

The theme of categorization of people in scandinavian stories

[Society](#)



Our society today still views people as categories instead of a homogenous society. Categorization of people produces a complex network in the society and consequently results in emergence of power dynamic. One of the main themes of Scandinavian stories is exploitation and abuse of power. Books and movies give as an insight to the way power was abused by the more powerful person in the society as in the case of *Insomnia*. One of the main focuses of the Scandinavian stories are conflicts between different social classes; In *Jeppe of the Hill*, the play shows a chaotic situation caused by the protagonist exchanging his social class; *Jeppe of the Hill* reveals the ease with which the people from upper class can manipulate ordinary people and change the course of their lives. There are conflicting themes of respect and resentment for the nobility in many of these stories. Hans Christian Andersen's resentment of nobility is most evident in *The Emperor's New Clothes*; *The Emperor's New Clothes* shows how our thoughts and beliefs are shaped by the dominant group in the society; At the same time, Hans Christian Andersen undermines the glory of the aristocracy and the emperor by showing that even those at the higher positions are vulnerable and insecure. *The Girl with the dragon tattoo* reflects the reality behind power abuse by those who are trusted the most, incompetency of government institutes, and struggle of women in a misogynous society.

Humans are hungry for power and have tendency to abuse their power. In the *Jeppe of the Hill*, Jeppe who is a peasant who gets really drunk and is made to believe that he is a king by Baron and his colleague, who are from the upper class. Baron and his colleagues are given the freedom to mess with the lower. Less-educated people in the society. Once Jeppe believes that

he is a king. He starts to take advantage of his life as a king but soon becomes cruel and threatens to execute his old oppressors. The moral of the story from the noble class of the society is that everyone in the society must remain within their own designated rank or else we would have chaos in the society as Baron says, " We can learn from his behavior how tyrannical and arrogant such people become who are suddenly thrust from the gutter into positions of honor and nobility." There are also some hints of criticism towards the noble class in this play. Jeppe gets manipulated and played by noble classmen; Baron plays the prank on Jeppe out of boredom. Jeppe is the victim of the society and the product of his environment. The way he abuses his power is how he expresses his anger towards the way he has been treated all his life by his oppressors. Jeppe acts according to the existing power mechanism in the society that he is familiar with. The character of Jeppe represents the peasant culture and the play is seeking sympathy with the socially weaker protagonist. This play reflects the nature of the society at the time and the play was intended to show the conflicts of people in different classes and how the people from lower classes get bullied by people from the upper class in the society. By having Jeppe act so tyrannically, without any sympathy for the people from his own class in society, Holberg intends to show the ridiculousness of the hierarchical system. The play also reveals the difficulties of belonging to the lower class of the society; In one of the dialogues of the play, Jeppe mentions " Everybody says that Jeppe drinks, but nobody asks why Jeppe drinks", which shows that his alcohol abuse is caused by the hardships he faces in his life.

Jeppe reveals that power can be intoxicating and that absolute power is the roots of many problems.

Power and dominance are essential elements of exploitation. One of the main themes surrounding Scandinavian stories is the exploitation of power by those who are trusted the most. In the movie "Insomnia", we see the dark reality of power abuse by government officials. The movie is about an investigator who is fired from his previous job for having an intimate relationship with one of the witnesses in the past. Although he is good at doing his job, he does not have a good past record. While chasing the murderer, he accidentally shoots his own colleague and decides to cover up the evidence and make it look as if the policeman was shot by the killer; thus, the police investigation takes a different turn with the main investigator leading the investigation while at the same time being guilty of mistake. The investigator, Jonas, believes he stands outside the rules that apply to other people. Insomnia reveals the ease with which people of higher ranks to abuse their power and to take advantage of others, yet the public is not willing to accept the truth or even discuss this issue; Jonas commits numerous felonies such as molestation of one of the witnesses, and covering up his mistake of killing a policeman, but the ending of the movie is somehow not satisfactory; Although he is hunted by unease and anguish, he is not punished for the crimes that he has committed. There is a scene in the movie when Jonas says, " This guy crossed the line and didn't even blink." Which shows how he expects others to follow the laws while he crosses lots of boundaries in this movie and can escape the punishment for his crime. Despite his crimes, Jonas maintained his power and his position towards the

entire movie. This movie shows the ease with which power can be exploited by government institutions or officials in the society and lack of legal confrontations with these cases.

The fairy tale "The shadow" portrays the real feelings of Hans Christian Andersen who belonged to the lower class in a strictly hierarchical class society. The protagonist of the story is Hans Christian Andersen himself, while the shadow is Edward Collin. Although HCA and Edward Collin grew up together and were very close friends, HCA never felt he was at the same level as the Collins because Collins belonged to the upper class. The Shadow is the story of the shadow of a learned man who escapes and become a powerful man through blackmailing people since he can secretly go to people's home and learn about their dark secrets; Meanwhile, the learned man gets older and weaker. Years later, the shadow meets the learned man and manipulates him to act as his shadow while he becomes the master. The shadow asks the learned man to become his shadow, and the learned man says "Nay, that is too bad!" and the shadow replies "But it is just so with the world, and so it will be." The shadow reveals the truth that the world is filled with injustice and everything is not as beautiful as the learned man imagines. When the learned man asks the Shadow if it is time that they call each other by the first name, the Shadow replies "It's a matter of sensitivity, not pride. I cannot let you call me by my first name, but I shall be glad to call you by yours, as a compromise" when the shadow marries the princess, he tells the princess that his shadow has gone mad and the learned man eventually gets executed. The Shadow reveals a disturbing truth about immoral ways that people seize power as the case of the Shadow gaining

