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**BINARY OPPOSITIONS IN TRADITIONAL AND POSTMODERN
FAIRY TALES**

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ABSTRACT

The fairy tale genre, with its deep-rooted narrative traditional and symbolic structures, continues to serve as a rich field for literary analysis. One of the key mechanisms shaping fairy tale storytelling is the use of binary oppositions which reflect cultural values, moral lessons and ideological frameworks.

The research paper focuses on the analysis of binary oppositions as a structural and semantic feature of fairy tale narratives. The study examines how binary pairs shape character development, plot structure, and thematic focus in two contrasting collections: “English Fairy Tales” (1918) by Flora Annie Steel, representing the traditional canon, and “The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories” (1992), as a postmodern reinterpretation of fairy tale conventions.

The analysis reveals that traditional tales predominantly rely on moral and social, oppositions to convey didactic lessons and reinforce societal norms. In contrast, Carter’s postmodern stories deconstruct these binaries, shifting the focus toward ontological, gendered and existential conflicts, thereby challenging established norms and emphasizing subjectivity and transformation.

Using descriptive, comparative, contextual, structural-semantic, and qualitative-quantitative methods, around 400 binary pairs were identified and grouped into semantic categories (moral-ethical, social, spatial, gendered, cognitive, temporal, etc.). The dual perspective enables a detailed comparison of the ideological functions and literary evolution of binary oppositions in fairy tales from diachronic viewpoint. It also underlines the significance of binary logic in both preserving cultural models and providing their interpretation through literature.

Key words: binary opposition, fairy tale, traditional fairy tale, postmodern fairy tale, deconstruction, structure, meaning, transformation.

АНОТАЦІЯ

Жанр казки, з його глибоко вкоріненими наративними традиціями та символічною структурою, й досі залишається невичерпним джерелом для літературного аналізу. Одним із ключових механізмів, що формують казкову оповідь, є використання бінарних опозицій, які відображають культурні цінності, моральні настанови та ідеологічні уявлення.

Дослідницька робота присвячена аналізу бінарних опозицій як структурної та семантичної особливості казкового наративу. Увагу зосереджено на тому, як парні протиставлення впливають на розвиток персонажів, побудову сюжету й тематичне наповнення у двох контрастних збірках: “English Fairy Tales” (1918) Флори Енні Стіл, яка представляє традиційний канон, та “The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories” (1992) Анджели Картер, як постмодерністське переосмислення казкових мотивів.

Аналіз демонструє, що традиційні казки переважно спираються на моральні та соціальні опозиції, щоб передати навчальні настанови та підкреслити суспільні норми. Натомість постмодерністські історії Картер руйнують ці протиставлення, зміщуючи акцент на онтологічні, гендерні та екзистенційні конфлікти, тим самим кидаючи виклик усталеним уявленням і висвітлюючи суб’єктивність та трансформацію.

За допомогою описового, порівняльного, контекстуального, структурно-семантичного та якісно-кількісного методів було виявлено близько 400 бінарних опозицій, які згруповано за семантичними категоріями (морально-етичні, соціальні, просторові, гендерні, когнітивні, часові тощо). Такий подвійний підхід дозволяє здійснити ґрунтовне порівняння функцій та літературної еволюції бінарних опозицій у казкових текстах у діахронному аспекті. Також він підкреслює важливість бінарної логіки як у збереженні культурних моделей, так і в їх інтерпретації засобами літератури.

Ключові слова: бінарна опозиція, дихотомія, казка, традиційна казка, постмодерністська казка, деконструкція, структура, значення, трансформація.

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INTRODUCTION

The oldest method of organizing and understanding reality relies on dual structures, which form the basis of how humans categorize the world. Though their symbolic structure and recurring motifs, fairy tales, serving as cultural mirrors and transmitting values across generations, often rely on binary oppositions to shape the characters and plot. They are a fundamental mechanism for constructing meaning in folklore and literary texts. In traditional fairy tales, they define the structure of the narrative, while in postmodern texts, these oppositions are often deconstructed.

