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Structural Analysis of Oscar Wilde's Fairy Tales

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Mehrish Khan
Ph.D. Scholar, Department of English Literature, The Islamia University Bahawalpur, Pakistan.
Muhammad Kamran Kashif
Department of English, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, Pakistan. Email: linguist.student.8@gmail.com
Muhammad Faheem
M.Phil (English Linguistics) and Research Scholar at Institute of Humanities & Arts Khawaja Fareed University of Engineering & Information Technology, Pakistan.
Email: faheemwali5@gmail.com

Abstract
The study's principal objective was to conduct a structural analysis of the fairy tales written by Oscar Wilde, considering the personal importance Wilde attributed to them and his intention to educate his sons through them. Wilde's fairy stories exhibited a comparable blend of inventive underlying meaning and otherworldly atmosphere akin to those encountered in traditional oral fairy tales. The author skillfully developed character profiles and story trajectories that elicited a feeling of rivalry. Consistent with previous fairy tales, these stories also concluded with joyful endings accompanied by didactic lessons. The researcher employed Propp's Structural Model as a conceptual framework to categorize nearly all forms of structures. In addition, this investigation significantly enhanced the authenticity of Wilde's extraordinary stories and the oral heritage associated with them. They acquired the highest number of structures from Wilde's chosen fairy tales. The two chosen narratives were The Happy Prince and The Selfish Giant, fragments from the initial compilation of stories titled The Happy Prince and Other Tales. The Selfish Giant, the third narrative, was derived from The House of Pomegranates, a supplementary collection of traditional anecdotes.
Keywords: Structure, Oscar Wilde, Fairy tales, Oral Tradition.

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Introduction:

The specific category of traditional stories that fall under the umbrella of folktales is commonly referred to as 'fairy tales' (Swales, 1990). Fairy tales emerged due

to the integration of magical elements into the extensive oral folklore tradition. Fairy tales often incorporate supernatural phenomena. Fairy tales are classified as fiction, distinguished by their significant deviation from reality (Zipes, 2001). According to Briggs (1971), fairy tales are characterized by a fundamental component of the supernatural or enchanting (p. 133). Numerous scholars have made efforts to reassess these literary works through the lens of their homosexual orientation (Summers, 1990; Schmidgall, 1994). For example, the impact of Christianity has been acknowledged (Quintus, 1991; Willoughby, 1993). Moreover, various academic researchers have extensively employed Jung's theoretical framework (Snider, 2009), leading to the extraction of societal, political, and cultural elements (Killeen, 2007). Due to the ramifications of this symbolic viewpoint, it has been determined that it is appropriate for a mature audience. However, the critical approach of the subject should be reevaluated considering the perspective of the genre. According to the narrative's structural analysis, there is a lack of identifiable exertion. Monaghan (1974) conducted a comprehensive structural analysis of his two-fairy tales, although his investigation would have benefited from a more precise level of inquiry.

Wilde was a prominent figure in the literary landscape of the Victorian era. In 1888 following his marriage, the individual released his first compilation of folklore titled The Happy Prince. There is currently no empirical evidence to indicate the underlying factors that led to his immediate captivation with the narrative structure and content. However, according to Zipes (1999), Wilde did not write the stories with explicit intention for a children's audience (p.135). The House of Pomegranate, Oscar Wilde's sophomore compilation of short stories, was published in 1891. Wilde's highly acclaimed short story, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, was also published in the same year. His most notable literary pieces include *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), *A Woman of No Importance*

(1893), *An Ideal Husband* (1895), and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). Considerable academic and literary focus has been dedicated to this concept in various countries. However, Pakistan has not yet experienced any research in this field. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to fill this gap in knowledge. A dispute had arisen regarding the underlying motivation behind his imaginative narratives. Certain individuals have hypothesized that he authored these narratives for his two offspring, as McCormack (1997) cited Wilde's statement that it is the primary responsibility of every paternal figure to create fairy tales for their progeny. Wilde explicitly acknowledged this fact, and Vyvyan vividly remembers recounting numerous instances of these anecdotes to his sons after the arrival of his initial two offspring. According to an unsigned notice published in the Athenaeum on September 1st, 1888, Wilde's stories are targeted towards a younger demographic and should not be regarded as intense. His narratives exemplify the socio-economic disparities prevalent during the Victorian period. All of his fairy tales do not portray a utopian world. The objective of the study was to ascertain the precise symbols found in Wilde's fairy tales and examine their reflection on the historical era in which he resided.

