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**NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF ENGLISH FAIRY TALES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO “THE SNOW-WHITE AND SEVEN DWARFS” AND “CINDERELLA”**

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Abstract

It is impossible to differentiate or pull the word story from literature. Literature is essentially human story, unmindful of its varied forms. Stories are carried by humankind from the day we were born. Every man and woman born and living, in spite of their longevity, carries a lot of stories within, some are spoken and most are hidden. Stories kindle imagination, which in turn becomes reality for many children as they grow. Fairy tales are forms of stories which are loved by kids. Fairy tales have surpassed time and years, yet they are loved and fancied by kids of the present time. More researches have been done to trace the origins of these fairy tales and on a few more topics. This research article would analyze the narrative structure of two famous fairy tales – The Snow-white and the Seven Dwarfs and Cinderella. These two tales are very famous among kids and are available in many forms rather than just in the colourful print version. Every child, after hearing these two tales, would have their own version or representation of these two stories in their minds. It is peculiar, from researcher's point of view, that these two stories have similarities in characterization and in plot. This research article would concentrate on their plot and narrative structure.

Key words: narratology, fairy tales, plot analysis, Cinderella, Snow-white, children's literature
抽象的

不可能从文学中区分或拉出故事这个词。文学本质上是人类的故事，不注意其多样的形式。故事从我们出生的那天起就被人类承载。每一个出生和生活的男人和女人，尽管他们长寿，都承载着很多故事，有的被说出来，大部分是隐藏的。故事激发想象力，随着孩子的成长，这些想象力反过来成为许多孩子的现实。童话是孩子们喜爱的故事形式。童话已经超越了时代和岁月，却为当代的孩子们所喜爱和幻想。已经进行了更多的研究来追踪这些童话故事的起源以及更多主题。这篇研究文章将分析两个著名的童话故事——白雪公主和七个小矮人以及灰姑娘的叙事结构。这两个故事在孩子们中非常有名，并且有多种形式，而不仅仅是彩色

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印刷版。每个孩子在听过这两个故事后，都会在他们的脑海中对这两个故事有自己的版本或表现形式。奇怪的是，从研究人员的角度来看，这两个故事在人物塑造和情节上都有相似之处。这篇研究文章将集中在他们的情节和叙事结构上。

关键词：叙事学，童话，情节分析，灰姑娘，白雪公主，儿童文学

Introduction

Narratology is an approach to literature, which looks at the nature of the story and not in interpreting a story. It is an offshoot of structuralism. It studies on how narratives make meaning by analyzing the basic mechanisms and procedures employed in storytelling. Narratologists prefer the term ‘plot’ rather than ‘story’, while discussing or analysing literature. Story, according to narratologists, is the sequence of events as they happen. A ‘story’ always begins with a beginning and moves chronologically with event left. A ‘plot’, as compared with a ‘story’ has events so they are edited, ordered, packaged and presented. A plot need not be chronological; instead it may begin in media res, with a climax, may have a flash back or sometimes could move flash forward. Apart from these differences, story is replaced with words like ‘fabula’ and ‘histoire’. Plot can also be called as ‘sjuzhet’, ‘discourse’ and ‘recit’.

Though there are many narratologists and narratology theories, this research article would magnify the narratological patterns of The Snow-white and the Seven Dwarfs and Cinderella under the purview of Aristotle, Vladimir Propp and Gerard Genette. For discussions and analysis, the researcher would narrow down the focus under subheadings based on the above theorists or philosophers or thinkers.

Aristotelian Perception

Every story has a history and storytelling also has its own history and the foundation for narratology is laid strong by Aristotle, when he

talks about the plot of a tragedy. Aristotle’s idea about plot is three fold:

- a) A plot should have a beginning, a middle and an end
- b) A plot should achieve three unities – unity of time, unity of place and unity of action
- c) A plot (tragedy) should have three elements – hamartia, anagnorisis and peripeteia

The Snow-white and the Seven Dwarfs and Cinderella have a beginning with two girls born to parents and they grow up into a beautiful maiden and both stories end with a marriage and a ‘happy life thereafter’. They fulfill the first fold of Aristotle’s narration of a story. Secondly, about the unities, these two stories have single plot carried from the beginning till the end without any sub-plot or other forms of intrusions. Unity of action is complying with Aristotle’s standard. Twenty-four hours is the time constraint levied by Aristotle, the two fairy tales under discussion cannot be locked by time constraints. Snow-white and Cinderella are born, their mothers die, fathers remarry and they get step-mothers, the step-mothers grow impatient with the passage of time and both these girls are facing hardships and finally reclaim their acknowledgement or recognition. These could never happen within twenty-four hours. Unity of place is the final unity. Cinderella takes place in a single city or town, except that she is in her house and dances with the prince in his palace. Snow-white has the shift in location, though not

in a staccato fashion, as the story progress. She goes to forest from her house, stays in the residence of the dwarfs and finally accompanies the prince to a palace. There is a gradual shift in her locale.

