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Imagine Being so Pretty and Getting No Happiness out of It! A Few Reflections on Beauty, Art and Artistic Creation in the Moomin Books by Tove Jansson

Abstract: The article discusses fundamental aesthetic stances which Tove Jansson has adopted in her Moomin books, traditionally perceived as children's literature. Nevertheless, the series is notably multi-addressed, and analyses of numerous scenes allow us to draw conclusions about the author's own concepts of beauty and art, which are accessible to more experienced readers. As the study shows, Jansson's approach does not correspond to one specific theory but rather inclines to perceptualism, emotionalism and hedonism. Furthermore, the article discusses the reflections on the act of artistic creation which the artist interwove predominantly into the characterization of Moominmamma and Moominpappa. In the traits of these two key characters she addressed aspects of her own two artistic domains, painting and writing. However, taking a stand on serious philosophical matters, she managed to retain an evident child-oriented address, demonstrating her unique mastery of double address.

Keywords: Moomin books, Tove Jansson, double address, philosophical aesthetics, the act of artistic creation

The first book of Tove Jansson's nine-volume series about Moomintrolls, *Småtrollen och den stora översvämningen* (*The Moomins and the Great Flood*) from 1945, is perceived as one of the crucial titles which contributed to a breakthrough of modern children's literature in Sweden¹ (Westin 1996: 23–31). Over the years the Moomin books have achieved significant acclaim and commercial success, establishing their position as major literary works representative for Scandinavia. Their popularity and impact have not been limited to the North, as Moomin has impressively become a world-wide phenomenon with translations into 51 languages. The timelessness of the suite and its global acceptance may be apparently explained with many arguments, but the fundamental one is its strong double address. It is a known fact that Jansson herself started to depart herself from writing for children already in 1962, with *Det*

¹ Jansson was a Swedish-speaking Finnish author and her literary production is often discussed together with Swedish writers.

osynliga barnet (*Tales from Moominvalley*) (Westin 2012: 362) and that her wish was to distribute the last part, *Sent i november* (*Moominvalley in November*), as a pocket book for adults (Westin 2012: 433).

Starting already from the second volume, *Kometen kommer* (*Comet in Moominland*) in 1946 the Moomin books gradually develop a more complex appeal to an experienced readership and include both explicit and implicit, verbal and visual intertexts referring to popular philosophical and psychological stances (Dymel-Trzebiatowska 2016). But in the shadow text (Nodelman 2008), Jansson-the-artist has also manifested her attitude to the aesthetic issues which she smoothly interwove into the narration outwardly directed at children. The goal of the paper is to point out her covert discussion about the nature of beauty, the essence of art and the character of art perception – topics taken up within philosophical aesthetics. Furthermore, I want to reflect on some elements in the act of artistic creation – inspiration, conditioning and the author’s position.

In *Trollkarlens hatt* (*Finn Family Moomintroll*), during the trip to Lonely Island, described in the fourth chapter, the family and their friends are trapped by a huge storm. When it finally passes they eagerly start picking shipwrecked treasure, which although ostensibly unattractive and impractical – for example, a buoy, a broken dipper or an old boot without a heel – appears really valuable in the eyes of the collectors. Their attitude can be interpreted as relativity of valuation: what seems worthless and needless can turn out practical and priceless, since everything is highly comparative and conditioned by a subjective point of view. Even the genuine gold discovered by the Snork at the place of a lightning strike brings him the same joy as a buoy does to Sniff, who will be able to swim henceforth.

When the Snork Maiden finds “the beautiful lady” washed up on the beach, which proves to be a figurehead², all of the travelers are immediately under her irresistible charm. And they have a good reason: “[...] the giantess was made of wood, and she was very beautiful. Her cheeks and lips were red and her round blue eyes smiled up through the clear water; she had blue hair, too, flowing in long painted curls over her shoulders. ‘It’s a queen,’ said the Snork Maiden, reverently” (Jansson 2019a: 89).

The motif of the Wooden Queen may be read as an implicit stance on aesthetic disputes about the essence of art and its perception, and suggests a comparison with fundamental dilemmas of a philosophy of art presented in the monograph *Główne kontrowersje estetyki współczesnej* [Main Controversies of Modern Aesthetics] by Bohdan Dziemidok: Is art universal? Is art constituted

² Jansson employs here a filter, a narratological tool that indicates a difference of knowledge between a competent reader and a less competent character that creates a feeling of alienation (Nikolajeva 1998: 120–121). The filter has here a specific variant, as the native perception of the Moomintrolls corresponds to the perception of the inexperienced readers (children), whereas it is obvious to more experienced readers (adults) that the dazzling finding is a figurehead.

by form? Or perhaps is aesthetic experience more important than art itself? And if art is embodied in emotions, then which ones?