Research Question:

The primary purpose of this investigation is to provide an answer to the following question:

1. What are the structural patterns employed by Oscar Wilde in his fairy tales and how do they adhere to the Proppian structural patterns?

Literature Review:

The term ‘fairy’ has its origins in the Latin word ‘fata’ which is a noun adjunct that signifies ‘fatum’, According to Warner (1995), fate can be conceptualized as the divinity of destiny. The terms "fee" in French, ‘fat’ in Italian, and ‘Hada’ in

Spanish have originated from this common root. The term ‘fee’ is referred to a female practitioner of magic in French romantic literature. They possess extraordinary or supernatural abilities. They have achieved perpetual youth by utilizing a range of botanical substances. Their exclusive understanding and expertise in these plants have played a crucial role in this process. The Italian term ‘fata’ also carries the same connotations, as stated by Kready in 1916. Based on Warner's (1995) research, fairies and sibyls are believed to possess precognitive abilities, allowing them to have knowledge of past events as well as future occurrences. In narratives involving these mythical beings, they often engage in prophecy and provide cautionary messages. Consequently, fairies are frequently associated with mysterious phenomena and the supernatural. Evil fairies exhibit callous, malicious, and deceitful behavior, while good fairies demonstrate considerate, charitable, and helpful attributes. Furthermore, Warner (1995) recognized ‘obligation’ and ‘compelling’ as connotations associated with the term ‘fairy. The semantic relationship between ‘fay’ and ‘fair’ is based on the terms ‘fegan’ and ‘feyen’, which denote the act of conforming, achieving consensus, or fulfilling the required objective. The sprites have gained dominion over this capability. These supernatural beings, known as pixies, can exert control over individuals by means of their paranormal incantations. Through these incantations, the pixies can compel individuals to act in certain ways, either causing harm or aiding others. The prevailing interpretation of the term ‘fairy’ typically pertains to the concept of enchantment and the manifestation of an illusion. A Fairyland is a dimension populated by diverse species of beings and its residents (Kready, 1916). During the fourteenth century, Britain demonstrated a favorable attitude towards the fourth sense. Since the 16th century, following the publication of Spencer's Faerie Queen, these entities have been commonly referred to as "little creatures" and are often linked to enigmatic humanoid female

figures. The Shakespearean play A Midsummer Night's Dream, written in 1916, exhibits a similar connotation.

His father was a well-known ENT physician who also earned a name as a scholar and writer. His main interest was in the Irish archaeological lineage and traditional stories from his farmworker patients, frequently because of fee he poised fallacies, legends, and swearword and gems that might have been misplaced (Ellmann, 1987). He was particularly interested in uncovering fallacies, legends, profanities, and valuable artifacts that may have been lost or overlooked (Ellmann, 1987). The publication titled "*The Irish Superstitions* (1852)" holds significant scholarly value. In the 1860s, he was bestowed with the honor of Knighthood. Jane Francesca Wilde, being his mother, exhibited exceptional courage and audacity. She additionally made a modification to her name, changing it from Frances to Francesca. She demonstrated a high degree of creativity in the process of assigning names to her offspring. The user included the name "O'Flahertie" as a potential addition, considering William Wilde's association with Galway, and specifically chose the name "Oscar." She demonstrated a profound fascination with Irish folklore and nationalism, evident in her composition of patriotic verses that explored the role of women in society. He received his primary education from Portorawhich, a renowned educational institution. He commenced his studies in the Greek language. He was also awarded the Carpenter's prize for Greek scripture. He was greatly influenced by his instructor. Mahaffy was widely recognized for his permissive approach, abundant knowledge, and preservation of it (Pritchard, 2001).