The principle of duality was investigated by L.Lévy-Bruhl [33], F.de Saussure [43], A.J.Greimas [23], H.Maturana, F.Varela [36], Yu.Lotman [35]. C.Lévi-Strauss [31] developed the idea and proved that myths are built on the basis of oppositions. Jacques Derrida [14] deconstructed the traditional understanding of opposition and pointed out to its instability and contextuality.

The theoretical basis of the research is also rooted in the works of other foreign and Ukrainian scholars, such as V.Propp [41], J.Zipes [59 - 63], S.Thompson [49], M.Tatar [48], V.Yefymenko [72 - 74], T.Goncharuk [68, 69], O.Koliasa [77], V.Volklov [66], Kanchura [76], Venhryniuk [65].

The **relevance** of the research is determined by the insufficient study of the binary oppositions in fairy tales and the need to explore and analyze their semantic potential in traditional and postmodern narratives.

The **object** of the research is the category of binary opposition as a structural and semantic device in fairy tales.

The **subject** is the meaning and reinterpretation of binary oppositions in traditional fairy tales and their postmodern variations.

The **purpose** of this work is to take a careful examination of binary oppositions and their deconstruction in Angela Carter's postmodern collection "The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories" (1992) in comparison to its classical representation in Anna Flora Steel's book "English Fairy Tales" (1918).

In order to fulfill the aim of the research, it is important to outline the following **tasks**:

- 1) To give a definition of a fairy tale, identify its distinctive features, functions and motifs; specify the peculiarities of a postmodern tale;
- 2) To define the theoretical basis, the concept of binary oppositions and their typology in literature;
- 3) To identify and classify binary oppositions in the traditional fairy tales from “The English Fairy Tales” (1918) by Flora Annie Steel.
- 4) To analyze the reinterpretation and deconstruction of the dichotomies in “The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories” (1992) by Angela Carter.
- 5) To compare the functions and semantics of binary oppositions in traditional and postmodern contexts.

Solving the aforementioned set of goals is supported by specific scientific

methods and techniques:

- description (in outlining and explaining the binary oppositions identified with each tale);
- comparison (in drawing parallels and distinctions between the oppositional pairs across the traditional and postmodern narratives in terms of structure, theme, meaning);
- contextual analysis (in interpreting the oppositions in relation to the broader discourse, emphasizing the underpinnings of Carter’s postmodern perspective and the traditional framework of folk narratives);
- structural and semantic identification (classifying the oppositional pairs within each tale and grouping them into semantic categories, e.g. spatial, temporal, seasonal, social, gendered, ontological, existential, cognitive, moral, ethical, perceptual);
- qualitative and quantitative analysis (in providing the interpretation of semantic functions of the dichotomies and statistics into their frequency and distribution).

The **material** for the paper includes 51 fairy tales that was taken from the books: “English Fairy Tales” (1918) by Flora Annie Steel and “The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories” (1992) by Angela Carter.

The study includes three parts. The theoretical part encompasses 6 chapters. The first is devoted to the notion of ‘fairy tale’, provides its definitions provided by different researchers, dwells on its main features and specifies approaches to its analysis. The second chapter represents information about common patterns, functions and divergent classification systems of fairy tales. The third chapter focuses on the roots and the scientific, linguistic and anthropological nature of binary oppositions. An issue in the fourth part is the categorization of dualistic systems and ways of their application. The aspects presented further on are connected to the connotations and evaluative peculiarities of the dichotomies from the semantic point of view. The final chapter stresses the postmodern view of the fairy tale genre and the reevaluation of the study of binary oppositions within it.

The research part is subdivided into two parts. The second chapter examines binary oppositions in traditional fairy tales from Flora Annie Steel’s collection “English Fairy Tales” (1918). The tales are grouped thematically according to their dominant motifs and themes and, subsequently, oppositions: tales on social hierarchy and justice, tales on morality and transformation, tales on identity and gender roles. The third chapter revolves around dichotomies in the postmodern collection “The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories” (1992) by the British writer Angela Carter. The special attention is given to how classical oppositions are presented and reimagined. The thematic groups are outlined: tales of power, violence and female agency; tales of metamorphosis and death; tales of love and subversion. Each practical part includes qualitative and quantitative analysis of the analyzed material with the identified types, frequency and semantic fields.