The characters' reactions to beauty in the above scene seem to illustrate aesthetic hedonism which postulates an art experience understood quite narrowly and one-sidedly – as pleasurable. Although restrictions of this theory have been criticized for some time, it is still popular and occurs in a broad scope of philosophical approaches (Dziemidok 2002: 153). At the sight of the figurehead the Snork Maiden feels respect, Moominmamma feels admiration, and the Moomintroll feels such an overwhelming delight that he becomes speechless. The scene featuring the family's homecoming portrays the hedonistic impact of the sculpture overtly:

Oh, how they admired each other's finds there on the beach! The Moomin family had suddenly become rich. But the most precious things were still the ship's figurehead and the little snowstorm in the glass ball. [...] and in the prow lay the figurehead gazing out to sea. Beside her sat Moomintroll with his paw on her beautiful blue hair. He was so happy! (Jansson 2019a: 92)

Thus the gold and wealth do not matter but beauty brings real joy, harmony and happiness. However, after a while the Snork Maiden loses her temper: "Oh, if only I were as beautiful as the Wooden Queen," she thought, "but I haven't even got my fringe left." And she didn't feel gay any more" (Jansson 2019a: 92). These words prove the relativity of aesthetic experience – it turns out to be utterly subjective and personal, determined by the immediate *now* and *here*, and comparing can destroy a pleasurable mood instantly.

Furthermore, envy about the inanimate artifact confronts beauty in artistic terms (ideal) with natural beauty (body):

"Do you like the Wooden Queen?", she asked Moomintroll.

"Very much!" he answered without looking up.

"But I thought you said you didn't approve of girls with hair", said the Snork Maiden. "Besides, she is only painted!"

"But so beautifully painted!" said Moomintroll. (Jansson 2019a: 92)

The Snork Maiden becomes pale, which Moomintroll notices immediately and makes her flush, saying that the queen looks stupid. So in this case nature wins over art, yet leaving a reflection on the dangerous charm of beauty that possesses a nearly magic power. Although its source is an insensate wooden object, it can affect and change us. This power is even more intriguing as it is unconscious, dead, which is stressed by Moominmamma's words commenting on the sculpture: "Imagine being so pretty and getting no happiness out of it!" (Jansson 2019a: 90)

This is not praise of essentialism, assuming a universal nature of art. It is impossible to claim that the figurehead possesses some immanent property that invariably evokes an aesthetic experience. Her blue eyes and red cheeks

are not necessarily in the taste of experienced readers of the shadow-text, yet a naïve reading – supported by the characters’ enthusiasm – implies just this interpretation.

“The beautiful lady” would also not be regarded as an art object in terms of institutional theory by George Dickie, for whom a work of art is an artifact of a kind created to be presented to an artworld public (Dziemidok 2002: 131). And she would not fall into Timothy Binkley’s definition, since his absolute condition of being called art was inclusion in current catalogues. Jansson is not in favor of such stances – she was rather skeptical of isolationist approaches, popular with intellectual elites. In the shadow-text she plays with normativity of opinions about art, objectivity of its assessments and constancy of its perception, invariably accentuating the relativity of aesthetic sensations.

Strong and positive emotions of the involved characters imply to some extent perceptualism, whose supporters insist that the nature of art cannot be defined without referring to aesthetic experience. In the light of this theory the constitutive features of art are its aesthetic properties which can be captured only through a direct, specifically aesthetic involvement (Dziemidok 2002: 77). The Moomintrolls’ encounter with the figurehead presents characteristics of the aesthetic experience by Monroe Beardsley: it consists in powerful and continuous concentration on a perceived object, and is intensive and complete. But even here some reservations must be made – it is questionable whether the intensity of experience might be considered as a measure of the artistic value of the artifact since it is discernible that Jansson does not characterize its artistry seriously. She rather emphasizes, by featuring the characters’ reactions, that it does not matter what we get enchanted by – everybody has a right to like what they feel like.