Additionally, R.Y. Tyrrel was an exceptional Hellenic scholar who achieved the position of Professor of Latin at the young age of twenty-five (Pritchard, 2001, p.28). Wilde exhibited a pronounced dandyism during his time in school, regularly donning a silk top hat as part of his attire. At Trinity College, his

acquisition of knowledge in aesthetics was evident. Upon his admission to the University of Oxford, he established a favorable reputation. He possessed a traditional perspective regarding religion and authority. During his time at Oxford, he displayed a significant level of interest in the literary contributions of John Ruskin and Walter Pater. He gained recognition for his proficiency in public speaking and his ability to engage in meaningful conversations. He had exhibited a high degree of creativity in his writing. He was awarded the esteemed Newdigate Prize for his poem Ravenna (1845). He also authored a significant scholarly publication during his time at the university. He entered into matrimony with Constance Lloyd in 1884. He fathered two offspring, Cyril and Vyvyan, with her. He has held the position of editor at Woman's World Magazine. The initial compilation of his fairy tales was officially released in the year 1888. There is currently a lack of empirical evidence that elucidates the underlying motivations for the creation of fairy tales. The author's subsequent installment of fantastical narratives was officially released in the year 1891. Presumably, in the year 1890, his political essay titled "The Soul of Man under Socialism" was officially published. The author's additional theatrical works, which garnered him a favorable reputation, were also released during this period. These works include *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), *An Ideal Husband* (1895), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), and a French adaptation, *Salome* (1893).

Reportedly, He was involved in a homosexual relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas. The discourteous behavior exhibited by Alfred's father, Marquise of Queensbury, incited his aggressive response. During a legal proceeding, Wilde levied an accusation against Marquise, asserting their sexual orientation as homosexual. In contrast, he was found guilty and received a two-year prison sentence, during which he was required to perform physically demanding work.

He identified this period as the most distressing. He was relocated from Wandsworth London Soul to Reading Goal on November 21, 1895. He perceived this period as the most demeaning. The individual remained at the platform of Clapham Junction, a specific location, from 2:00 to 2:30 on the specified day in anticipation of the arrival of the train. A social assembly of individuals exhibited amusement towards him while he engaged in self-deprecating humor. The regularity with which he conveyed his grief in De Profundis (1897), at a consistent time and duration daily, evoked a tearful response from him (Ellmann, 1987).

The individual received the news of his spouse's passing while he was incarcerated. He stated that Alfred composed De Profundis (1897) in response to his sense of neglect. In 1897, he was released from incarceration on parole. His attempt to reconcile the two of them with Alfred was in vain. After this, in 1898, he proceeded to write "The Ballad of Reading Goal." Such a poem surpassed every previous industry benchmark. The poem by Ellmann entitled "Last Triumph" is presented here. He passed away at the age of forty-six in the Hotel de Alsace, an exceptionally budget-friendly lodging establishment. During his lifetime, Wilde's literary contributions did not garner widespread recognition. His proficiency in composing biographies attracted most of the interest. His candid homosexuality captured the attention of individuals who were intrigued by his persona. The volume of discourse surrounding his enthralling persona increased. Originally, Oscar Wilde's Life (1906) was a biography. He had his companion, Sherard, produce it. The biography showcases the author's deep affection for Wilde, as evidenced by his intermittent humiliation stemming from his obsessive devotion to Wilde's remembrance (Holland, 1997). 1914 also saw the publication of "Lord Alfred Douglas—Oscar Wilde and Me," an additional significant biography. 1916 saw the publication of an additional biography by Harris entitled

"Oscar Wilde: His Life and Confessions." This biography demonstrates an elevated degree of sensationalism. Holland argues that his portrayal of Wilde's sexuality and his downfall at the hands of Douglas was more profound than that of other authors. The 1917 publication "The Real Oscar Wilde" is a biographical account that describes Alfred Wilde's disrespectful treatment. Every single one of these contemporary biographers was a close acquaintance of his. The biographies convey subjective elements. In 1946, Oscar Wilde: His Works and Wit was published as an additional biography. It is a biography of tremendous significance. Furthermore, Montgomery Hyde published a supplementary biography entitled Oscar Wilde in 1977. This biography is primarily concerned with Wilde's travels.

