

The Voices of Anti-Capitalism in Hans Christian Andersen's *The Emperor's New Clothes*

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates matters of voices of anti-capitalism in Hans Christian Andersen's short story entitled The Emperor's New Clothes. The story tells about a king who behaves arbitrarily and is concerned with his own personal affairs rather than his people. He is concerned with how he dresses so that a lot of people visit him and make it a stereotype that must be done. If the king passes in front of them, they must praise the king. However, his people trick him at the end. The capitalist behavior of the king who uses royal money to dress and care for himself is an interesting thing to research and raises questions about the existence of anti-capitalist voices in this short story. By using qualitative method and explorative approach, this study aims to reveal the voice of anti-capitalism reflected in royal lifestyle and fashion that the king wears. The voices are also matters of such silent rebellion to those who are too proud of themselves. Those arrogant beings never care to other people but themselves. The anti-capitalism works efficiently to the points that the king does not know that he is being tricked, not only by his tailor, but also by all of his people. In conclusion, the voices of anti-capitalism must not always loud. This story proves that the rebel could be done merely by tricking the powerful one.

Keywords: *Anti-Capitalism, Hans Christian Andersen, The Emperor's New Clothes*

INTRODUCTION

Literature has a complex function not only as a result of production that comes from imagination, but literature also plugs into the mind of the writer where the source of imagination, ideas, and ideas (Empson, 2020; Faldi & Putri, 2022). This imaginative and creative literature basically has no limits and is infinite, so in its creation the author uses anecdotes and even deceives and disguises original events and turns them into fictional forms rich in imagination. The author in creating, gets around writing literary works so that it will bring out the ultimate and comprehensive truth in the form of fictional works (Kos-Lajtmán, 2021; Ma'rifah, 2020).

Literary works as a form of imaginative creation and fiction cannot be underestimated, where the content and content of literary works have a large and dominant role, thus making literary works a suitable and appropriate tool for the depiction of phenomena and/or events in the social environment (Empson, 2020; Faldi & Putri, 2022). In its creation, the author requires high imagination and creativity, so that it can make experiences, events, and phenomena that occur into fictitious works that are presented through extensive imagination.

The nature of literary works consists of two aspects, namely the form aspect where the content is all things that concern the object and content in the creation of literary works and the second is the content aspect where in the content aspect there are events experienced by the author which include life, society, group mindset and even culture and art that become ideas and ideas in the writing or creation of literary works (Empson, 2020; Faldi & Putri, 2022). It is the aspect of content that makes literary works essential in truth, although literary works are imaginative and fictitious, but in their creation there is a series of events in the social life of the author. The creation of literary works is required to be sensitive to social situations and the proletariat.

Analysis of literary works is not far from these two elements, namely the intrinsic element of literature that contains plots, settings, and others, and the extrinsic element that contains what gives ideas to the author through events in his life (Kos-Lajtmán, 2021; Ma'rifah, 2020). In analysis, these two elements will be inseparable, if they are more one-sided, if without intrinsic elements will only be possibilities in the analysis process and if only extrinsic elements will only explain what structure is in writing literary works.

Both intrinsic and extrinsic elements are inseparable and the role of the author's biography also plays a role in the creation of literary works (Kos-Lajtman, 2021; Ma'rifah, 2020). So, it can be concluded that literary works and their authors have a close relationship, because the process of creation involves life and the process of writing which contains fiction based on the experience of the author.

In the analysis of the work entitled *The Emperor's New Clothes* there is a biographical role of the author, Hans Christian Andersen. Hans Christian Andersen was a Dane, his inspiration in creating *The Emperor's New Clothes* was the Spanish-language book *Libro de los ejemplos* created in medieval times and compiled by Juan Manuel a prince of Vienna (Mulyadi, 2016; Ningsih, 2023). *The Emperor's New clothes* sounded to get a lot of appreciation from the king of Denmark at that time because of its creator who was said to be brave in criticizing the upper class, namely the bourgeoisie. The writing of *The Emperor's New Clothes* also comes from the personal experience of little Andersen while living in Copenhagen, which contained a large number of Danish upper classes.