Moomintroll’s and his friends’ fascination and deep emotional engagement resemble communication theories, which combine three elements: the audience, the artwork and the artist. In particular, they incline to emotionalism, assuming that inanimate objects can convey feelings to people. But even here it should be noted that readers get access exclusively to the experiencers’ emotions, whereas a potential artist remains out of context. Therefore, it is difficult to consider the Wooden Queen as a “transmitter” in terms of nonverbal communication with her creator, which for example Leo Tolstoy claimed. According to him, art just like language is one of the most important ways of human communication. Nevertheless, it is not simply an ordinary form of uttering emotions but a well-organized expression of the feeling which first has been experienced by the maker, and which afterwards “infects” recipients, making them sense the same (Dziemidok 2002: 40). The blue wavy hair and the red cheeks of the Wooden Queen are presumably the work of a craftsman, who was not necessarily emotionally engaged in a creative process.

Therefore, it seems impossible to ascribe one specific theory of art to the motif of the figurehead. It can be concluded that the analyzed scene is obvi-

ously not in favor of any essentialist (or even para-essentialist) theory, whose main thesis is possession of inherent aesthetic properties by artworks. Jansson, characteristically, accentuates the subjectivity of sensations and prioritizes it over all theoretical stances: a naïve reader, affected by the characters' reactions, may acknowledge that the sculpture represents beauty which deserves the disputable name of art. On the other hand, an experienced reader of the shadow-text detects covert clues divulging both its poor artistry and the innocence of the Moomin characters' perception.

In *Finn Family Moomintroll* readers encounter another symbol of beauty – a ruby hidden in Thingummy's and Bob's suitcase. It is an incarnation of what is most beautiful not only in the world but also beyond it, and although it is – in contrast to the figurehead – an artifact, it still gives rise to some interesting observations as regards aesthetic experience. The motif of the ruby proves that independently of provenience both art and nature evoke equally profound emotions. Thereby Jansson expresses her attitude to disputes about a difference (or its lack) between an artistic and aesthetic experience.

When Moomintroll starts to weep, longing for Snufkin, Thingummy and Bob decide to console him and show “the Contents” of their suitcase:

The ruby changed color all the time. At first it was quite pale, and then suddenly a pink glow would flow over it like the sunrise on a snow-capped mountain – and then again crimson flames shot out of its heart and it seemed like a great black tulip with stamens of fire.

“Oh, if only Snufkin could see it!” sighed Moomintroll, and he stood there a long, long time while time grew weary and his thoughts were very big. At last he said: “It was wonderful. May I come back and look at it another day?” (Jansson 2019a: 146)

This time the confrontation with beauty looks different than in the case of the figurehead, when the experience was pleasurable and all-encompassing. Now, when Moomintroll is missing his best friend, his experience becomes more reflexive. This passage, like in the scene with the Snork Maiden's shift of mood, shows that a contact with beauty is highly subjective and conditioned by one's mood.

The ruby interpreted as a symbol of beauty suggests, similarly to the Wooden Queen, that beauty possesses a dangerous power as it gets others to commit deeds which are morally disputable – Thingummy and Bob, after all, deprived the Groke of the gem and made her unhappy. The destructive nature of beauty is also portrayed in a very suggestive way in *Moominland Midwinter* in the characterization of the Lady of the Cold, whose fairness is so dazzling that it can cost a little squirrel its life (Jansson 1975: 57). But apart from this episode the series is permeated with a belief in the hedonistic impact of beauty – in its vicinity the characters feel not only happy but also beautiful themselves. Hence beauty possesses a mysterious property of “infecting”, which is depicted

in a scene in *Moominpappa at Sea* when Moomintroll is observing indescribably gorgeous seahorses.

While Moomintroll was watching them, something curious but quite natural happened. He suddenly thought that he, too, was beautiful. He felt relaxed and playful and light-of-heart. He ran to the beach crying: “Look at the moonlight! It’s so warm! I feel I could fly!”

The seahorses shied, reared and sprang away in the moonlight [...]. He just felt small, and fat and clumsy again. (Jansson 2019b: 97)

These magical creatures are simply delightful, they represent “a picture of Beauty itself” (Jansson 2019b: 163), which only Moomintroll in his young self-confidence can understand. Yet one time more it turns out that beauty cannot be identified with goodness. The seahorses, in their narcissistic vanity, insult Moomintroll, calling him a little egg-shaped mushroom, and as a result, the charm disappears and the protagonist wants to go to sleep and be left in peace (Jansson 2019b: 183).

