



THE REPRESENTATION OF NON-HUMAN ENTITIES IN JACOB AND WILHELM GRIMM'S *COMPLETE GRIMMS' FAIRY TALES*

P. M. Ponnampерума*

Department of English Language Teaching, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

The Fairy tale belongs to genre of traditional folklore. In the 19th century, the canon of fairy tale was broadened by research studies of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. As every other story, fairy tale consists of a story that ends with a specific message to its readers. Yet, unlike other stories, the fairy tale consists of animals and objects who provide moral lessons to the society. The purpose of this study was to investigate the notion of representation of non-human entities in selected fairy tales in *Complete Grimms' Fairy Tales* which was written by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. The research pursued the question of representation of non-human entities as it emerges in selected fairy tales in *Complete Grimms' Fairy Tales* by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. The non-human entities have been represented by objects and animals. The study used thematic analysis to analyze the selected fairy tales. Five fairy tales were selected of which the main characters of the story are non-human beings. They are, "Cat and Mouse in Partnership", "The Fisherman and His Wife", "The Mouse, the Bird, and the Sausage", "The wedding of Mrs. Fox" and "Herr Korbes." The findings revealed that performance of non-human entities in fairy tales is more powerful than performance of human beings. The nature is synonymous to non-human entities in fairy tales. The nature teaches moral lessons to the human beings. The representation of the weaker entity of the society has been surpassed by the dominant entity. Instead of celebrating the superiority of the human beings, the degradation of the human beings has been pointed out through the intervention of non-human entities. The nature and the controversial marital status of human beings are represented by the non-human entities. The study celebrates the ability of nature to guide humans in better ways. In addition, common social factors are addressed such as the activation of the bad luck which is empowered by nature. Bad luck has been acted upon with the integration of the nature.

Keywords: *Complete Grimms' Fairy Tales*, fairy tales, human beings, non-human entities, society

**Corresponding Author: p.ponnampерума95@gmail.com*



THE REPRESENTATION OF NON-HUMAN ENTITIES IN JACOB AND WILHELM GRIMM'S COMPLETE GRIMMS' FAIRY TALES

P. M. Ponnampерuma

Department of English Language Teaching, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

INTRODUCTION

The fairy tale is a fabricated story which is a cousin of myth, folktales or fables. The narrative of fairy tales is closer to anyone's heart since their childhood. The fairy tale consists of the Kings, Queens, Princes, talking animals, and even the talking objects. Each story provides a certain morale to the society. Specifically, the duty of the fairy tales is to convey the message simply through the intervention of beautiful creatures which is helpful for the children to learn the message with an interest. In the contemporary society, different types of stories have been emerged; yet the fairy tales have been deeply rooted in the souls of the people. The reason for above is that the fairy tale consists of magical elements which celebrate extremely happy endings. Devi (2019) mentions that 'fairy tale' consists of magical realism which has two types of magic. They are "the impossible and the implausible." The impossible magic tells the readers that it is not possible, but the implausible magic invites the readers sense of questioning and logic in the mind (Devi, 2019). She further discusses that the special interpretation which is driven by the fairytale addresses the psyche of the children rather than the adults (Devi, 2019). On the contrary Lester (2015) mentioned that the fairy tales can be enjoyed by everyone without adhering to any age limits and it has the power on influencing the thoughts and the actions of the individual in the society.

Theoretical Framework

The posthumanist theory was employed in the present study. According to Moore & Moran (2016), the theory of Posthumanism decentres the human being as the foundation of all ontological inquiry. It seeks to overthrow anthropocentrism through embracing the notion that the nonhuman objects fundamentally shape the social life.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the present research study used a qualitative analysis. Five fairy tales were selected. The selected fairy tales were analyzed using the thematic analysis. The main characters of the story are the non-human beings. The selected fairy tales are as follows,



1. Cat and Mouse in Partnership
2. The Fisherman and His Wife
3. The Mouse, the Bird, and the Sausage
4. The wedding of Mrs. Fox
5. Herr Korbes

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Each story consists of both humans and non-human beings. The non-human beings are represented by both animals and the objects. These non-human beings have not been given any specific names, but their presence and the actions are powerful.

1. The weaker entity and the dominant entity

In the story of ‘Cat and the Mouse in Partnership’, the story has portrayed the living of two friends, mouse and a cat together. It was the winter, and they had decided to bring something to survive throughout the winter times. Accordingly, they had bought a pot of fat. The cat seemed to be the dominant character. She even looks down upon the innocent mouse while mentioning, “you, little mouse cannot venture everywhere, or you will be caught in a trap someday” (p. 242). Both of them have decided to save the pot of fat for the winter. The cat is the bad character who lies to the mouse several times and consumes the fat from the pot. The cat breaks the promise. She lies to the mouse, and she steals the fat. The cat is a powerful character. She repeatedly does the same mistake while fooling the weaker one which is the mouse. The mouse does not suspect the cat. When winter arrives, they together go to the pot of fat. The mouse is surprised to see the empty pot and realizes that he has eaten them all. The cat does not even like to accept that she was wrong. She further surpasses the mouse by threatening him. The cat threatens the mouse by mentioning “one word more and I will eat you too.” Not only that, but the cat is also not hesitant to eat the mouse. The story ends with the following note, “verily, that is the way of the world.” The two non-human beings represent the usual nature of the society. The powerful entities unfairly pressurize the weaker entities. The author further generalizes the same because it is the usual way of the society.