The **practical value** of the research lies in its comprehensive typology and semantic classification of binary oppositions within traditional and postmodern fairy tales, which can be used as a methodological framework for further literary analysis. The findings may be applied in practical, seminar sessions, courses on literary studies, comparative literature and cultural analysis.

Chapter I. Theoretical framework of the research

1.1 The fairy-tale genre: development and key elements

A fairy tale is an integral component of culture. It is generally considered that fairy tales began as oral narratives shared within communities to teach moral lessons and provide entertainment. According to Jack Zipes, their origins can be traced back to ancient rituals, customs, and belief systems. Rituals around fertility, death, and rites of passage often found expression in these stories, with supernatural elements used to illustrate and make sense of life's mysteries and transformations [60, p.2]. The oral nature of these stories played a significant role in their evolution. As they were passed down through generations, each retelling allowed for adaptation, reflecting the shifting needs and values of society. This fluidity meant that fairy tales were highly adaptable, able to incorporate new elements while preserving core themes.

Emerging from the rich tradition of oral storytelling and capacity to connect with universal human experiences, folk tales were initially of epic-fantastic adventurous character and contained fantastic creatures and elements of the supernatural, as well as moral lessons, which naturally lent themselves to the fantastical narratives of fairy tales. In his work "The Folktale" (1946), Stith Thompson defines *folk tales* as narratives which are handed down orally from one generation to another without being fixed in a literary form. He emphasizes a defined moral ethical basis of folk tales and archetypal characters that reflect beliefs of the people [49, p.455]. This cultural focus of the folk tales was also made by Maria Tatar, as she describes them as stories that draw on the communal wellspring of oral tradition to create narratives that resonate with the values, fears, and desires of a particular society. The tales shape cultural identity, encapsulating collective beliefs, and function as moral guides [48, p.56]. According to another definition proposed by the American folklorist Alan Dundes, *folk tales* are prose narratives that are regarded as fiction and are different from myths and legends. They are not bound to any specific time or place and often feature recurring motifs, such as the trickster or the quest, which make them recognizable across different cultures [16, p.197].

Thus, in modern linguistics, the concept of ‘folklore’ is understood as a part of folk culture and is interpreted as collective, tradition-based creativity of groups or individuals, driven by the hopes and aspirations of the community as an adequate expression of its cultural and social identity, and folklore patterns and values are transmitted orally [79, p.538].

In terms of understanding the fairy tale genre as a literary form, folklore studies encompass various approaches. English scholars like K.Briggs, S.Thompson, M.Yearsley, J.R.R.Tolkien, E.Hartland, and others have differing perspectives on the use of terms such as ‘folk tales’ and ‘fairy tales’. For instance, J.R.R. Tolkien argues that a single term – ‘fairy story’ - is enough to describe the fairy tale genre. For the English researcher M.Yersley, there is no significant difference between the two terms ‘fairy-tales’ and ‘folk tales’, as he is convinced that fairy tales, or folk tales are the fiction in its childhood adding that they are in fact ‘the fossil’ remains of the thoughts and customs of the past [58, p.16]. American folklorist S.Thompson defines ‘folk-tales’ as a broad category that includes all types of traditional oral narratives, using the term in a general sense to cover various forms of storytelling. In contrast, he suggests that ‘fairy-tale’ should be reserved for stories that focus on fantastical adventures and miraculous events [49, p.195-197]. As studies show, such definitions are more typical of European fairy tales [47, p. 294]. Another method posits the word combination ‘fairy tale’ as a phenomenon which covers both the categories of oral tales and prose literature, but as a term itself it can be synonymously used to ‘magic tales’ which are included into the Aarne-Thomson tale-type index [61, p.167] In this paper, the term ‘traditional fairy tales’ will be used to refer to folk tales.