Theoretical framework:

Propp's (1928) essay *A Morphology of Folktale* (1958) examined folk narratives; he devised a structural framework for the purpose of analyzing the inverse patterns present in fairy tales. Later, these recurring patterns came to be referred to as functions. One hundred legendary tales were divided into smaller sections so that he could begin his foundational work. Thirty-one functions were utilized frequently in his folk tales. The individual developed an original narrative typology in which he incorporated thirty-one (31) functions, the tiniest constituents he termed them. He categorized fairy tales into seven spheres of function in his morphology. According to Propp, the establishment of each domain was determined by the characters' involvement (Barthes, 1975). These minuscule components constitute the foundation of folklore's narrative and constitute its recipe. The functions of narrative texts, as opposed to the semantic implication of signifiers, were his primary concern. His primary area of interest evolved into the connection between the signifier and the signified. This function between the signified and signifier is perpetual, like a stiff tie. Propp (1968) and

Lacan (1901) are comparable in that both advocate historical reductionism. A progression of a fairy tale with a movement is referred to as a "move," and a single fairy tale may contain numerous moves, which may be circular or linear in nature, as shown in the following manner:

Research Methodology:

This qualitative investigation examines the existing structural patterns in Wilde's fairy tales. For this purpose, the researcher selected three fairy tales of Wilde: *The Happy Prince, The Selfish Giant and The Young King.*

1. **The Happy Prince**

In The Happy prince this Proppian scheme was applied:

Move 1: α εʒα B D E FlC↑GlK ↓

The initial setting serves as the location where the protagonists of fairy tales are introduced. The following elements comprise this scheme: the protagonist's misfortune, the donor's return, the hero's response, the hero's deed, the absence of liquidation, and the hero's return. This Proppian scheme is described in the following manner with respect to thirty-one functions: The introductory environment functions as the starting point of each story. Not fundamentally, among the thirty-one functions, is it the one in question? It is held in high regard as an essential element within the morphological structure of each folk tale. Generally, fairy tales begin with an individual who embodies feelings of joy and satisfaction. The prince is personified in The Happy Prince as an inexhaustibly joyful being for the duration of his existence. The Swallow and the Happy Prince are both joyous figures in this narrative. Propp then proceeds to delineate the subsequent function, reconnaissance, which is maliciously executed by the adversaries.

Reconnaissance possesses a distinct characteristic. This function concerns the

protagonists' quest for shelter. An assortment of ABC↑ elements contribute to the narrative's progression as an element of Propp's scheme. Function A, which represents malevolence, is absent from the narrative. The Happy Prince portends adversity and deficiency. Additionally, he declares the provision of a donation of ruby, which is a magical agent. Departure and counteraction are the subsequent functions in Propp's sequence of thirty-one functions, following B. An error in the structure of The Happy Prince is evident, as *D7EF can be substituted for C↑. Motif C appears to be distinct as well. The protagonist is forgoing the quest in favor of an Ariel voyage. Both functions of F and C↑ appear to be entangled with each other. The subsequent operation reveals the Swallow in its ideal trajectory through the air. As the hero's voyage nears its culmination and, with the aid of magical power, he triumphs over poverty, the deficiency is ultimately eradicated. Even though every indication of the story's conclusion is present in this section, the narrative continues to progress through the use of repetition, as is customary in fairy tales. "This repetition is mostly threefold..." (1965, Olrik, p. 130).