power by blackmailing people while the scholar, who is a good-hearted man becomes poorer and weaker. The story shows that good does not always triumph over the evil; The Shadow is a criticism of the nobility and the more powerful class of the society since it reveals the ways with which people gain power and remain in power. There is also a theme of manipulation of the less-privileged class of the society. Once the Shadow becomes the more powerful character in the story, he manipulates the learned man. The shadow of the learned man stands for the power and the higher status people. After the Shadow gains wealth and power, he asks his master to become his shadow because he needed one. The Shadow indirectly refers to the power that rules the lower status people. The story also implies that no matter which class someone belong to, or how much power he has, everyone all look the same, just like the leaned man and his shadow.

The society that we live in often influences our thoughts and pressurizes to act or think in certain ways. Throughout Scandinavian history, there was a burden on the people from the lower class to conform to the norms of the more dominant group. In the story of The Emperor's New Clothes, we see the existence of social anxiety and fear that is rooted in difference in social status conformity, judgement, trust and individual morality. " The Emperor's New Clothes" is the story of an emperor who is manipulated by two imposters who claim they can create a suit for him that would be invisible to those who are excessively simple or stupid. The imposters pretend to weave his suit and once its done, the emperor walks around the city with an " invisible" suit and no one has the courage to tell that the suit does not really exist. Eventually a child breaks the silence and reveals the reality that the

emperor is not wearing any clothes. The story shows the power of social pressure in influencing conformity. When each character realizes that they are not able to see the suit, they fear their reputation. Every character in this story, even the emperor, change their perception to match that of the dominant group to be harmonious with that group and for the fear of being labeled as incompetent. The dominant group in this story is everyone who pretends to see the suit. These dynamics of conformity can be seen in real life; The main theme of this story is that our free thinking, individuality and freedom from social conventions is strongly influenced by others in the society. The child represents a man who can see the inequality in the world that others are blind to, but it is hard to gain your individuality and freedom in a society in which we are forced to conform to the dominant group. The Emperor's New Clothes is a direct criticism of the aristocracy. Hans Christian Andersen questions the competency of the nobility and attempts to reveal to the reader that there is no major difference between the emperor and the ordinary people as they all got deceived by the imposters. After becoming aware and facing the truth, the emperor says " But I, as Emperor, was overpoweringly stupid... I, as Emperor, was more stupid than you all, because I was responsible for all this stupidity!"

The girl with the Dragon tattoo is a mystery thriller, but on a deeper level, it's an examination of power abuse by the government officials and the government failure to confront these acts. The theme of power abuse becomes more graphic in a scene in the movie when Lisbeth's court guardian sexually abuses her in an exchange for access to her finances and in another scene when he brutally rapes her. As Lisbeth's guardian, he is

<https://assignbuster.com/the-theme-of-categorization-of-people-in-scandinavian-stories/>

authorized to take of her, but he violates the trust of the court and Lisbeth and takes advantage of his position to gain sexual favors. The narrator notes that the guardianship itself is an unwanted governmental pressure into her private life. Nil takes her freedom away and makes her captive by controlling her finances, her choice and her body; her treatment at the hands of her guardian shows how unreliable a system that values men more than women can be. Lisbeth actions constantly clashes with the legal system which illustrates how women were forced to conform to the injustice legal system in which men could easily influence and impact the independence of women since they were the more dominant group in the society. Lisbeth does not report the crimes committed against her to the police and throughout the movie, we see her lack of trust in the government officials to confront violence against women. The fact that Nils Bjurman sexually assaults her multiple times, shows that he is confident that the authorities would not punish him since assaults against women was accepted as part of Swedish culture. When looking for details of the gruesome murders, Lisbeth tells Blomkvist ““ I think you’re wrong. It’s not an insane serial killer who read his Bible wrong. It’s just a common or garden bastard who hates women.” Hans Erik Wennerström symbolizes corruption in Swedish economical system. Wennestrom was able to secure immense power in the economic world through corruption. Despite Blomkvist’s efforts to expose Wennerström’s corruption, Wennerström initially comes out the winner just because of his power power and influence.

Each story reflects the power dynamic of its time. The stories tell us that at every point in time, every individual is part of a complex network and the

place that everyone occupies in this network is indicated by certain factors which give him his identity and his position in the society. Power abuse is a topic that has always been a part of our history and culture and continues to draw different reactions from people from different demographic disposition. Many of these stories show the power structure in the society and how middle-class people relate with people in power. These stories show how social dynamics and public perceptions affect power abuse in the society and reveal the dark reality of living in a compartmental society in which the power of everyone is predetermined based on his class, race, or sex in the society; We are exposed to the dark reality of the struggle people go through to confront power abuse and to gain their freedom and individuality. Many of the characters of the fairytales written by Hans Christian Andersen reflect his own struggle with his social class and the feeling of being alienated among people from higher classes.