 His first trip to Sweden where HCA became acquainted with the Swedish authoress Fredrika Bremer. After a visit to Copenhagen, the French writer Xavier Marmier wrote a biographical article on HCA, which included a French translation of the poem *The Dying Child*. The article *Vie d'un poète* appeared in 'Revue de Paris' and had decisive influence on the awareness of HCA in Europe, since then it was reprinted, translated and cited in several languages.

1838 Søren Kierkegaard's first book *From the Papers of One Still Living* featured a review of HCA's 3rd novel *Only a Fiddler* where HCA was attacked as a novelist head on. The same year, HCA's financial situation was stabilised due to annual art grants.

1840 Success at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen with the drama *The Mulatto*, which was also performed at theatres in Stockholm and in his hometown Odense and by private touring theatre troupes. The same year, HCA embarked on a grand tour of Europe and the Orient where on the way he befriended, among others, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. On a later journey, also Franz Liszt.

1842 He published the travelogue *A Poets Bazaar* with the famous chapters on a concert with Franz Liszt and his experience with the railways.

1843 HCA commenced on a new series of booklets with the title *New Fairy Tales*, i.e. no longer 'Told for Children'. He fell in love with the Swedish singer Jenny Lind, who however declined him.

1844 HCA became acquainted with the young heir to the Grand Duchy of Saxon, Carl Alexander von Sachsen-Weimar. They became close friends, and the Prince urged HCA to move to Weima as a 'new Goethe' – not an idea to HCA's liking.

1845 HCA's novels were published in English for the first time.

1846 The first fairytales were published in English.

1847 HCA's collected works were published in Germany, including his first official autobiography. It was published in English the same year under the title *The True Story of My Life*. HCA's first journey to England and Scotland was a true triumph. There he befriended Charles Dickens.

1848 The fairytales were published in French.

1849 HCA was assigned to a new popular theatre, Casino, where a play of his was enormously successful.

1851 The travelogue *In Sweden* was published containing, e.g. his poetic credo. Just as his teacher and friend, the physicist H.C. Ørsted, he believed in the trinity of poetry, religion and natural science. HCA was appointed titular professor.

1852 HCA published his first collected works with the new title *Stories* where HCA followed the contemporary movement towards greater realism.

1853 The Danish edition of HCA's collected works was published. As a part of the series, his first official Danish autobiography, *The Fairy Tale of My Life*, was published as a revised and expanded version of the German edition.

1857 Second trip to England where HCA spent more than a month with Charles Dickens – this time to Dickens' great annoyance, since he was in the midst of divorce.

1860 (His autobiography quotes 1858). For the first time, and as the first Danish poet ever, HCA read to the newly established *Arbejderforening*, which was a conservative worker's association for the enlightenment of the working class. He gave approx. 20 readings to large audiences, on occasion 500-900 people. He was often commended for his involvement.

1862-63 HCA travelled to Spain with a short stay in Morocco. The travelogue *In Spain* was published in 1863.

1866 HCA travelled to Portugal. The travelogue *A visit to Portugal* was published in 1868.

1867 HCA was appointed titular Councillor of Odense and later became honorary citizen. He was celebrated with a torch procession in his honour.

1868 HCA Published the tale *The Dryad*, which draws on his experiences at the World Exhibition in Paris the year before. He befriended the young Danish critic Georg Brandes, who published an extensive article on HCA's fairy tales, which appeared in 'Illustreret Tidende' in 1869.

1870 HCA's sixth and last novel *Lucky-Peer* was published.

1871 HCA travelled to Norway.

1872 HCA published his last collection of fairytales.

1874 HCA was appointed Royal Councillor.

1875 Following prolonged sickness, HCA died on 4 August at the Melchior family countryseat 'Rolighed' where he was tended to towards the end of his life.