It is noteworthy that in the Moomin saga we come across numerous references to acts of artistic creation. Jansson, a writer and a painter, used to interweave a plot with scenes featuring the author’s work and state of mind: both artist-painter and artist-writer, i.e. creators representing the dimensions she identified herself with. Moominmamma can serve here as an interesting example, when she goes through an unexpected metamorphosis in *Moominpappa at Sea*, turning from a protective, altruistic caretaker into a thoughtful artist. When she seems to have been irrevocably classified in a category of somebody who is “living for others”, she unexpectedly baffles both her family and readers and turns into a painter who is desperately longing for home and starts building up her own, imaginary world. She eventually focuses on herself – presumably the artist needs to be at least a little egoistic – and is able to say “no”:

“But it’s all so lifelike!” exclaimed Momminpappa. “I can recognize all those flowers! That one is a rose.”

“No it isn’t,” said Moominmamma, very hurt. “It’s a peony. Like the red ones we had at the bottom of the steps at home.”

“Can I paint a hedgehog?” cried Liddle My.

Moominmamma shook her head. “No,” she said. “This is my wall” (Jansson 2019b: 178)

In this scene, in which Moominmamma disappears in her garden conjured with a brush, we can again observe an emotionalist approach to reality. After the wife’s comeback Moominpappa writes in his diary: “Can strong emotional disturbance in a person transfer itself to his surroundings? Example: I was really very upset because we couldn’t find Mamma. Investigate this” (Jansson 2019b: 194).

The story of Moominmamma’s surprising metamorphosis occurs in the volume of changes and transitions. The introductory situation is here very atypi-

cal – Moominmamma, who constantly represented Bergson's *élan vital* (Dymel-Trzebiatowska 2016: 65), suddenly becomes melancholic. On impulse she climbs up to an attic of the lighthouse and starts painting flowers, trees, fruit... applying the technique *al secco*. In the description of what she composes there are no verbs like *shows*, *depicts* – her work is treated as reality: “There were rose bushes all over the place, most of them red – just like the ones that grow in everybody's gardens. And each of them had a border of little white shells. The well was green and the woodshed was brown” (Jansson 2019b: 184). All that is not a representation, *mimesis*. All that really *is*. Jansson's own artistic experiences are discernible in the background of this scene – when Moominmamma is creating, some elements are of special importance: a quality of light, loneliness and the fact that she is painting what she feels like. It is not the first time in the series when the power of imagination overcomes reality. It does not matter that the painting is not perfect. It is her own, out of her dreams, and so longed-for that she is able to leave her family: “She flung her arms round her apple tree and shut her eyes. The bark felt rough and warm, and the sound of the sea disappeared. Moominmamma was right inside the garden. The room was empty” (Jansson 2019b: 187).

Moominpappa experiences a similar distraction and gets away from reality while remembering his youth in *The Exploits of Moominpappa*. One day, when he found a gorgeous clearing, he immediately designed a house with a stick on the sand and engaged himself so deeply in this architectural undertaking that he believed he had achieved it. He says to his neighbor, a hedgehog: “But won't you come and look at my house? We could sit there for a while and have a chat” (Jansson 2019c: 16). He stops in mid-sentence when he realizes that the house was built only in his fantasy. As can be seen, creating absorbs, devours and makes us lose ourselves so that we cannot differentiate between reality and fiction.

In the Moomin books there are also included observations about the process of writing, which are predominantly related to Moominpappa. It is he who in the three following volumes is an author of: memoirs (*The Exploits of Moominpappa*), a drama (*Moominsummer Madness*) and a dissertation (*Moominpappa at Sea*). As a tireless wordsmith and a master of existential inquiries, he can be perceived as Jansson's literary alter ego (Westin 1988: 191), all the more so as at the beginning of *The Exploits* he was given her date of birth³. In this book references to literature function on three levels – they pertain to the act of artistic creation, the author and the relation between reality and a diegetic world.

