

Representation of the Concept "Home" in *Andersen's Fairy Tales*

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ABSTRACT

There are three similar stories in Hans Christian Andersen's later fairy tales, and the plots basically follow a general structural pattern of the hero and heroine "making a covenant at home — leaving home and abandoning the covenant — returning home". Through the different choices of the hero and heroine, the story reflects the change of the human relations accompanying the industrial civilization. On the one hand, the girl "leaves home and abandons the contract", on the other hand, the hero "returns home". These unloved bachelors embody the author's strong sense of home and imagination of place.

Keywords: Andersen's fairy tales, Home consciousness, Being in imagination.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Andersen's later fairy tales, there are many kinds of stories that reflect real life. These works basically do not contain the fantasy factors of fairy tales, and are completely a description of real life. Among them, the most likely to attract people's attention are three stories with similar plots based on the love of the hero and heroine: *Old Bachelor's Nightcap*, *Under the Willow Tree*, and *Ib and Christine*. Andersen seems to try to reflect the changes of human relations accompanied by industrial civilization through patterned love stories.

Although the three stories have their own merits, they have the same structure. The male protagonists representing the identity of small craftsmen and farmers of agricultural civilization are abandoned by young lovers who have entered the civilized society of industry and commerce. Their childhood is pure and wonderful. Their love was born with a quiet and comfortable agricultural town and ended with the change of the heroine's growth situation (coming to a civilized and developed industrial and commercial metropolis). In the surface narration, the three protagonists in the story are losers, defeated by a more civilized and advanced way of life. As the keeper of the old way of life and the old ethical relationship, they

seem outdated and inappropriate in front of the transformed childhood lovers, but in the deep structure, they embody the author's persistent ideal. The heroines have left their hometown and moved towards a civilized and developed city. What is opposite to the heroine's journey to leave her hometown or even abandon her home is the male character's adherence to her home and his attachment to her hometown. In order to keep the promise of love, they either become old Bachelors or die in wandering.

The author's strong home consciousness lies in these bachelors who have not obtained love. These stories basically follow the general structural model of "making a contract at home — leaving the hometown and abandoning the contract — self-improvement through returning home". Among them, the concept of home and hometown has become the narrative starting point and the narrative end point of the story. The story ends in a circular structure. This paper will discuss and analyse these stories.

2. HOME AND CONTRACT

Home refers to the land, house, hometown and living place on the material level, as well as the family and life attached to emotion. The concept of home not only embodies the relationship between

people and geographical space, but also includes the relationship between people and society. "Home consciousness" is one of the basic categories of contemporary ecological aesthetics." (Zeng, 2010) [1] It condenses human thinking about self and existence, yearning for poetic residence, and emphasizes the integration of man with self, others and society. In the western traditional subject object dichotomy epistemology, home garden is regarded as an object opposite to individual and an obstacle to the process of self cognition. It is the bondage of self-development. In the view of ecological ontology aesthetics, "home consciousness" is an individual's understanding of the relationship between existence and environment and society, an individual's spiritual belonging to nature and society, and "the return and liberation of man's true existence"(Cheng, 2013).[2]

Home — a natural living area closely connected with natural scenery and beyond the residential space. It is a village far away from the city, even a river, a tree and a mountain, which occupies an important position in the story. It is written at the opening of *Under the Willow Tree*:

"The country around the town of Kjöhe is very bare. The town itself lies by the seashore, which is always beautiful. "(Andersen, 2009:283) [3] It shows that it is a quiet town far away from prosperity and metropolis. It is closer to nature than modern civilization. Home is that no matter how common its actual scenery is. It will make people used to living and be reluctant to leave. Knud and Johanne are children of poor families in the beautiful town of Kjöhe. Their childhood was spent in the beautiful town:

"The outer edge of kjöhe, where small, humble gardens line the little stream that flows into the sea, could be very pretty in the summertime. This was the opinion of the two small children, Knud and Johanne, who were playing there, crawling under the gooseberry bushes to reach each other." [3]²⁸⁴ he initial scene of the story is the poetic dwelling of people in their homeland. It means that people have a sense of belonging to the earth and live in harmony with the rhythms of nature. Under the elderberry and willow trees in the garden, young Knud and Johanne are nourished by nature, sincere and pure, and mature day by day in the harmonious beauty of heaven, earth and people. Since then, no matter where the protagonist is, it is difficult to forget the "elderberry mother" and "willow father" who represent his home. The sincere feelings of the protagonists and heroines have also become a

representative and epitome of human relations here. "Space can be expanded and transformed, culture can be spread and carried, but the connection between people and places is long-term, and people's natural home is fixed and unique." (Wang, 2013:193) [4] The fixity and uniqueness of the natural home laid the tone of the story.