The story begins with the appearance of the king who likes fashion and is willing to spend his money just to buy clothes, even when sitting in his stop the king is said to have sat in his fashion in the sense that the king really glorifies the clothes and fashion he wears. The king was even ignorant and did not pay his soldiers and focused more on his fashion, so he occupied the upper class where he also paid travelers to make the best clothes but to the exclusion of wages for his soldiers who had served him (Mulyadi, 2016; Ningsih, 2023). The struggle of the lower classes was depicted by two nomads employed by the king as tailors, with dissatisfaction with fashion the king was willing to pay the two nomads to create clothes that he would wear while touring the city.

The story is about capitalism as the act of economic power that includes the upper class or bourgeoisie as they are free to distribute their finances for anything. Hans Christian Andersen created this work to satirize the bourgeoisie by creating two wandering characters sent to create clothes for the king (Mulyadi, 2016; Ningsih, 2023). Two nomads who reflected the lower class or the proletariat, they fooled the king by creating clothes that were invisible, so that the king was actually naked.

The class struggle of the proletariat for the rights it needs, or it will even overthrow the upper class so that the upside of society will collapse and will create class equality. Marxism deals with the conflict between man and society as well as actual reality, in the sense that people cannot put the interests of individuals above the interests of the public, and/or the interests of the passions of a particular class for the sake of their individual interests (Aulia, et al., 2022; Cicerchia, 2022).

Marxism with its teaching about opposing reality and a certain class society means a society that has individual passions above the public interest where this turns and conflicts with the public interest. It is known that a certain class will prioritize its personal or individual passions above the general interest, all of this is only based on desire or lust because the particular class in question has power over everything (economic, political, even throne) (Aulia, et al., 2022; Cicerchia, 2022).

Capitalist actors, namely the upper class, have things to contribute their wealth, use their money, and do things related to the economy. They have authority over capital and how to distribute it. *The Emperor's New Clothes* composed by Andersen himself has an anti-capitalist ideology using the example of the king who looks stupid in front of his people, and a child who is portrayed as a folk or lower class dares to *speak up* loudly that the king has been fooled (Mulyadi, 2016; Ningsih, 2023). However, the people who have been indoctrinated with the ideology of the king, and must always uphold the king do not have the courage like the child.

Although the community wanted to fight back, due to lack of capital it was not done, and gradually became commonplace. The people did not have the courage to overthrow this king because of lack of capital and courage, but when the courage and desire to take away the rights that should be obtained the people will do reckless things and have an orientation to overthrow the leader or the upper class (Mulyadi, 2016; Ningsih, 2023). Through the background above, this article would like to expose more about the voices of anti-capitalism in Andersen's story. The short story is analyzed through literary sociology where depictions of literary works are seen through social contexts.

METHOD

This study uses explorative approach and qualitative method in a short story entitled *The Emperor's New Clothes* by Hans Christian Andersen published in 1989 in a book entitled *Fairy Tales Told for Children*. By using qualitative method, the concepts and written data are analyzed to answer

the question in this paper. Written through explorative perspective, online and offline scripts are used to explain correlations between *The Emperor's New Clothes* and the voices of anti-capitalism. Online and offline scripts are derived from books and journals to understand shown matters. The data analysis includes attaining sources, reading sources carefully, comparing with other issues, quoting into paper, and writing down in references. Each of them is read then broken down into its every particular element. The plots and settings of the short story are mainly involved to point significant condition of *The Emperor's New Clothes*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The voice of anti-capitalism in the short story entitled *The Emperor's New Clothes* is implied through some words, sentences, or even dialogues conveyed by the author to the reader. In the context of anti-capitalist voices, people reject the leadership of the ruler or upper class on the grounds of injustice and taking away rights that should be obtained, but in conditions of unfair leaders, rights seem to be in the hands of the upper class (Aulia, et al., 2022; Cicerchia, 2022). As in this short story, the author distributes anti-capitalist voices to offend the upper class who worship fashion as a symbol of the upper class, they are styled so as to give rise to a social society grouped by fashion and or their class. In this story the king is willing to spend money to make, buy, and wear beautiful, good, and branded fashion, so he has to spend some money.