Move 2: A B D E FlC↑GlK

The mystical agent imparts unique experiences to each recipient. The alterations made to the initial state have no impact on the characteristics or order of these operations. Different narrative styles advance the plot. Initially, The Swallow makes the decision to relocate to a different land but ultimately reconsiders his decision because of his benevolence. Two schemes that arise from this initial circumstance bear resemblance to the preceding one.

Move 3: ɑ ʒɛ a B D E FlC↑GlK

The alteration in B can be attributed to the modification in the initial circumstance. Although the duties are altered, the mode remains unchanged from before. The Swallow, this time, portends ill fortune. This further induces a modification in the function E. There, one can observe reactions that take place

reflexively and without opposition. However, the identical route was adhered to by every other event. The following scheme is diametrically opposed to the preceding ones.

Move 4: A (a) b{Gl}JlTlW

The villain experiences misery at this point. He inflicts such intense suffering that no donor is willing to approach him. This results in a variety of severe consequences. In the end, this deficiency results in mortality. The status of the Happy Prince is now altered to "ugliness and futility" in this (j1) function. The wedding function initiates the protagonist's pleasure through the union of lovers and their subsequent meeting. The nobleman and the swallow would eventually be eternally content.

2. The Selfish Giant:

Propp used the following scheme in this tale.

aβ1 γ2 I aB2 C E F K
II a1B D1E2F G2K4 = W

The protagonist, Giant, is introduced in the opening scene alongside children and the garden that serves as the setting for the narrative. The narrative commences with children engaging in enjoyable play within the Giant's garden. There is evidence of Giant's seven-year absence from home. The (β1) function is utilized to determine his return as well. A subsequent interdiction occurs when Giant forbids the children from playing in his garden (function (y The protagonist, Giant, is introduced in the opening scene alongside children and the garden that serves as the setting for the narrative. The narrative commences with children engaging in enjoyable play within the Giant's garden. There is evidence of Giant's seven-year absence from home. The (β1) function is utilized to determine his return as well. A subsequent interdiction occurs when Giant forbids the children from playing in his garden (function (y2). This narrative presents the Giant as an evil and archetypal figure, consistent with the conventions of fairy tales. In this

fairy tale, he also imposes a typical motif involving interdiction. This interdiction catalyzes the progression of the events in a folk tale. As Propp (1968) confirmed, each action begins interchangeably with the absence or villainy. The absence of spring in his garden can be interpreted as an interdiction.). This narrative presents the Giant as an evil and archetypal figure, consistent with the conventions of fairy tales. In this fairy tale, he also imposes a typical motif involving interdiction. This interdiction catalyzes the progression of the events in a folk tale. As Propp (1968) confirmed, each action begins interchangeably with the absence or villainy. The absence of spring in his garden can be interpreted as an interdiction.

The Giant's interdiction is breached when he approaches his garden via the window. The children construct an aperture in the garden's wall to access it. They enter and engage in joyful play. He then comes to terms with his transgressions. He realizes that his garden is not experiencing spring due to his selfishness. Self-awareness and regret are the recurring themes of the narrative at this point. Function B of meditation pertains to the recognition of certain transgressions. Positioning the youngster atop the tree serves purpose C↑ The subsequent action of the Giant satisfies the first function D of the donor when he observes a young boy sobbing and accomplishes the second function E by situating the boy atop a tree. Using this operation, function F implies the kind F, and the narrative's conflict is resolved with the advent of fresh foliage and blossoms on the tree. Another deficiency, denoted as a1, exists within the report; it pertains to an individual. Eventually, the purpose of meditation B is also achieved. He then proceeds to the subsequent function DEF. Giant's transformation and attitude accomplish the donor's primary goal. The friendly demeanor exhibited by Giant towards children satisfies function G (of the kind G2). His adolescence in paradise serves the final purpose of W. This folk tale is more straightforward than others. This story is more didactic than entertaining in nature. The central focus

of the narrative is the protagonist, a giant, along with his garden and young sons. Initially, the protagonist exhibits a stern demeanor; however, his disposition gradually softens as time passes. This transition also results in variations in the weather. This story is among the shortest of Oscar Wilde's works. A lack that is first generates a second lack. The first deficiency pertains to young males and the Giant, whereas the second is exclusively for the Giant. The second deficiency is remedied by the knowledge he acquires from the children who resemble Christ.