Old Bachelor's Nightcap begins with a flashback. In a long and lonely night, in a room on the small house Street in Copenhagen, Anthony, an old bachelor from Germany, shed tears and memories poured down like a waterfall:

"The beech forest in Denmark is beautiful!" people say. But the beech forest near Warburg is much more beautiful in Anthony's eyes." [3]³⁵² On a cold night in a foreign land, an old man who had left his hometown for many years recalled his hometown where he was born and spent his youth. Old Anthony's happiest memories begin with the beech forest in his hometown. His hometown Isenaha, which is full of ivy, with old oak trees and apple trees emitting charming fragrance, has always been old Anthony's eternal "home" although it is thousands of miles away. "Sometimes they burst into flames and showed him a picture of life — a picture that would never die in his heart." [3]³⁵³ This picture of life that would never die is a harmonious home between man and nature.

The story mentions the memory that little Anthony and little Molly who planted an apple seed together. The seed broke through the soil and grew from the tender bud into a strong tree. The whole process of the apple tree from sowing, germination, flowering to fruiting is carried out according to the natural growth law of plants, which are not controlled by man. The growth of the apple tree symbolizes the deep feelings accumulated by the hero and heroine in the way of conforming to the natural rhythm, without any false decoration.

This is IB's home: "which stretches through the wood like a wall. Westward of this ridge, and not far from the river, stands a farmhouse, surrounded by such poor land that the sandy soil shows itself between the scanty ears of rye and wheat which grow in it." [3]³⁰⁸ Rivers, forests, mounds and barren land with sand looming. This slightly wild place far away from urban civilization is the home of IB. The relationship between IB and Little Christina took root in the woods on the heath. Their body and mind are inspired by nature, and their vitality is fully extended in the beautiful nature. The pure and beautiful feelings of childhood are integrated with these simple natural sceneries. If

you leave such a home, such feelings will have nowhere to take root because they lose their dependence." According to the human experience and history, all essential and great things only come from people having a home and taking root in a tradition." [1]

"In those days there was no factory or any town house, nothing but the great farm, with its scanty-bearing fields, in which could be seen a few herd of cattle, and one or two farm laborers. The rushing of the water through the sluices, and the scream of the wild ducks, were almost the only signs of active life at Silkborg." [3]¹²

This is an ideal habitat away from industrial civilization. There is the most sincere and pure relationship between people. Once, IB and Christine be explored in the forest and drifted on the river. They met a mysterious gypsy woman. The woman sent three mysterious nuts to the two children and promised them that they would get what they wanted. IB was full of love and tolerance for the poor little girl Christine. He left the best two nuts to Christine. As an adult, when Christine had a better choice, IB chose to give up their agreement silently. He made his decision based on Christine's happiness. This episode of childhood exploration in the forest seems casual, but it foreshadows the fate of the two protagonists in the future. The gypsy woman gave nut to Ib, saying that there was the best thing in it, but after opening it, it was a little bit of black earth. It's strange to take the ugly and cheap black earth as a gift. The metaphors of earth are just at the symbolical level. Simple and loyal earth gives people the best. The existence of people and earth close to each other can be called poetic dwelling.

The protagonists at this stage of the story are all in childhood. Because of the purity of childhood mind, it is easier to accept the immortal information in the universe and closer to the real life in nature. Children are more likely to get harmonious communication with nature because of innocence.