The term ‘fairy tale’ itself originated in the 17th century, largely due to the influence of French writers like Madame d’Aulnoy, who coined the term *contes de fées*, or ‘tales of fairies’ [61, p.167]. By 1750, the term was in common usage in England, but many stories associated with fairytales contained no actual fairies, as the name would suggest. Rather this was a link to the identifying characteristic of containing magic, leading to the fairytale also being referred to as *wonder tales*. In British culture, the term ‘fairy’ became significant during the Victorian era when there

was a rise of interest in magical stories, partly influenced by Romanticism and its celebration of the imagination. During this time, fairy tales were widely translated and adapted, gaining popularity among children and adults alike. English versions of French and German tales were published and became staples in British culture. By the late Renaissance, a new form emerged — the literary tale. Its transition from folk tales was gradual, initially seen as a transformation of a folklore genre into a distinct authorial creation. The literary tale developed due to the free interpretation of recurring plot patterns and due to the introduction of new magic-fantastic elements into the original fairy tale composition [66, p.283].

Literary and Scandinavian studies expert, Lyudmila Braude, defines a *literary tale* as an author-created work, in prose or poetry, which may be folklore-inspired or entirely original. It typically features fantastical or magical elements and portrays the extraordinary adventures of fictional or traditional fairy tale characters, sometimes aimed at children. Here, the miraculous drives the plot and shapes character development [6, p.234].

Literary tales not only utilize similar compositional devices as folk tales but also reflect the author's unique personality, perspective, and vision [78, p.155]. They capture the essence of their era just as effectively as folk tales, as the author embodies the values of their community [75, p.80]. Literary fairy tales feature a more flexible structure than folk tales, limited only by the author's creativity. While characters in folk tales often migrate across stories, those in literary tales are generally unique to the specific work and do not reappear in other tales by different authors [75, p.81-82]. The world of literary tales is shaped by the author's interpretation of mythological sources, with modifications that may alter traditional fairy tale characteristics. [86, p.34]

Scholars suggest that literary tales could have gained popularity much earlier, as evidence points to the presence of oral folk tales during early Christianity in the West [62, p.8]. According to the Ukrainian literature studies expert Dereza, the process of studying a literary fairy tale can be singled out into several stages:

1. Accumulation of the primary working material. The stage involves gathering and describing folk and literary tales.

2. Differentiation. At this point, scholars begin distinguishing between folk and literary tales, exploring their similarities and differences. The literary fairy tale is examined both as an adaptation of folk tales and as an independent, complete work.

3. Study as an independent genre. The literary fairy tale is analyzed as a standalone genre within fiction, with emphasis on its position within the genre system and its role in a specific historical literary period [71, p.6].

Generally, it is possible to differentiate literary tales from folk tales taking into account the following peculiarities:

1. Although rooted in folklore, literary tales are fixed in written form and do not undergo further changes.

2. Literary tales reflect an author's personal perspective on society, presenting reality through their unique lens, unlike folk tales, which convey the collective views of the people.

3. The tales include detailed, non-plot-related descriptions and in-depth physical and psychological character portrayals.

4. While containing magical elements, literary tales are more grounded in real life, mirroring contemporary thoughts and aspirations.

5. Characters in literary tales are more diverse and realistic in appearance, as opposed to the idealized figures in folk tales.

6. The actions, events, and motivations of characters in literary tales are driven by causation and logic [75, p.82].

As for the compositional devices, fairy tales, much like myths, typically avoid specifying a particular time or place for their events. It serves a distinct purpose: allowing listeners to apply the story's lessons to their own lives more easily, as the events can occur anytime, anywhere. Additionally, the main characters generally possess straightforward personalities, defined by a limited set of traits. The repetition of actions and events highlights the cyclical nature of the story and aligns with Propp's narrative functions. While these elements are typical across Western folk tale traditions, in English fairy tales, the narrator often acts as an observer, without directly

participating in the events. Their endings also stand out. Unlike the usual “happily ever after” conclusions in most fairy tales, English tales often conclude with events that underscore ethical values like honesty, justice, and rationality [85, p.192-194]