The underlined situation can be seen in The Emperor's obsession with new clothes and his willingness to spend excessive amounts of money on them reflects the consumerist culture perpetuated by capitalism, where value is often placed on material possessions rather than genuine worth or substance. Furthermore, the story highlights how those in positions of power, like the Emperor, are often disconnected from reality and willing to perpetuate falsehoods in order to maintain their status and authority. This mirrors how capitalist systems can perpetuate inequality and exploitation, with those in power often turning a blind eye to the struggles of the marginalized in order to protect their own interests (Aulia, et al., 2022; Cicerchia, 2022).

The Symbols of The King's Fashion in *The Emperor's New Clothes*

Many years ago, there was an Emperor, who was so excessively fond of new clothes, that he spent all his money in dress. (Andersen, 1989)

The upper classes often spend their money on their personal needs, as if those with money, thrones, or even power get *the privilege* to distribute the money for what they want. In this case fashion is revered as a symbol of progress, power, and even a symbol of the upper class (Malherbe, 2022; Proni, 2022). Fashion as a symbol of class and identity of a race, tends to be a reference and even an example for the next trend. The upper class who has a role as leaders and as well as good examples for social society seem to continue to change how they live, thus making the lower class afraid of changing existing trends (Malherbe, 2022; Proni, 2022).

The taste of lifestyle in a recognized society is the taste of belonging to the upper class or ruling class. Those who have good money can follow trends from the upper class and are considered towering upwards so that they go to a class order that is followed by their lifestyle (Malherbe, 2022; Proni, 2022). It could also be said that those who jump to a higher level of social order are considered successful in raising their class social order. In this case, it produces conclusions about how fashion is used as a symbol of a certain social class, so that it will produce a different social order (Malherbe, 2022; Proni, 2022).

Those who have trendy fashion will be seen as a person or group of different levels, given the differences in fashion that already exist. The king in this short story, he always changes fashion every time he finds a newer fashion style. The king as a symbol of leadership and being in the upper class tends to be wrong in distributing his finances (Malherbe, 2022; Proni, 2022). Personal interests such as fashion made the king not care about what happened, even he did not care about the royal army, and continued to focus on fashion which made him constantly worshipped.

His extravagant love of new clothing and the money he spends on them symbolize a leader who choose importance on appearance than on character (Andersen, 1989; Malherbe, 2022; Proni, 2022). This behavior reflects the emptiness and vanity often found in those who prioritize how they look rather than their responsibilities. The Emperor's focus on fashion where maintaining an image becomes more important than making meaningful decisions or caring for other people. The Emperor's

obsession with clothes leads him to his public humiliation, revealing the emptiness of his leadership and the consequences of prioritizing appearance over duty (Andersen, 1989; Malherbe, 2022; Proni, 2022).

He did not trouble himself in the least about his soldiers; nor did he care to go either to the theatre or the chase, except for the opportunities then afforded him for displaying his new clothes. (Andersen, 1989)

The king never cared about his soldiers, the money that should have been used to provide salaries for his soldiers was instead used for his personal interests, even the king also did not care about the theater performances held, the king only cared if in the event he could show off the fashion that the king wore. The king's indifference reflects an unjust form of leadership, where the king is concerned with his person rather than society or even his army (Malherbe, 2022; Proni, 2022). The king who is a leadership figure whose role is always to be fair in his leadership is very different from what happens to the king's leadership in this short story.

The king attaches importance to personal problems and ignores the problems of his people, this reflects a leadership figure that is not trustful, fair, or even a reflection of a good figure. The leader may have good or high achievements, but if the leader is not successful in cultivating goodness in his people it is inadequate and unsuccessful in his leadership. Leaders who behave well towards their people tend to get success in their leadership and make their people happy. The true leader is the main figure in a group, and if in his leadership he cannot create a condition of good for his masses, then things that tend to be destructive will happen as well as what happens in the procession of his leadership.