Aristotle, while talking about the plot structure of a tragedy, expects three key elements, which would define character and more importantly pushes the story forward. *Hamartia*, *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* are the three elements. The researcher would like to stress and emphasize, as a caution, that these three technical terms are used for Greek tragedies and the fairy tales, this research article deal, are not a tragedies nor do they belong to the Greek origins. Yet for the inquisitive application of Aristotelian terms, the researcher has used them and thereby it could also mean a ‘deconstruction’ of the tales.

Hamartia is an alternate term used for ‘tragic flaw’, which is a sin or fault of a character, which would lead to a catastrophic end. Cinderella, the titular character, does not have any tragic flaw and she does not have the Aristotelian ‘thud’ or fall at the end. The characters that draw the attention and wrath of her step-mother are her beauty and hard work. She never boasts her beauty with pride nor does she out-grow her size because of her hard work. She stays humble with her two natural gifts. Cinderella’s step-mother has a tragic flaw – jealousy, which is also entrusted and imbibed into her daughters, Cinderella’s step-sisters. This tragic flaw, which is equally found in the step-mother and step-sisters, does not make them fall from an altitude. They just get deceived at the end of the story, when the prince falls in love with cinder Cinderella and not with her step-sisters. Snow-white, similar to Cinderella, does not have any weakness other than being born a beauty and with modesty to carry out any

household chores with a song in her lips and birds and pets as silent auditors. Snow-white’s step-mother has a tragic flaw – jealousy (as with the case of Cinderella’s step-mother). Ironically she asks a magic mirror which says that Snow-white is more beautiful than the queen, Snow-white’s step-mother. Mirror reflects the self and this ‘magical’ mirror could not be magic because it could surface the innermost jealousy of the step-mother over Snow-white. The queen’s jealousy affects her mentally and she abets to erase the physical existence of Snow-white. She arranges a huntsman to murder Snow-white in a jungle. The man takes pity on her and lets her live in the jungle. The ‘magical’ mirror proves its magical power by saying that Snow-white is still alive and she is still the most beautiful girl. The queen becomes a villain, turns into a witch literally and poisons a healthy apple, which in turn poisons Snow-white. This jealousy makes her fall from the top of a cliff and die.

Anagnorisis, an Aristotelian concept, represents the moment in the narrative when the protagonist recognizes or realizes the truth, in most cases it is the truth about oneself. Cinderella realizes herself as a beautiful woman only when she goes to the ball dance. She is ‘transformed’ by a good angel. This self-realization in Cinderella does not have any effect in her. She is not proud of her beauty because she rushes home at the strike of the clock and later resumes her work a simpleton, who sans vain pride. Cinderella’s step-mother and step-sisters get the self realization when the prince comes home with the glass footwear. They not only realize the worth and beauty of Cinderella, but also realize their vain pride and superiority over Cinderella. Snow-white, the titular character like Cinderella, does not recognize her beauty till the end of the tale. She is ignorant

from the beginning till her death and rebirth. Snow-white's step-mother's magic mirror makes her consciously realize her beauty. The mirror demeans her stature and beauty. She realizes herself to be less fair than Snow-white.

Peripeteia is a turn-around or reversal of events, which would make a tragic hero fall from high to low level. In Cinderella, the step-mother and step-sisters are likely to encounter such reversal. They expect, like all other mothers and girls in the story, the glass footwear carried by the prince to fit their legs, but it happens the reverse way. Cinderella's foot suits it perfectly and she becomes a perfect match for the prince. In Snow-white, the queen faces this reversal. She arranges the huntsman to kill her but there is a reversal in her expectation and at the later stage, Snow-white wakes up from death even after eating the poisonous apple. The seven dwarfs push the wicked queen from the top of cliff and she dies. In both the tales, chosen for this research article, the villainous people face the reversal, which further leads to a joyous life of the good and ignorant Cinderella and Snow-white.

