

A seminar on H.C. Andersen and Karen Blixen

Call for papers

There can be no doubt that Hans Christian Andersen and Karen Blixen are the two most famous and celebrated Danish storytellers. Both writers and their respective authorships have grasped the attention and imagination of readers all over the world. There is a wealth of scholarship on both authorships and international conferences on both writers have gathered participants from many parts of the world. But the possible affinities and points of intersection between the two writers and their authorships have been more or less neglected.

There are obvious reasons for this. Internationally, Andersen is almost exclusively recognised as a writer of fairy tales and more often than not viewed predominantly as a children's writer. He was born to a very poor family and in spite of his social climb he in several ways remained a man of the people and an alien figure amongst the elite of the society of his day. Blixen, on the other hand, was born as a member of the societal elite and she successfully maintained an air of aristocracy and exotic mystery throughout her career. She never wrote fairy tales proper but rather sophisticated novellas disguised as classical tales of destiny.

However, there are numerous affinities and points of intersection between the two writers and their respective authorships. They were both avid travellers with a deep interest in and an astonishing sensitivity towards other cultures. They share an acute eye for the Other – or the Other's – perspective, while they at the same time are acutely aware of human fallibility when it comes to acknowledging the point of view of the Other. While still alive, they were both active and expert designers of their own myths as artists and storytellers.

They were both Romantics in key senses of this term and they were both visual artists in their own right. The tales and stories of both writers share central concerns and have important themes and motifs in common. The faculty of imagination and its crucial but often wayward impact on the human condition is a major concern in both authorships. States of anxiety and struggles of recognition abound in them both. The same goes for Gothic undercurrents and elements of the literary fantastic. The question of genre is a pertinent thematic issue in the tales and stories of both writers.

In order to explore these and hopefully many more such affinities and points of intersection the Hans Christian Andersen Centre will host a seminar on Andersen and Blixen on **the 20th and 21st of January 2016**.

Abstracts of about half a page for proposed papers should be submitted to us before the first of October 2015. Presentations will be 45 minutes including a discussion.

Abstracts should be submitted to Jacob Bøggild (jaboe@sdu.dk) or Anya Aarenstrup (anaa@sdu.dk) at the Centre. The papers presented at the seminar will be published as an anthology by the Centre.