In the literary discourse, space is a kind of framework in the centre of which archetypal, symbolic and mythological problems can be realised [3, p. 21]. The phenomenon of interconnection between temporal and spatial relations is referred to as ‘chronotope’. Bakhtin argued that chronotopes situate the reader within a particular spatiotemporal framework that governs how the story is perceived and internalized [79, p.230]. The chronotope in a fairy tale, as well as in a folk tale, is divided into the ordinary world, where the hero is born, and magical, which they encounter during their life in the real world and where they face the challenges and miracles, however, they can also vary depending on the author’s idea and choice of time, place and characters [81, p.19].

In terms of spatial dynamics, literary fairy tales often feature vertical movement between ordinary and magical worlds, reflecting the characters’ psychological states. A folk tale is characterized by an absolute outcome. The events associated with magical realities are resolved when the character returns to ordinary events. The tasks that the characters faced at the intersection of the worlds are completed, and there is no turning back to the magical world. In a literary fairy tale, however, the magical events do not end even when all the tasks are completed. Basically, the hero stays in the magical world, or they can return there at any time [25, p.100]. Thus, the magical can intersect with reality and be related to any of the characters in the tale, which is typical for a fairy tale, but atypical for a folk tale. V. Propp believes that depending on the journeys, or ‘moves’, of the fairy tale hero, the duration of plot events will also vary [41, p.83]. Thus, temporal dynamics in folk tales are more closed, with clear beginnings and endings, while fairy tales have flexible timelines, allowing for complex narratives and unresolved endings.

Nowadays there exist different approaches to the analysis of the fairy tales:

- The folkloristic approach centers on the study of folk tales and examines their historical and geographical distribution, reconstructing the original versions of the tales. Its representatives are S.Thompson and A.Aarne.
- The structuralist approach examines the internal structure of fairy tales rather than their historical context. V.Propp analysis led to two models and, thus, definitions of fairy tales: 1) it is a story that involves seven characters, 2) it is a story that is based on a fixed set of functions and has a certain order of their sequencing. The researcher considers motif to be a basic structural unit of narratives. Two main cycles that provide a lot of fairy tale motifs are the rite of passage and the journey to another world.
- The psychoanalytic approach explores the symbolic meanings and psychological depth. The school of the famous Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Jung focuses on archetypes, views fairy tales as expressions of the collective unconscious. According to the scientist, fairy tales are ideal for studying the psyche because they contain minimal cultural details, making it easier to identify basic psychological models compared to myths or legends.
- The socio-historical approach to fairy tales examines how they reflect and respond to the social and cultural conditions of the periods in which they emerged. Researchers who worked in that field include A.Nitschke, R.Bottigheimer, J.Zipes, M.Tatar.
- The feminist approach to analyzing fairy tales explores how these stories reflect and reinforce gender roles, often highlighting a male dominance while seeking out women's voices within the tradition. Feminist critics M.Liebermann, S.Gilbert, S.Garber examine narratives that encourage female empowerment and liberation. [73, p.186 - 188]

All in all, quite a lot of scientists covered the notions of 'folk tale' and 'fairy tale', but their interpretations vary, since some researchers believe that the latter denotes a specific narrative form with easily identified characteristics, but for others it suggests not a singular genre but an umbrella category under which a variety of other forms may be grouped [23, p.322]. Approaches to studying tales differ widely, their evolution

demonstrates a combination of cultural and societal influences that have shaped their form and content across centuries.

1.2 Common narrative patterns and motifs in fairy tales

While each folk and fairy tale has its own cultural or authorial peculiarities, their structure is quite predictable and has been subject to numerous researches. Within the structuralist approach, the fairy tale is studied as a structured system of recurring patterns that reveal organization principles common to the genre. The narrative structure found in the folk-tales of one culture can recur in another, suggesting that there is something universal in the structure as well as in the function of narrative. [51, p.82]

Among the notable scientists who analyzed the structure of tales are several key figures, such as M.Bal, S.Chatman, M.Curie, W.Martin, V.Propp, R.Volkov, B.Kerbelytė.