Gerard Genette's Perception

Gerard Genette focuses on how a tale is told as a way of seeking answers to the following questions:

- Is the basic narrative mimetic or digetic?
- How is the narrative focalized?
- Who is telling the story?
- How is time handled in the story?
- How is the story packaged?
- How are speech and thought represented?

As done earlier, in this research article, for the convenience and coherence, all these questions could be taken individually and

answered based on the two stories under discussion.

Mimetic and digetic are two ways of how a plot is voiced. Mimetic is showing or enactment of dialogues and the plot. Digetic, on the other hand, is giving a nutshell of events in a short form. Usually every plot employs both these forms. There would be dialogues as a kind of pause that would arouse and kindle the imagination and reading pace of the readers. Digetic would give rapid summary of events so that the readers just get the essence of the plot and events and move on to something important. Both Snow-white and Cinderella are mimetic. The story teller or the author has used so many dialogues and exclamations to arouse the eagerness of their target audience, kids. Readers, who read aloud, these two stories and dialogues could easily bring in the expected emotions in their voices and could certainly see the dilations in the sleepy eyes of the kids.

Focalization in simple terms could be altered with the phrase 'view-point' or 'point of view'. External focalization is an external character, which does not have any connection with the story, narrating the story. Internal focalization is a character thinking to himself or herself. The plot may have many characters but they are all perceptions of one single narrator, who is focalizing internally. Apart from these two focalizations, there is zero focalization or omniscient narration, which sans any kind of perception. Snow-white and Cinderella are stories with zero focalization. There is no internal and external perception but only omniscient narration.

Gerard Genette's third question is about who is narrating the story. There are, in general, two kinds of narrators – overt and covert. A covert narrator tells the story but never takes part

in it nor does he has identification like name or relation. On the other hand, an overt narrator has an identity and sometimes he or she may take part in the story. Snow-white and Cinderella has a covert narrator, who never takes part in the story but just say the story and stay hidden. This narrator allows the characters to talk and behave in their own manner and never intrudes. The story happens, one should acknowledge, without a blockade.

Consideration of time or handling of time in these two stories has already been discussed under the head unity of time. These two stories have a beginning, middle and an end. There is not complication over time. It is linear. Snow-white and Cinderella are born, they attain youth hood and then get a pair to get settled down in life. These two stories are round and well accomplished based on time.

Gerard Genette questions about the narrative pattern or patterns within the story and he names it as story package. According to Gerard Genette, a story is packed with primary narrative, the main course of the story and this could be added or have a branch narrative called as secondary narrative or meta-narrative. The secondary narrative could be a part of the primary or could exist as a separate entity. The intertwining of the two narratives or their isolation are termed as single-ended, double-ended or intrusive. Cinderella is a story with a primary narrative and it is single ended. On the other hand, Snow-white has a secondary plot with the seven dwarfs and their house, yet the end of the story is intrusive and the story ends with Snow-white marrying a prince.

The final aspect of Gerard Genette is the representation of speech in the plot. Since Snow-white and Cinderella are meant for kids, the speeches are represented in the direct form and

always have the tag of who the speaker is. Speech represented directly but without a tag and speech represented in an indirect form or in the reported speech are the two other forms.

Vladimir Propp's Perception

Vladimir Propp is a Russian formalist, who researched about the components of Russian folk tales. He analyzed the plot contents and has identified a 'narrative elements' or units which carry the story forward. He has identified a few character types, which are considered as mechanisms for distributing the functions around the story. He has also identified thirty one functions, which are grouped into four spheres. Snow-white and Cinderella have some of the stereo type characters and they have a few sphere representations, as established by Vladimir Propp. Villain, donor, helper, princess and her father, dispatcher, hero and false hero are the list of characters as laid by Vladimir Propp. In Snow-white and Cinderella the villains are visible and they are the step-mothers and step-sisters. In Snow-white, the huntsman and the seven dwarfs act as helpers. They rescue Snow-white from the perils and extend her living. Snow-white and Cinderella are the princesses and they have a father, who is helpless and busy throughout the story.