It is easy to write – this is the first insight resulting from observations of Moominpappa's diary writing. At the same time it is a clear parallel to Jansson's own enthusiasm and speed while making the first Moomin books, released at

³ Tove Jansson was born on the 9th of August 1914 and in the first edition of the book *Moominpappa* was given exactly the same day and month of birth. As Boel Westin writes in *Famijen i dalen* this information was removed in the second edition in 1956 (Westin 1988: 316). Now they share solely the month of birth – August. This information was not retained in all translations.

an incredibly quick tempo. The *Moomins and the Great Flood* was still in print when she started to write another part. She was burning to write and it seemed that the Moomin stories wanted to be put on paper and come out in the open (Westin 2012: 65). Writing became a part of Jansson's identity and Moomin started to take up so much of her life space she had to restrain her literary zeal (Westin 2012: 184), and for example the manuscript of *Moominsummer Madness* was so extensive that two chapters had to be removed (Westin 2012: 187). Moominpappa writes equally fluently and quickly, the following chapters appear continuously, he does not experience any artistic breakdown or a lack of ideas. If the children are not loud it is enough to go to the study or to lie on the grass, take a pencil... and soon another chapter is ready. Writing becomes pure pleasure when a head is full of ideas.

The second insight: makers are endowed with fantasy and inquisitiveness. They are familiar with ponderings traditionally associated with philosophers – Moominpappa, since his childhood, has always wondered, challenged and asked questions why it is not the opposite of what it is. One of the qualities which makes him proud is his superior fantasy. When the above-mentioned house, drawn on sand, is ready, he comments on it with his characteristic boastfulness: “That must have been due to inherited ability, but also to talent, good judgment and a sure taste” (Jansson 2019c: 14).

During the birthday party of Daddy Jones, depicted in *The Exploits of Moominpappa*, it is he who wins rewards for the biggest visionary. In this specific *mundus inversus* these are humorously impractical prizes: a meerschaum tram, a shark's tooth, a preserved smoke ring and a champagne whisk. For many they would be plainly absurd but not for those who are gifted with imagination. Moreover, these objects are a symbolical comment on how fantasy is regarded in a world dominated by a pragmatic and utilitarian attitude to life⁴. It is yet another example within the Moomin series when an issue of relativity is discussed: something that is of no worth in the eyes of a materialist-pragmatist becomes of special value for a visionary-idealist.

Moominpappa draws on his rich experience, which is presupposed by the format of diaries, relating authentic events. A diary author is *a priori* expected to feature real facts and incidents, which Moominpappa recurrently reassures his readers about. On the other hand, they are provided with some evident clues suggesting they should maintain some distance from this “truth”. Even though in the Introduction the author promises that his autobiography

⁴ The same motif recurs in the short story “A Tale of Horror”, when Whomper's imagination makes the boundary between reality and fantasy blur. The angry parents punish the son who leaves his family home: “The Whomper decided to go away. Not to punish them, only because he suddenly felt so utterly tired of them and their inability to understand what was important or dangerous. They simply drew a line straight through all things and declared that on one side of it everything was believable and useful, and on the other side everything was simply thought up and useless” (Jansson 2019d: 26).

is fully credible and that he belongs to those who love the truth, he makes the reservation that his memory has weakened with the years. It can consequently make him exaggerate a bit, but in principal he tells the truth if it is not too dull. Thereby we come to the third insight: these contradictory signals compose a coherent vision of the world as a game of authenticity and fantasy.

Jansson does not take a position on writing in a serious manner or with authority but rather with a remarkable distance, under the cover of irony, in which she proves her artistry. Moominpappa is a self-confident, cocksure writer, oversensitive about himself and hostile towards criticism, who unconditionally believes in the greatness of his works. He creates for posterity and does not doubt that he will earn a fortune from his diaries. Likewise Jansson distanced herself from idle intellectualism in *Comet in Moominland*, here she maintains a distance from authorship. *The Exploits of Moominpappa* is a parody of the male way of writing, with numerous intertexts of the classic work of early biographies – *The life of Benvenuto Cellini written by himself* (Westin 2012: 227) – which explicitly ridicule the Renaissance style.

A motif of literary production recurs in the following volumes. When in *Moominsummer Madness* the family has finally become familiar with the mystery of theatre, it turns out that somebody has to write a play. The choice of author is a formality and it is as usual Moominmamma who takes the decision, saying barely a few words to her husband: “I suppose you could write a play [...] You’ve written your Memoirs, and it can’t be so very hard to put in a few rhymes.” (Jansson 1974: 97). Traditionally, the author resists “Dear me, I couldn’t write a play” (Jansson 1974: 97) but it should not be regarded seriously as “In the evening Moominpappa had finished his play and proceeded to read it to the others” (Jansson 1974: 98).