He had a different suit for each hour of the day; and as of any other king or emperor, one is accustomed to say, "he is sitting in council," it was always said of him, "The Emperor is sitting in his wardrobe." (Andersen, 1989)

The dress worn by the king became a symbol of his leadership, where when he attended an event, symbolized as that he was in a luxurious dress. Clothing can indicate where someone is in the class social order, this is because there is a price to pay if someone wants to dress or use a luxurious dress (Aulia, et al., 2022; Happe, 2024). Luxury became one of the characteristics of the upper class, they used their money in a way that the lower class could not, just as the distribution of money for personal purposes aimed at making the identity of a person or group of classes.

Clothing distinguishes itself in social vertically and horizontally, where vertical dress or clothing will show where a person is in the sense of which class, and horizontal indicates a person's relationship with social and relationships between others (Aulia, et al., 2022; Happe, 2024). So that it finds the role of clothing as a symbol of the existence of class social order in life. This signifies the social class of society and become a symbol of the power of domination and class in the upper order.

They asked for the most delicate silk and the purest gold thread; put both into their own knapsacks; and then continued their pretended work at the empty looms until late at night. (Andersen, 1989)

This reflects the characteristics of luxurious clothing worn by the upper class or ruling class made with luxurious and expensive materials. The clothing is nothing but the real differences between the ruler and the ruled. In reality, it is also similar since those who wears expensive, or even sophisticated clothing is considered in higher class than other people. In this sense, even clothing is never neutral at all, but socially constructed since it could contribute to any value of any people as well.

And he caused large sums of money to be given to both the weavers in order that they might begin their work directly. (Andersen, 1989)

The king is willing to spend a lot of money, in this story symbolized by two gold bars just to make clothes that are considered luxurious. Weavers who are actually travelers, claim to know the fashion that is trendy in other Kingdoms. Instead of paying his soldiers or going to socialize by watching the theater organized. Unlike the working class, they tend to wear ordinary clothes, and these ordinary clothes make a symbol of the working class because the working class dresses according to its importance as workers.

In dressing the working class, it is emphasized through slogans of there is no special tendency to the aesthetics of wearing clothing. This distinguishes vertically that the upper class will dress like the upper class and the lower class will dress like the lower class (Aulia, et al., 2022; Brass, 2022). Meanwhile, such society is considered lower class can be seen from the way it is dressed because they prioritize function rather than aesthetics in dress, and are labeled as having bad taste.

"These must, indeed, be splendid clothes!" thought the Emperor. "Had I such a suit, I might at once find out what men in my realms are unfit for their office, and also be able to distinguish the wise from the foolish! This stuff must be woven for me immediately." And he caused large sums of money to be given to both the weavers in order that they might begin their work directly. (Andersen, 1989)

The king used clothing as a tool to measure his parliamentary office, in this case the upper class. The king distributed his money for his selfish interests without knowing the risks and repercussions of the Decree. So, the king concluded that those who are suitable and appropriate to wear this garment are suitable for their position. This shows that fashion is a benchmark tool among the upper-class social circles so that fashion must be *up to date* and tend to continue to regenerate and update themselves. The use of fashion makes mobility and movement vertically among the upper class social (Mufli & Ali, 2022; Suyaji, et al., 2024).

It is not only economic capital that creates class social order, but there is only cultural capital, namely knowledge and the ability to create cultural differences. Unfreedom in socializing is not only influenced by economic capital factors, it turns out that there are non-economic factors, namely cultural capital (Mufli & Ali, 2022; Suyaji, et al., 2024). Those who have the knowledge and ability can tinker with and or replace and make vertical differences in the cultural system.

Rejection of Capitalists and Fashion Culture

In the short story of *The Emperor's New Clothes*, there is a thin voice that opposes the existing capitalist system. This voice is implied in the author's writing to criticize the system of the upper class that worships fashion. Fashion differentiates such culture among the people (Aulia, et al., 2022; Brass, 2022). People seem to understand what is worn by the king and make it a symbol of power and upper class. The upper class of the ruler in this short story is marked by the figure of the king who wastefully spends his money just to buy clothes as a luxurious lifestyle.