3. The Young King:

In 'The Young King' following scheme has been applied:

I A 1ɳ2ɵ2U
II A1ɑ aʒB2C↑ : C↑D2ElFʒ↓
:C↑dElF ↓ = Ex TʒW˳
:C↑D F2↓

This renowned tale is dissimilar to its predecessors. The narrative incorporates a flashback and presents the central events of the story in the form of a "dream." The narrative's current events are paved with the means made possible by every past event. The identity and standing of the protagonist are established early in the narrative. As history commences, an entombed princess and her deceased father, the monarch, are observed. The narrative contains an interdiction breached (1) when the princess utters a single sentence. The interdiction in question needs explicit mention within the narrative. We discover an interdiction violation when the duchess weds the Rimini artist working beneath her station. Violated interdiction can be interpreted as involving both trickery (ή) and complicity (ɵ). A subsequent function of punishment (U) takes place at the conclusion. This function conforms to the scheme of Proppian. In this story, the infant of the princess is both abducted and poisoned. This occurrence introduced the type of Al villainy function. The story commences with information regarding the abducted infant. The narrative later describes the child's elevated status to that of

monarch. The designation of "Young King" is bestowed upon him. As the narrative unfolds, the king's misgivings become increasingly apparent. He also designated his grandson as his heir before his demise. The regal monarch is captivated by the magnificence that can be obtained through immense wealth. As his appreciation for aesthetics grows, he dispatches individuals searching for exquisite items to adorn his coronation accouterments. The functions of meditation (B2) and departure and counteraction (C↑) are symbolized by his commands and the minions' departure, respectively. As the narrative unfolds, the monarch is depicted dozing off and dreaming of three journeys, all corresponding to ↑ departure.

His dream depicts him within the weaving home. He encounters a hostile environment there. Although he communicates with the weaver, his demeanor is exceptionally antagonistic. This item demonstrates his suffering concealed within the realm of luxury. The narrative pertains to the character's trial, precisely the Dl function. He comes to comprehend the cost the impoverished multitudes endure while carrying the exquisite objects for him. The moment the fabric for the king's attire was complete, this is the Fʒ function. The other two dreams are also about fulfilling his quest for beauty. New actions are not discovered in tandem with new defects. The nature of these two visions is comparable to that of the preceding dreams. However, the mode remains unchanged. We can see similar reactions of the young monarch. He returns to reality after leaving the realm of beauty. The Rs, Pr, and Q functions are absent as the narrative progresses. The function of exposure is discernible in dreams. The youthful king awakens from his dream to discover that he has transformed: become more modest and uncomplicated. His heart was in this transformation. This modification signifies the operation of transfiguration (T). He dons his former attire on the day of his coronation. This act symbolizes both the wedding ceremony and the persona of Christ.

Conclusion:

These three folk tales adhere to the H-I (struggle-to-victory) structure. This strategy is more prevalent in comparison to Propp's other strategies. While locating all thirty-one functions in Wilde's stories is impossible, Propp suggests they occur in sequence. All these functions are materially manifested in the levels of Wilde. Both the essence and status of these tales remain unaffected. Each character appears to behave according to the regions that Propp has delineated. We can discover various qualities in a single character; for example, the Giant in the story possesses qualities of both the antagonist and the protagonist. A single element unifies these three-folk tales. At some point, the protagonists develop optimistic dispositions. Consequently, the function of transfiguration plays a vital role in Oscar Wilde's fairy tales. The essence of each story depended on the personality traits of the characters. This function is the defining characteristic of Wilde's stories. This function has no bearing on the poem's structure.

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