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# Janteloven and Social Conformity in Thorbjørn Egner's Literature

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# Janteloven and Social Conformity in Thorbørn Egner's Literature

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# Origins of Janteloven

Janteloven is a set of fictional laws detailed in Danish-Norwegian author Aksel Sandemose's 1933 book "A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks," which satirizes the Scandinavian stance towards individuality versus the collective.

# Laws of Jante

- 1. Thou shalt not believe that thou art something.
- 2. Thou shalt not believe that thou art as good as us.
- 3. *Thou shalt not believe that thou art more than us.*
- 4. *Thou shalt not fancy thyself better than us.*
- 5. *Thou shalt not believe thou know more than us.*
- 6. *Thou shalt not believe thou art greater than us.*
- 7. Thou shalt not believe that thou art a worthwhile human being.
- 8. *Thou shalt not laugh at us.*
- 9. *Thou shalt not believe anyone is more concerned with thee.*
- 10. *Thou shalt not believe thou canst teach us anything.*

(Sandemose 77, adapted).

# Focus of Research

- Evidence of Janteloven in Egner's work
- Promote community harmony over individual social achievement
- Utilize children's literature as an agent of socialization

# Sample of Work



Karius og Baktus  
Doktor Dyregod  
Ole Jakob på Bytur  
Da Per var Ku

Tommy og Elefanten  
Jumbo som Dru Ut i Verden

Folk og Røvere i Kardemomme By

Klatremus og de Andre Dyrene i Hakke Bakke Skogen



# Methodology

Recorded examples of behaviors or speech exhibiting Janteloven behavior.

These were scaled to the range of society affected: the individual, family, friends, or the community as a whole.

A fuzzy scale was used for transferring qualitative to quantitative data.

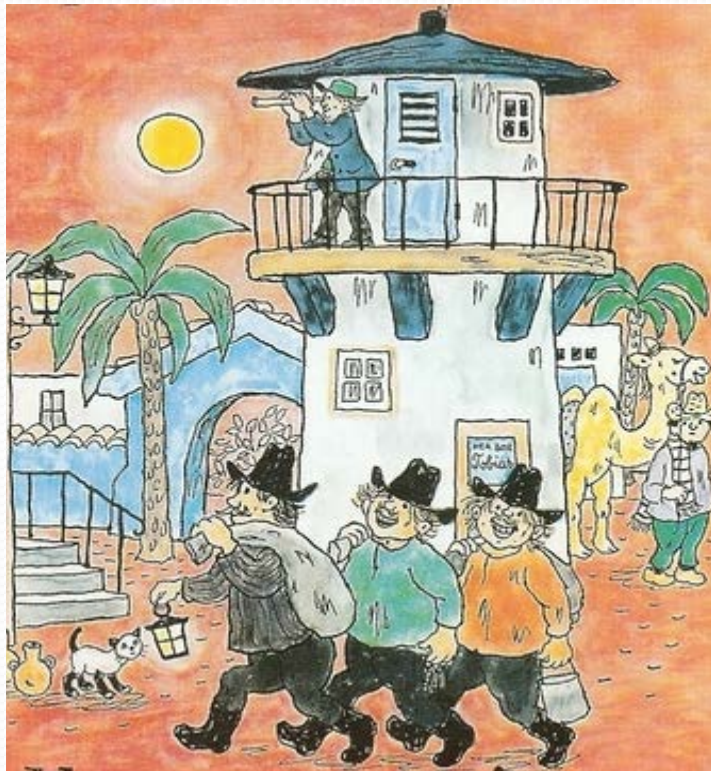
Table 1: Severity of Janteloven in Thorbjørn Egner's Books

Title	1 <sup>st</sup> Instance	2 <sup>nd</sup> Instance	3 <sup>rd</sup> Instance	4 <sup>th</sup> Instance	5 <sup>th</sup> Instance
Karius og Baktus	3				
Doktor Dyregod	1	2	4		
Ole Jakob på Bytur	1	2			
Da Per var Ku	1				
Tommy og Elefanten	1				
Jumbo som Dru Ut i Verden	2	3			
<b>Folk og Røvere i Kardemomme By</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Klatremus og de Andre Dyrene i Hakke Bakke Skogen</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>			



# Two Texts of Focus

Folk og Røvere i  
Kardemomme By



Klatremus og de Andre  
Dyrene i Hakke Bakke  
Skogen



# Aunt Sophia



# Aunt Sophia vs. Mrs. Bastian

- Orders vs. Compassion
- Position of power vs. humbling oneself
- Home vs. Jail



# Rehabilitation

By the end, the thieves are socialized into the idyllic community of Cardamom Town and transformed into useful citizens after rescuing the light keeper's pets from a fire.

- “Friendly to all-and from all-they had met.”
- Comprehensive and long-lasting impact
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Law of Jante

# Klatremus og de Andre Dyrene i Hakke Bakke Skogen



# Laws of Hakke Bakke Forest

1. All animals must be friends.
2. No one is allowed to eat anyone else.
3. Those who are idle and cannot get food for themselves may not take food from others.



# Benefits to the Whole Community



“If Mikkell Fox and Klatremus and you and I and everyone not been friends, we could not have rescued your son from the farmers.”

# Conclusion

- Specific instances of Janteloven behavior
- Messages of story promote general attitudes and behaviors
- Stronger in books for older audiences

“The Law of Jante was not just merely a set of laws, it was the very core of the speech of the people; all they ever said could be traced back to the law of Jante.”

-Sandemose *A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks*, 78



# Implications

Thorbjørn Egner's works hold a high level of instances where Janteloven is upheld.

Suggest that the generations that were exposed to these books are more receptive of upholding Janteloven in their own communities.

# Focus for Further Studies

- Generational attitudes
- Publishing trends in Norway from 1950-80
- Janteloven in Denmark or Sweden



# Final Thought on Janteloven

“Its effect was that of poison gas, slower perhaps, but more heartless. It would poison the soul without killing it utterly. In union there is strength. This united attitude rendered Jante successful in holding Jante down. All are equally big, but each equally assured of their insignificance” (78-9).