2. The degradation of human beings

In the story of ‘The Fisherman and His Wife’, there are three main characters. They are fisherman, his wife, and the flounder in the sea. The flounder is a non-human being who is more powerful than the human beings in the story. He is an enchanted



prince. Since the fisherman does not catch the flounder, the fisherman's wife asks the fisherman to request for fortune from the flounder. The fortunes which have been given by the flounder, greediness of the fisherman's wife hype up. She requests for more. Accordingly, the woman who is at the dirty hovel is being shifted to the emperor in an empire. She is punished because of her greediness. She aspires to be God. The result is that she ends up at the dirty hovel again. In the story, the degradation of humanity is reflected through greedy fisherman's wife. The husband is a puppet of the evil and greedy wife. He is totally dominated by the greediness of the woman. The flounder is a non-human being who is generous enough to fulfil all the wishes of the greedy couple and even become powerful to be in the higher position and punish the human being. As in most other fairy tales, the idea of 'human is best' is challenged. The celebration of Anthropocene is challenged. The human should be punished, and the same can be done through non-human beings who represent nature. Nature has the capability of punishing humans.

3. The nature and the controversial marital status of human beings

'The Wedding of Mrs. Fox' consists of two stories. The main characters of the story are two foxes. The characters can be identified as husband and wife. In the first story, Mr. Fox is doubtful about Mrs. Fox. He thinks that she is not faithful to him. He wants to check her fidelity and acts as dead. Mrs. Fox is worried but after some time, she decides to marry someone. At the day of her marriage, the fox wakes up and chase away Mrs. Fox. The aforementioned situation of the husband and wife commonly appears in the human society. The fidelity of the partner is a question. The couple is married and living under the same roof with so many doubts. Consequently, after living with their partners. They are unsatisfied. When it comes to the second story, the old Mr. Fox is dead, and many beats in the forest come to marry Mrs. Fox. Yet, she rejects them all except the one she loves to date. She specifies his appearance as follows, "gentleman red stockings on, and has a little pointed mouth" (p.168). She happily agrees to marry the young Mr. Fox. The present story reflects one of the common social contexts of the society. After the death of her old husband, a young woman tends to marry the young man she has been in love till date. Without providing any human names, the crucial scenario is portrayed through providing the identities of the non-human beings. The fox is naturally cunning and way smarter than other animals. The qualities of the human are compared to the qualities of the fox. That might be the reason why the aforementioned characters have been selected.



4. Acceptance of the assigned duty by nature.

In the story, 'The Mouse, the Bird, and the Sausage', there are three non-human beings. They are a mouse, bird and a sausage. All three objects are assigned to perform certain duties. The bird is supposed to bring wood from the forest. The mouse has to carry the water, and the sausage has to cook. They are having very a quiet and a peaceful life. The bird is not satisfied with what he has. In the story, the bird is described as follows; "He who is too well off is always longing for something new." Meanwhile, he is further influenced by another bird. Subsequently, the bird resists working with his team and requests to change their roles. The changing of roles had causes devastation. The sausage is asked to bring wood, the mouse has to cook, and the bird has to carry the water. The later assigned job roles do not suite of them, and eventually, they all have an unfortunate death. The story has reflected the contemporary society. Without providing any specific gender identity, the characters of the society are portrayed. Due to the dissatisfaction of the assigned task, they all have very unfortunate deaths.

5. Bad luck which is acted upon by nature

The story of, 'Herr Korbes', consists of four non-human beings. They are cock, hen, egg, duck, a pin, and a needle who are all seated in a carriage and go to see a human called, Herr Korbes. They all enter Herr Korbes' home without acknowledging him. Herr Korbes enters his own home without knowing the presence of the objects, and accidentally, he dies because of the presence of the aforementioned non-human beings. Herr Kobes is identified as a wicked man. The author believes that Herr Kobes is subjected to receive such a death because of his ill luck. This fairy tale portrays the ways in which the death of a person happens because of ill-luck. The non-human beings have acted as the nature to make him die. The bad luck has been acted upon with the integration of the nature.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

The availability of the theory of posthumanism in the 21st century is celebrated. The non- human entities have become powerful than the human entities. The weaker entities have been surpassed by the dominant entities. Instead of celebrating the superiority of the human beings, the degradation of the human beings has been pointed out while celebrating the non-human entities. The nature is also represented by the non-human entities. The nature is able to punish and instruct the human beings for better pathways. Another controversial aspect of the martial status of the human beings has been reflected through the non-human entities; specifically, the question of infidelity and dissatisfaction with the available partner. In addition, the activation



of the bad luck is empowered by the nature. The nature represents non-human entities. Bad luck has been acted upon with the integration of nature. Nature teaches moral lessons to humans. This study recommends the future researchers to explore the notion of the European fairy tale elements in the folktales of South Asia with the purpose of investigating the fairy tales in South Asia because every tale nurtures both national and global thought. The tales consist of universal truths and reflect the values of the time periods from the societies which they are derived from.

REFERENCES

- Devi, R. (2019). Interpretation of Elements of Magical Realism in Selected Fairy Tales. *Online International Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, Vol 9(1), 67-89.
- Grimm, J. & Grimm, W. (1812). *The Complete Grimms' Fairy Tales*. Finger Print Publishing.
- Harries, E. (2015). *Changing the Story: Fairy Tale, Fantasy, Myth*. Springer.
- Lester, A. (2015). The impact of Traditional and Modern Fairy Tales on Society and Its individual. [Bachelor's thesis, *University of Arizona, Tucson*].
- Moore, L.J. & Moran, K. (2016). Posthumanism. *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, JohnWiley & Sons publisher
- Settiyawan, R. (2024). Women, Ecology and Children: A Study of Ecofeminism in Indonesian Children's Literature. *Musawa Journal*, Vol 23(2), 146-157.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to my parents and to my professors who helped me to consume M.A in World Literature from Nālandā University in India.