

Hans Christian Andersen: Human Values and Ethical Literature: An Introduction

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It was a great pleasure and experience for me to participate in The 8th Convention of the International Association for Ethical Literary Criticism: Ethical Literary Criticism and Interdisciplinary Studies at Kyushu University in Fukuoka, Japan (July 2018). I found it very interesting to meet colleagues from Asia and North America who study world literary texts from an ethical perspective. World literature, for that matter all literature, contain discussions on values. This is self-evident. However, in the field of ethical criticism scholars address how literary artifacts give form to the question of human values in a modern world where the humane in itself is not a given thing.

My contribution to the conference was a lecture on Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875), the Danish fairy tale author, who is read — and read aloud — in the whole world. Hans Christian Andersen is an ethical teller of tales. He takes a position on societal values and he always sides with the weak and fragile, the children, the outcast and the strange and odd characters. In his iconic and very famous fairy tales like, for example “The Little Mermaid,” Andersen discusses what the conditions are for becoming a human and also what it takes to remain human. “The Little Mermaid” is like most of Andersen’s tales and stories ethics in the artistic form of genius.

This special issue of *Form for World Literature Studies*, which I — to my delight — have been asked to edit together with Lyu Hongbo, is dedicated to the study of Hans Christian Andersen and his works. The authors of the four articles have all focused on the question of ethical readings while performing individual readings of aspects of Andersen’s literary output. This issue begins with Frandsen’s article “Light and Shadows in Stories by Hans Christian Andersen: Ethical Perspectives on the Fairytales” which contains an analysis of several fairy tales. The analysis is intended to show that Andersen always guide humans to confront themselves and

face the values which make us human. In the next article “Hans Christian Andersen, Literature and Ethics: New Perspectives on Old Stories” Tony S. Andersen and Anne-Marie S. Christensen argue that ethical reflections are almost always present in Andersen’s world which they show in readings of four of his fairy tales. These readings can be used as teaching material for young people.

In “Denmark, my Native Land! Hans Christian Andersen as a Happiness Object with Killjoy Potential” Torsten Bøgh Thomsen and Anne Klara Bom portray how Andersen in his time took part in the construction of the national feelings for his home country, Denmark, and how Andersen today functions as an icon for modern nationalism and a sense of national community. In their discussions, and by using concepts like “Happiness Object” and “Killjoy,” Thomsen and Bom show how the modern use of Andersen as an icon contains both constructive and destructive elements in relation to the conceptions of the national. Thereby the authors point out that though Andersen can be used as an icon for Denmark, his authorship as such is much larger and diverse than that. In the article “Is the Ugly Duckling a Hero? Using Philosophical Inquiry to Unfreeze Hans Christian Andersen’s Fairy Tales in Danish Primary School Teaching” Anne Klara Bom and Caroline Schaffalitzky focus on how Andersen’s fairy tales can be of use in philosophical inquiries and ethical dialogues in Danish primary school teaching. They analyze “The Ugly Duckling” and use Andersen’s tale as a platform for teachers to conduct dialogues with children on philosophical and ethical questions at the primary school level.

I hope that readers of *Forum for World Literature Studies* will enjoy this special issue. My thanks to the authors, to Lyu Hongbo, Professor Nie and the editorial board.