3. DEPARTURE AND ABANDONMENT

The heroines in these three stories all experienced leaving their hometown. These heroines who left the countryside came to the really big city, and then entered the upper class society or the rich group. It seems that because they come to civilize cities. Fate gives them richer rewards than staying where they are. The gift of civilization

brought them considerable satisfaction and joy. For example, in Copenhagen, little Johanne became elegant and beautiful, like a lady of high society. The promise made by the gypsy woman she met in the forest in her childhood has been fulfilled in Christine. She has a lot of expensive things. They all adopted an evasive attitude towards the individual identity belonging to the earth and the countryside. Therefore, when those childhood lovers who carried almost all the memories of their childhood came from their hometown day and night, they found that girls had changed. With her acceptance and adaptation to the city, the heroine begins to feel strange to the male protagonists who still live in the rural home.

Leaving their hometown is an important node in their growth process. After coming to the city, the little girls who appear again have no innocence and childishness in their childhood and entered the adult world. Leaving home has symbolic significance here. Leaving home is not only farewell to hometown, but also farewell to childhood. With their departure, all the love that grew up in their hometown died because of changes in the environment. The end of childhood declared that the days of blending with the natural mind and spirit were gone. The contract with nature — the feeling that originally only belongs to that land, like plants that lose soil and uproot roots, there is no place to stay. Leaving home has become the fate of love in death. Johanne told Knud that they were like brothers and sisters, and Molly told Anthony, We have changed a lot with each other — internal and external. Christine chose to marry a rich suitor. Leaving home means saying goodbye to the past. This farewell is not only farewell to a young lover, but also farewell to the "home". The girls don't want to go anymore. In the process of growing up, these girls gradually move away from their homes, and the natural connection with the natural scenery of their homes is naturally cut off.

According to the ecological place theory, they leave their homes and join the city, and are in a state of "non-place existence". The theory of ecological place is a theory discussed more by western ecological writers and ecological critics in recent decades, emphasizing people's attachment to specific places and regions in close contact with nature. However, it draws lessons from the theory of space and human geography in the ideological and cultural circles, and is closely related to Heidegger's ontological philosophy. Its philosophical meaning is stronger. The researcher of location theory, Marc Augé argue that a specific

space that can not reflect the relationship between man and nature, determine and mark man's ecological existence and ecological identity is 'non place. [5]⁷⁷ If move the ecological criticism perspective of "place theory" into the examination of "Johanne's", it can regard the living state of Johanne's after leaving their home as "non-place survival". "If the natural areas closely related to nature such as home and hometowns are places, airports, hotels and even the whole city separated from nature can be called non places." [4]²⁰³

All these female protagonists get in the city are at the cost of the lost of homeland. Johanne lives in an apartment in the city. Johanne, who has become a singer, has no fixed place in her tour life. In noisy cheers and boiling applause, where are the shadows of yesterday's "elderberry mother" and "willow father"? Johanne couldn't hear Knud shouting her name on the stage. Compared with their childhood life, Johanne's life in the city has lost its natural and regional characteristics. It is only an artificial "position". Such survival is not a natural residence, let alone a poetic residence. For urban people living in the era of industrialization, "home is a rest apartment that leaves the 'real world' of the labor market. For urban people living in the industrialized era, "home has been a house, a rest apartment that leaves the 'real world' of the labor market. The house has become just a convenient place and a base for recreational activities. As the home has become a house, the meaning and identity have gradually disappeared. The house and the people living in it have become interchangeable parts in a larger system." (Bonzo & Stevens 2008:48, cited in Wang 2010 : 205) [4]

Place, in short, refers to the specific natural area to which people depend. It determines, affects and marks people's survival characteristics, ecological thoughts and people's ecological identity. At the same time, this natural area is also influenced and cared by people living in it. In *IB and Christine*, Christine gives up living in the countryside and chooses to marry the suitor in Copenhagen, but finally dies in the slums of Copenhagen. Far from home, Christine cut off dependence on nature, gave up his ecological existence, gave up his sincere love as pure as nature, and became a member of "non local survival" in the city. Christine, who lost his homeland, did not get happiness, but got the end of retribution. The consequence of the loss of homeland is the loss of the freedom of life, the tenacious emotional bond between people and the value of goodness. In the city, "the mountains and rivers that gave birth to life have retreated, the true