According to Bal, by defining the characteristics of narrative texts, structuralists aim to form a system and identify common constants that can be found across different stories. Once the system is described, it provides a framework for understanding how individual stories can be created or “concretized” within it. The narrative system operates under the assumption that a finite set of structural elements—like character roles, plot functions, and narrative sequences—can combine in various ways to produce an infinite variety of specific narrative texts. [2, p.3]

Traditionally, there should always be an underlying message in the story, that is the theme; characters, or roles played by different individuals, and challenges faced by them and how they are resolved (conflict and resolution); setting (place and time); point of view and also plot. The latter follows a traditional framework consisting of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement [56, p.34].

A significant work that marked a boost to the systematic classification of compositional aspects of folk tales was first published in 1910 by the Finnish folklorist Antti Amatus Aarne. It was later revised and expanded by the American scholar Stith Thompson and German folklorist Hans-Jörg Uther. Referred to as the “Aarne-

Thompson-Uther tale-type index”, this categorization focuses on two main indicators – plot and tale type – which help to identify narrative patterns and motifs that can be regarded as the basis for the traditional narrative. The researchers catalogued 2500 common plots that “underlied the tales of European and Near Eastern storytellers” [1, p.18] Thompson defined a *tale type* as a traditional tale that exists independently and can consist of only one motif or of many; it is a complete narrative and its meaning does not depend on any other. [49, p.415] The division of tales in the catalogue falls into 5 main groups with each type having a certain number entry:

1. Animal Tales: Types 1 - 299
2. Ordinary folktales: Types 300 – 1199 (Tales of magic, Religious tales, Aitiological tales, Romantic tales, Tales of the stupid ogre)
3. Jokes and Anecdotes: Types 1200 – 1999 (Numskull stories, Stories about married couples, Stories about a woman/girl, Stories about a clever/stupid lucky/unlucky man/boy, Jokes about parsons and religious orders, Tales of lying)
4. Formula Tales: Types 2000 – 2399 (Cumulative tales, Catch tales)
5. Unclassified Tales (Narrationes Lubricae): Types 2400 – 2499 [53, p.9-12]

Apart from the largest collection of fairy tales, the work includes regional catalogues which describe a particular national fairy tale tradition.

Nowadays the Index is used along with the Thompson’s six-volume (1932) “Motif-Index of Folk-Literature” which organizes thousands of motifs for each story type. Each of them is grouped under broad category, such as “Magic”, denoted by category letter (D as with the group “Magic”); within each broad category there are numerous subcategories that provide further specificity. For instance, entry “D1000” refers to “Magic Objects”, which are then divided into more specific subcategories. One such subcategory is “D1055”, which includes “Magic Ring” — an object that grants the possessor various powers or abilities. Within this, we find further divisions, such as “D1055.1”, which details “Ring that grants invisibility”. This hierarchical

structure allows researchers to easily locate motifs within specific contexts and facilitates comparative studies across folklore traditions [16, p.197].

While the Aarne–Thompson–Uther classification system is considered to be extremely influential and is widely used, it was criticized for its approach to classifying folktales by the representative of the Russian Formalist school of the 1920s Vladimir Propp. He argued that the method of categorizing stories by motifs overlooked the importance of the functions those motifs played within the narrative structure.

