



Hans Christian Andersen

By Jens Andersen, Tiina Nunnally

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On the 200th anniversary of his birth, a new biography of the much-loved children's author, Hans Christian Andersen.

Hans Christian Andersen was a storyteller for children of all ages, but he was more than that. He was a critical journalist with great enthusiasm for science, an existential thinker, an observant travel book writer, a passionate novelist, a deft paper cut-out artist, a neurotic hypochondriac, and a man with intense but frustrated sexual desires. This startling and immensely readable, definitive new biography by Danish scholar Jens Andersen is essential to a full understanding of the man whose writing has influenced the lives of readers young and old for centuries. Jens Andersen sheds brilliant new light on Hans Christian Andersen's writings and on the writer whose own life had many aspects of the fairytale. Like some of the memorable characters he created, Andersen grew up in miserable and impoverished circumstances. He later propagated myths about his life and family, but this new biography uncovers much about this man that has never been revealed before.

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Hans Christian Andersen By Jens Andersen, Tiina Nunnally Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Danish biographer Andersen (no relation to his subject) provides a fascinating backdrop for the life of the acclaimed fairy tale writer on the 200th anniversary of his birth. The biography opens with 14-year-old Hans's arrival in Copenhagen and demonstrates how the teen's determination to break onto the stage, coupled with a prevailing sense of philanthropy among the wealthy, resulted in unique opportunities for the boy from Odense. His brilliant strategy to get one of his plays produced at the Royal Theater offers deep insight into his character. Throughout, Andersen deftly juxtaposes the facts with Hans's rewriting of his life in his autobiography, *The Fairy Tale of My Life*. Perhaps most provocatively, Andersen makes the case that Hans was shaped by the events and ideas of his era; he refers to the writer's rivalry with Kierkegaard and, coincidentally, the "elucidating light" that the philosopher's views about love cast on Hans's "preferred role" as "the chaste lover." The biographer reveals in some detail the unusual relationship between Hans and Edvard Collin as well as other platonic relationships with both men and women, describing the era's tolerant approach to love between the sexes. Some readers may be frustrated by the biographer's tendency to raise issues and then put off further exploration to a later chapter. But most will be caught up in this smoothly translated, accessible evaluation of a budding genius placed in the context of his time. (May)
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From [Booklist](#)

The Danes may consider Hans Christian Andersen, along with his contemporary (and rival) Søren Kierkegaard, one of their foremost literary treasures, but in America, when thought of at all, he is relegated to the children's shelves. This thick, fascinating new biography makes a good case for the great Dane's place among grownups. For the evocative, gracefully written fairy tales on which his international fame rests have great literary merit, and Andersen was a well-rounded man of letters, equally at home writing for the theater, for newspapers and magazines, and for book publishers. He was also a fascinating bundle of contradictions, and the extensively researched book reveals his multifacetedness: his considerable gifts as an oral storyteller; his eccentric, often annoying public habits; his ambivalent sexuality; his bouts of narcissism; his painfully slow transformation from rough-hewn provincial and awkward melodramatist into brilliant, internationally famous writer-celebrity. The biography is best and most moving when it is frank about formerly suppressed aspects of Andersen's life: the unrequited love he felt and never fully acknowledged for his friend Edvard Collin, and the intense, neurotic, frustrating (for Andersen) nonsexual relationship with his beloved friend and muse, Jenny Lind. Tiina Nunnally, the woman responsible for Englishing Peter Hoeg's best-selling *Smilla's Sense of Snow* (1993) and the newest versions of Sigrid Undset's *Kristin Lavransdatter* and selected Andersen *Fairy Tales* (2005), has again gracefully translated from the Danish. *Jack Helbig*
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About the Author

Tiina Nunnally has translated work by Astrid Lindgren, Henning Mankell, and Peter Hoeg, among others.

Users Review

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