The king besides being a waste of money, he also liked to pay weavers only for personal interests, as well as a tendency to not care about his soldiers and even his people. This opens up an opportunity for the lower classes to revolutionize and vote against capitalism. It was capitalism that puts capital in the owners of capital and freedom in the private distribution of capital (Aulia, et al., 2022; Brass, 2022). The king was so good that it made the opportunity wide open to the eye of the beholder.

The impostors requested him very courteously to be so good as to come nearer their looms; and then asked him whether the design pleased him, and whether the colors were not very beautiful; at the same time pointing to the empty frames. The poor old minister looked and looked, he could not discover anything on the looms, for a very good reason, viz: there was nothing there. "What!" thought he again. "Is it possible that I am a simpleton? I have never thought so myself; and no one must know it now if I am so. Can it be, that I am unfit for my office? No, that must not be said either. I will never confess that I could not see the stuff."

"Oh, it is excellent!" replied the old minister, looking at the loom through his spectacles. "This pattern, and the colors, yes, I will tell the Emperor without delay, how very beautiful I think them." (Andersen, 1989)

With his high ego and unwilling to fall from office and be said to be stupid, the minister appointed by the king began to think that he would deceive the king to see. Seeing the oration of the wanderer disguised as a weaver about who should wear this garment, the content of the dialogue mentioned that only wise and upper-class people are suitable to wear this garment (Aulia, et al., 2022; Brass, 2022). Not only suitable, and only those who are not stupid can see the clothes made by the weaver. So, in this case create impostors because they know that if they do not lie their position will be removed and fall from the upper social class order. Every individual will prioritize their personal interests so that it will cause prolonged and unavoidable conflicts.

This conflict, in addition to prioritizing personal interests, also has a complete goal of wanting to overthrow and embarrass the king, the appearance of two wanderers disguised as weavers, they take the opportunity to fool and overthrow the king. In social and society in their lives have a competitive nature, with each person having certain goals that are not the same as others (Latham, 2020; Sarmi, et al., 2024). So that, conflict cannot be avoided and will occur because of individual interests that underlie the conflict.

The Emperor now sent another officer of his court to see how the men were getting on, and to ascertain whether the cloth would soon be ready. It was just the same with this gentleman as with the minister; he surveyed the looms on all sides, but could see nothing at all but the empty frames.

"Does not the stuff appear as beautiful to you, as it did to my lord the minister?" asked the impostors of the Emperor's second ambassador; at the same time making the same gestures as before, and talking of the design and colors which were not there. (Andersen, 1989)

The second man sent by the king to see his clothes being made by two travelers disguised as professional weavers, again and again lied for his sake of maintaining his position and to avoid the foolish attitude that would be thrown. This act symbolizes how capitalist and fashion culture often prioritize appearance and reputation over honesty and substance (Latham, 2020; Sarmi, et al., 2024). The story shows the emptiness of valuing image over substance, ultimately leading to the Emperor's public embarrassment when the truth comes out, highlighting the dangers and consequences of a society obsessed with appearances.

"I certainly am not stupid!" thought the messenger. "It must be, that I am not fit for my good, profitable office! That is very odd; However, no one shall know anything about it." And accordingly, he praised the stuff he could not see, and declared that he was delighted with both colors and patterns. (Andersen, 1989)

Conflict between rulers and subordinates must exist, this tends to be caused by the existence of self-interest that underlies the existence of conflict. Social conflict is based on demands related to power, statutes, and sources of wealth which are limited, and this social conflict can occur between groups, even individuals (Latham, 2020; Sarmi, et al., 2024). Thus, the upper classes remained at odds over positions and orders that were considered important because of their privileges that were considered useful for their style and life.

This quote shows how someone fear losing their status in a society driven by capitalist and fashion culture. The messenger, unable to see the nonexistent cloth, pretends to admire it to avoid being assume not fit for his position (Latham, 2020; Sarmi, et al., 2024). This behavior shows a system where people prioritize maintaining their image and status over honesty and dignity.

