



H. C. Andersen and Franz Kafka

A seminar

Call for papers

Franz Kafka is arguably the most iconic modern writer. One need only think of the popular use of the term “Kafkaesque” in order to acknowledge this. Research in Hans Christian Andersen in recent decades (Johan de Mylius, Klaus P. Mortensen, Peer E. Sørensen for example) has stressed the modern aspects of his writing, especially when it comes to the fairy tales and stories. Present research (Klaus Müller-Wille, Heinrich Detering, Karin Sanders, Jacob Bøggild for example) attempts to expand and refine this understanding of Andersen.

According to Harold Bloom, Andersen and Kafka are alike in their being so remarkably unlike any other writer. At a first glance, however, what one might call the “Andersenesque” does not have many affinities to the “Kafkaesque”. But do the literary universes of these two singular writers still have something in common? The Hans Christian Andersen Centre invites you to participate in and contribute to a seminar, where we can discuss this intriguing question.

Of course, both writers were outsiders who felt alienated in and at odds with their immediate milieu or environment. But where Andersen's answer to this predicament was a life of almost perpetual travel, Kafka was unable to let go of Prague – or Prague was unwilling to let go of him. Still, both writers were able to observe their contemporary culture from a position of an

intensified distance, so to speak, which is very much reflected in their respective writings. They might have even more in common, however.

As Patrick Bridgewater has demonstrated, Kafka is deeply influenced by the genre of the fairy tale and a great manipulator of its basic components. The same goes for Andersen, of course. So this is one obvious point of departure, when it comes to establishing a dialogue between the literary universes of the two writers. The acute awareness of the materiality of language which they share might be another one. The ability to examine the human condition by adopting the perspective of the non-human also springs to mind. Whatever point(s) of departure you take off from, we look forward to your contribution.

The seminar will take place on **the 16th and 17th of November 2016**. Abstracts of about half a page for proposed papers should be submitted to us before the first of July 2016. 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.