While composing a tragedy the author was not given as much autonomy as while writing his diaries – it turns out that everybody has their vision of art and they could not restrain from sharing it. The theatre specialist, Emma, makes it clear: a text must be written in blank verse, all characters must be relatives and somebody has to die in the end – “Preferably all except one of them, and perhaps that one too” (Jansson 1974: 99). Moominmamma would only like a princess to be a heroine in the drama and... a happy end. The prima donnas, Misabel and Mymble, apart from being prima donnas, have two wishes: Misabel wants to die last and Mymble wants to kill Misabel. Whomper feels disappointed: he believed Moominpappa would write a mystery with a lot of suspects and nasty clues. The author himself has practically only one unconditional expectation – there must be a lion in the play.

Criticism and the conflicting demands from the environment frustrate the artist and make him say the words which might have been predicted by non-artists: “If you don’t like my play, then by all means write a better one yourselves” (Jansson 1974: 100). Apparently they cannot write their own as all in unison exclaim that the play was wonderful.

Jansson again draws on parody while depicting the work of an artist whose relatives, as well as close and distant friends, want to manipulate, adding their good advice in good faith, typical of dilettantes. In any case, finally the play “The Lion’s Brides or Blood Will Out” is ready. It is written in an elevated style, in blank verse and its family relations are so complicated that even the author has lost control over them. Luckily, it does not matter because, as Emma sums up: “And anyway the audience won’t understand a word” (Jansson 1974: 107).

Moominmamma creates a painting, Moominpappa creates literature, and Snufkin’s domain is music. His portrayal featured in the short story “The Spring Tune” in *Tales from Moominvalley* is a confirmation of Moominmamma’s and Moominpappa’s earlier experiences, yet it is even more profound and insightful. Primarily, a necessary condition for artistic creation is a feeling of freedom, guaranteed by at least a temporary aloneness⁵ and peace. Even a small intervention of an uncritical fan can kill inspiration. Another advantage is proximity to nature, whereas the idea itself ripens as a fruit on a tree and it is important to reach and pick it at the right moment.

While featuring Snufkin’s ripening idea Jansson employs a very figurative language. She makes use of a specific personification of the concept, which quite paradoxically seems both to belong to Snufkin and to be sovereign.

He had kept this tune under his hat for several days, but hadn’t quite dared to take it out yet. It had to grow into a kind of happy conviction. Then, he would simply have to put his lips to the mouth organ, and all the notes would jump instantly into their places.

If he released them too soon they might get stuck crossways and make only a half-good tune, or he might lose them altogether and never be in the right mood to get hold of them again. (Jansson 2019d: 2)

Similarly to the tunes, even ideas can jump into their places on paper or canvas – if only they be caught at the right moment.

As I have tried to show, Tove Jansson in her Moomin saga discussed diverse topics which represent a shadow-text, accessible to more experienced readers. In this implicit semantic layer she expressed her attitude to aesthetic dilemmas which does not cover one specific stance but in the course of this study was approximately classified as perceptualist-emotionalist-hedonistic. She granted her characters a full right to appreciate whatever they liked with no concern for the artistic quality – in terms of philosophical aesthetics – of the object. Additionally, she did not differentiate between an artifact and nature, and ascribed similar qualities of the aesthetic experience to both of them.

⁵ In a paper from 1983 Jansson defined the human desire for freedom as one of the strongest. She characterized it as a luxury which yet can become too sterile and lead to stagnation. In other words, loneliness was, in her opinion, both creative and paralyzing (Westin 1988: 88).

Furthermore, Jansson thematized the act of artistic creation in the form of numerous threads in which she portrayed her own incarnations: Moominmamma appears as a painter, and Moominpappa as a writer. Moreover, Snufkin acts as a composer. In this vision, creation of art – no matter of what kind – is closely related to solitude. But the artists must not only be given peace, they must also prove some assertiveness. As regards the idea of their works, on the one hand it belongs to them, but on the other, it still retains its integrity.

It is noteworthy that Tove Jansson, even when she took a stand on serious aesthetic issues, always kept in mind her young readers, and the analyzed scenes could be perceived by them as fascinating depictions of breathtaking adventures. This particular balance of double address is in my interpretation a fundamental key to understanding the phenomenon of the Moomin books' timeless popularity.

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