and simple human nature has been lost, and some are shrinking life, incomplete human nature, carnal games and moral decay." [6]²²⁰ The abundance of material wealth, coupled with all kinds of pleasure means and wine and sex places in the city, has grown the humble side hidden in human nature and aroused people's vanity and greed. The life tragedy brought by money is vividly staged on Christine. Materialistic lifestyle makes people regard chasing money and expanding material enjoyment as the only purpose of life. Extreme desire inflation stifles people's soul and beautiful nature. If one's body is too comfortable, his spirit will deteriorate. Therefore, ecologism advocates that in order to seek the enrichment of spiritual life, which needs a simple and quiet way of life. Only when return to homes can people live poetically.

4. HOMECOMING

Heidegger points out that "The poet's vocation is homecoming, by which the homeland is first prepared as the land of the nearness to the origin. To preserve the mystery of the reserving nearness to the most joyful, and thus to unfold it while preserving it. That is the care of homecoming." [7]

Zeng Fanren said that "home consciousness" has the origin of culture. Because of the origin of "home consciousness", it not only has extremely important modern significance and value, but also has become the "motif" of human literature and art for thousands of years. "Home consciousness" has always occupied an important position in western literature. From Odysseus in Homer's epic to Robinson Crusoe, they all restate a motif that human beings must return home after thousands of difficulties and dangers. Andersen also reveals this "home consciousness" through the protagonist's "return home" in his works.

The heroes of the three stories have experienced returning home. Because of their discomfort with urban civilization, returning home has become their common choice.

It never showed admiration for the city when the lovers live and the prosperity and delicacy created by the civilization in the city. On the contrary, in Knud's eyes, the high-rise houses in the city make it difficult for him to understand: "And he found the house he sought, and mounted flight after flight of stairs until he became almost giddy. It was terrible to him to see how people lived piled up one over the other in the dreadful city." [4]²⁸⁸ Because of the limited space in the city and the

commercial cost of land, people's houses can only be reduced to a "pigeon cage" with "one floor on top of another". How can such a room far away from nature and even from the ground bear the title of home? Survival in the city is a rootless wandering state. The traditional sense of stable belonging no longer exists, and everyone has become homeless. This discomfort is mixed with the alienation caused by the changes of lovers entering the city. Both Knud and Anthony feel estrangement and distance when they face their once close childhood partners. This estrangement and distance aggravated their discomfort and rejection of urban civilization.

The most thrilling of the three stories is *Under the Willow Tree*, Knud wanted to dilute the pain of lovelorn through a long trip. As a result, no matter where he was, he was disturbed by the breath of his hometown. When Knud drifted to Nuremberg, Germany, he lived in summer. "The elder was in blossom, and its fragrance reminded him so of home, that he fancied himself back in the garden at Kjøge;" [3]³¹⁰ He had to move away, went to the new boss and met the willow again. "He had certainly gone from the "Elder-mother" to the "Willow — father". "The tree here had something, especially on moonlight evenings, that went straight to his heart — and that something was not in the moonlight, but in the old tree itself." [3]³¹⁰ He finally left again. When he saw the green lake in the woods, he thought of the coast of Chage Bay. When he arrived in Milan, Italy and saw the Marble Church, which seemed to him to have been formed in the snow of his native land. The home thousands of miles away always is with him, like a shadow that never leaves. After leaving home, the sense of maladjustment like plants being transplanted always haunts the protagonist's mind. It was snowing winter when Knud decided to set foot on his way home. With his backpack and crutches, he followed the ruts behind the slowly moving carriage.

On the practical level, the trip back home is unprepared and a little blind. The possibility of safe arrival is very small, but at this time, the protagonist has no other choice. Even if he is always on the road, he would die without regret as long as the direction of home is in front.