"Is not the work absolutely magnificent?" said the two officers of the crown, already mentioned. "If your Majesty will only be pleased to look at it! What a splendid design! What glorious colors!" and at the same time they pointed to the empty frames; for them imagined that everyone else could see this exquisite piece of workmanship. (Andersen, 1989)

The king's two envoys argued as if he was not stupid in order to secure his position. This false argument seems to overthrow the capitalist system because it relates to the power of the king, a symbol of luxurious and fashionable clothing that is only suitable for the king to wear (Latham, 2020; Sarmi, et al., 2024). The purpose of the two wanderers disguised as weavers is none other than to embarrass the king, and to want the king not to appear in his own personal interests.

They clearly attach importance to their personal problems because of the ego of ownership of economic capital and cultural capital. This will lead to conflict towards social change, this change aims to inhibit or encourage changes that occur in a society (Azmanova, 2020; Ferrando, et al., 2020). In this context, what two nomads do is to inhibit social change that upholds fashion or fashion that has become a culture in the community in the short story.

"If your Imperial Majesty will be graciously pleased to take off your clothes, we will fit on the new suit, in front of the looking glass."

The emperor was accordingly undressed, and the rogues pretended to array him in his new suit; the Emperor turning round, from side to side, before the looking glass.

"How splendid his Majesty looks in his new clothes, and how well they fit!" everyone cried out. "What a design! What colors! These are indeed royal robes!"

"The canopy, which is to be borne over your Majesty, in the procession, is waiting," announced the chief master of the ceremonies. (Andersen, 1989)

The traveler begins his action with dialogue and a voice that is convincing to the king, so that the king will assume that the clothes that did not exist from the beginning are luxurious clothes, this leads to humiliation and makes the king no longer buy or make clothes that are solely for his own personal interests. Leaders have a great responsibility both moral and non-moral, namely the responsibility for their work (Azmanova, 2020; Ferrando, et al., 2020).

This quote indeed exposes the emptiness and potential for mockery in a society obsessed with appearances and status, emphasizing the dangers of neglecting integrity and honesty in favor of maintaining a delusive image. The mock itself is the voice of anti-capitalism (Azmanova, 2020; Ferrando, et al., 2020). It works so subtle that the capitalist does not know that he is the one being mocked. He is lost because of the ruses of the people. He may own the dominant power, but people have everyday power that could easily mock the throne and whoever sits on it.

"But the Emperor has nothing at all on!" said a little child.

"Listen to the voice of innocence!" exclaimed his father; and what the child had said was whispered from one to another.

"But he has nothing at all on!" at last cried out all the people. The Emperor was vexed, for he knew that the people were right; but he thought the procession must go on now! (Andersen, 1989)

From within the crowd, a low voice came from the child, which meant that the king was wearing nothing, but the culture of glorifying clothing as a symbol of the king's capitalist leadership made those around the child try to cover their mouths and lead the child's opinion towards the belief that the king was wearing clothes, But the son insisted and clung to what he saw and spoke again that the king was not wearing any clothes.

This voice is a picture of anti-capitalism, even the innocent son knows that the king is not wearing clothes, and with the sound of the voice the king is aware of his people, and is ashamed of what has happened. Leadership will collapse if in order someone dares to speak loudly about the existing way of leadership (Azmanova, 2020; Ferrando, et al., 2020). Resistance actions arise because of the forced forces of the elite on the ideology and beliefs instilled in society so that it becomes a culture and assumes that it will regulate the existing social system.

The system of order and ideology referred to in this short story is the understanding of the community with the leadership of the king who likes to spend money for his personal leadership (Latham, 2020; Sarmi, et al., 2024). The ideology that the king's clothing and must always praise the king wherever and whenever. Anti-capitalism is created because of a leadership procession that is not in line with what society wants.

CONCLUSION

The story of *The Emperor's New Clothes* indeed contains the voices of anti-capitalism. At first, Andersen talks more about the existence of a greedy king. Then, the king is contested by his greed itself. People tell lies that his clothes are great whereas he is naked at that time. In this sense, the voice of anti-capitalism is not meant to be great or even enormous. It could be coming from trivial ruses among people. The everyday dialogues about the king itself is the resistance to the leader. Whenever there is injustice, any kind of contestation begins. Any resistance is already ideological since it contains how people react to such injustice that they face directly and indirectly.

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