Introduction, the body of the story, the donor sequence and the hero's return are the four spheres of a story as advocated by Vladimir Propp. Absentation, interdiction, violation of interdiction, reconnaissance, delivery, trickery and complicity are the elements that make the first sphere. Snow-white and Cinderella opens with the absentation, they were born and a character, which would nourish their life, the mother goes missing in the form of ill health leading to death. Their fathers are also found to be busy and remain missing in the story without

much a role to play except to appear in the conclusion to see their beautiful daughters clutching the hands of princes. Interdiction means a warning given to the hero or the protagonist. Snow-white and Cinderella are warned with the appearance of their step-mothers, through their harsh words and treatment. Their treatment is so rude that both these princess forget their identity and work in the house like a maid. They do all the odd jobs that are otherwise carried out by a menial. Snow-white is warned twice apart from the initial ill-treatment by the step-mother. The huntsman who should have murdered her warns her and leaves her to live and the seven dwarfs warn Snow-white not to strike a conversation with a stranger nor to open the door and transact business with strangers. Snow-white never heeds to these warnings, she violates the interdictions and fate takes her through the rough roads. Cinderella does not have further interdiction and she does not violate them. By reconnaissance, Vladimir Propp focuses his attention to the villain character, wherein the villain seeks something. In Snow-white the queen seeks an answer to her narcissistic pleasure about beauty. The mirror says that truth that Snow-white is more beautiful. She gains information about the real beauty, which is termed as 'delivery'. The queen does the 'trickery' of deceiving the victim (Snow-white) by sending her into the forest with the huntsman. The huntsman helps Snow-white by taking pity on her, which according to Vladimir Propp is 'complicity' (unwitting help of the enemy). In case with Cinderella there is no explicit villain. The step-sisters seek the love and attention of the prince and they wish to marry him. Her step-mother also wishes the prince to be her son-in-law. These 'villains' do not gain information

about Cinderella or they do not engage in some trickery against Cinderella. There is no complicity because of the lack of explicit villain.

The second sphere is technically named as the body of the story. Vladimir Propp claims that the main story starts from here and extends to the climax. In this part the hero or the protagonist goes on a quest and face the following situations:

- Villainy and lack – the need is identified
- Meditation – hero discovers the lack
- Counteraction – hero chooses positive action
- Departure – hero leaves on a mission.

Snow-white and Cinderella are two stories, wherein the lead characters does not a quest or thirst. They are shown to existential heroes, who accept life in all its forms and never fight or flight on seeing it. They accept life as it comes. The second sphere could be taken seriously by the researcher while discussing these two stories.

The donor sequence is the technical name of the third sphere. In this sphere of the story the hero goes in search of a solution to the problem by framing a method or plan. To achieve his or her goal a magical element from the donor could come handy. The first part of this sphere is testing, where the hero is challenged to prove heroic qualities. Snow-white proves her only heroic quality, house-keeping. She finds the house of the seven dwarfs and she keeps it clean. The seven dwarfs are really satisfied with her work and they allow her to stay with them. They are also willing to serve her food in exchange of her house-keeping service. Cinderella proves her dancing skills in the ball dance, which not only impresses the prince but everyone present in the hall. 'Acquisition' is a term used by Vladimir Propp to show the hero gaining the magical item.

A fairy appears before Cinderella, who cries because she is denied to go to the ball with her step-sisters. The fairy gives Cinderella a pumpkin horse cart, new clothes and a pair of glass footwear. Cinderella goes to the ball and she is recognized as the most beautiful girl even by her step-mother and step-sisters. A struggle, between the hero and villain is mentioned in this sphere. Cinderella struggles to reach out to the soldiers and extend her feet towards the glass slippers brought by the king's men. She has to fight against her step-mother and step-sisters to test her feet with the slippers. Snow-white, in spite of the strong warnings from the dwarfs, eats the poisonous apple given by the queen in the disguise of a witch. She struggles for her life and finally brought back to life with the shake and stumble of the men who carries her. The hero or the protagonist is victorious against the villain. Cinderella and Snow-white are victorious. Snow-white do not succumb to death and Cinderella out smarts her step-mother and step-sister and marries the prince.

The final sphere, which is termed as hero's return has the hero returning to home, where the hero is given a gala welcome. Usually this phase is uneventful except for a marriage of the hero or the protagonist. The two stories,

Snow-white and Cinderella ends with the princess' marrying beautiful princes.

Conclusion

Children's literatures are unique among themselves and fairy tales are a specialized form of narration that conveys the story, which surpass time and stay from generations to generations. Through this research article, the researcher has had a successful attempt of applying narratological theories to two famous fairy tales. The result of this short study is an understanding of the two fairy tales in a different perception – narratology. It could be deduced that narratology theories could be used for the overall understanding of any genre of literature in an objective way.

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