Old Anthony, the main character of *Old Bachelor's Nightcap*, had to leave his hometown to make a living because of his father's bankruptcy. As a German guy in Denmark, he became one of the bachelors ridiculed by the Danes — "pepper

gentleman". The children's make game of the poor bachelor and his nightcap. The boys sing—

"Cut, cut wood,

Poor bachelor's a sorry elf;

A nightcap goes with him to bed,

And he must light his fire himself" [4]³⁵⁰

In the novel, it shows the lack of a sense of home and place, because it happens in a foreign land. Accompanied by this lack, they experience the misunderstanding, opposition and alienation in the society. "There is an important connection between the two experiences, because the natural environment always plays a role in the shaping of individual and collective psychology and personality." [8] In a foreign country far from his hometown, Anthony experiences misunderstanding, alienation and indifference from the surrounding world. Anthony, who has lost his home, is lonely and can only be filled by memories and imagination about his home."Old Anthony did not speak much of His own native place, but he thought of it all the more.

The three protagonists who take returning home as their final life complex have been fulfilled in different ways. Knud's way of returning home is always fixed in the reader's mind in a poetic way. Although he didn't really return to his hometown at the realistic level, in the strong emotional rhythm in the second half of the story, returning home was pushed to the climax: "he walked in a hurry, as if he wanted to go back before the people at home died.... he was a stranger, traveling in some strange countries, heading for his hometown and North." [3]²⁹⁰ Under a willow tree in a foreign country, Knud went home in death. "the tree appeared to be an old, mighty man — it seemed as if the "Willow-father" himself had taken up his tired son in his arms, and were carrying him back into the land of home, to the bare bleak shore of Kjøge, to the garden of his childhood." [3]²⁹³ The suppressed desire in reality has been imaginatively realized in the dream. To a certain extent, the dream balances the unbearable and difficulties in real life and gives considerable comfort to the soul.

On the practical level, the only one who returns home is IB. Farmer IB represents ideal and hope. In the state of agricultural civilization, people's production and life operate completely according to the rhythm of nature, and people have no strong desire for material and conquest. Farmers only take enough materials from nature to maintain their

basic life. They have deep feelings for the earth that raises them, and the relationship between people is harmonious and simple. Human nature is more simple and noble, as being the case with IB. He is always quiet, values and appreciates life. IB gave Christine the best things when he was young. When they grew up, in order to make Christine live a rich life, he took the initiative to give up his love for her. Afterwards, IB found the gold, but he went to Copenhagen day and night to hand it over to the government. He took a large sum of money awarded to him by the government, but he didn't want to spend it in Copenhagen. Instead, he took the children left by Christine who was dying and returned to the hut under the barren ridge of his hometown. The protagonists in the other two stories can only return home in the form of death, but IB successfully returns to his "home" - the hut. Little Christine, the child returning home from the hopeless slums of Copenhagen, symbolizes the new hope and tomorrow of his home.

5. CONCLUSION

At a symbolic level, the three stories reflect Andersen's "home consciousness". This "home" contains more imagination. Andersen really stayed in his hometown for a short time in his life. Wandering in a foreign country is the ordinary state of his life. How to find his own dwelling place in the turbulent world may be the goal that Andersen has been pursuing. Without geographical support, there is no spiritual support. Repeated place imagination in his works can be regarded as Andersen's "home" as the spiritual support. Place imagination in his works means that Andersen takes "home" as the spiritual support.

The warm homestead that people live in harmony with nature in the countryside has become the spiritual support for him to fight against the city. In his warm memories of his childhood rural life, the author expresses the affectionate call of the physically and mentally exhausted vagrants in modern cities for returning to their natural homes. As we all know, imagination makes up for reality. In Andersen's fairy tales, natural images similar to Andersen's home and local experiences similar to his youth appear again and again in his stories. For example, beech forests in Denmark, storks flying to Denmark for summer vacation. Elderberries, willows, the sea, surging glaciers and heather flowers are everywhere in Denmark. The imagination of the place is an important mission of the ecological literature, and also an important

content. It fills the gap of the modern human mind caused by the "non place" existence through the literary imagination.

The author remedy regrets of "non-place existence" by imagination. The imaginary place is also the refuge of human spirit or the Garden of Eden. Ecological literature should provide an ideal living place for contemporary people who are alienated from nature. In this sense, Andersen provided us with a lot of place-imagination through his fairy tales.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Kiali Sheng contributed the central idea, did the analyses, and wrote the paper. Lanjia Peng developed the idea for the study and revised the manuscript.

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