In 1928, Propp published his own groundbreaking work “Morphology of the Folktale” in which he introduced a method for analyzing folktales based on their structure rather than motifs or themes. He analyzed 100 Russian folktales from the corpus of O.Afanasiev breaking them down into a series of narrative functions and identified a sequence in which the functions appear. Propp differentiated between two kinds of structural analysis in folklore. *Syntagmatic structural approach* studies the formal organization of a text in terms of the linear sequence of events; it views the structure as a chain of elements. In contrast, *paradigmatic structural analysis* is used to reorganize elements in one or more analytic schema and to identify the underlying patterns within a story, often based on binary oppositions. Lévi-Strauss, a contemporary of Propp, utilized this method to explore myths and cultural structures in folklore to show how elements might uncover deeper paradigms. Applying the approaches, Propp singled out 31 functions that he argued formed the building block of all Russian folktales, though not all functions appeared in every story. These functions serve as the fundamental and constant components of a tale that are the acts of a character and necessary for driving the action forward [59, p.3] Jack Zipes created a shorter version of Propp’s 31 functions simplifying them and offering a more thematic framework that captures essential stages of the protagonist’s journey:

1. The protagonist is confronted with a restriction or prohibition, which they subsequently break.
2. The protagonist departs or is banished, often as a direct consequence of violating the initial prohibition.

3. The protagonist meets figures or creatures who will play significant roles in their journey. Zipes categorizes them into a) villains, b) mysterious individual or creature, who gives the protagonist gifts; c) three different animals or creatures who are helped by the protagonist and promise to repay him or her; d) encounter with three different animals or creatures who offer gifts to help the protagonist, who is in trouble. The gifts often serve as magical agents.
4. The protagonist, now equipped with magical gifts or new abilities, faces tests that challenge their strength, courage, and resolve.
5. A moment of peripety occurs, characterized by a sudden and often unexpected reversal in the protagonist's fortunes.
6. The protagonist actively utilizes the gifts and magical agents they have received to navigate the challenges ahead and work toward achieving their ultimate goal. It can be resulted in a) three battles with the villain; b) seemingly impossible tasks that are transformed into achievable feats through the application of their gifts, cleverness, or the assistance of allies; c) the breaking of a magic spell.
7. The culmination of the protagonist's journey is marked by the punishment of the villain or the defeat of the inimical forces that have posed challenges throughout the narrative.
8. The success of the protagonist generally results in various rewards that signify their growth and achievement: a) marriage; b) the acquisition of money; c) survival and wisdom; d) any combination of the first three. [59, p.10]

Apart from presenting the functions, Propp also examined how they are distributed among characters, or the 'dramatis personae'. He introduced the idea of 'spheres of action', a concept that pertains to how various functions are distributed among different characters in a story. The spheres of action are based on the roles characters take in relation to the plot's progression. In the tale, there are the following spheres of action and their constituents:

1. The *villain*: villainy, fight, pursuit.

2. The *donor* (provider): preparation for transmission, provision of a magical agent.
3. The *helper*: spatial transference, liquidation of misfortune, rescue from pursuit, solution of difficult tasks, transfiguration.
4. The *princess (a sought-for person) and her father*: assigning difficult tasks, branding, exposure, recognition, punishment of a second villain, marriage.
5. The *dispatcher*: dispatching through a connective incident.
6. The *hero*: departure on a search (this function is characteristic only of the seeker-hero), reaction to the donor's demands, wedding.
7. The *false hero*: departure on a search, reaction to the donor's demands and, as a specific function, exposure or unmasking as an imposter. [41, p.106-107]

Each constituent is thus one of the many tasks or actions that contribute to a character's role in advancing the plot.

Another key point in Propp's analysis regards the form of appearing of each category of characters. The *villain* is introduced into the course of action twice. The first appearance is sudden and unexpected, from outside the character's immediate surroundings. Later in the tale, the villain reappears as a person who has been sought out. The *donor* appears through a chance encounter in the forest, field, street or on a roadway. The *magical helper* takes a form of the gift. The *dispatcher*, the *hero*, the *false hero* and the *princess* are all introduced in the initial situation. The *false hero* may not always be explicitly introduced at first but later appears as already present in the court or household. The *princess*, like the *villain*, appears twice; once during the initial situation and later when the protagonist seeks her out (the seeker may see her first and then see the *villain*, or vice versa). But the shift is also possible, so in some stories all the characters may be introduced through the initial situation. Other deviations occur when the *donor* is absent, their role and introduction transfer to the helper. [41, p.84-86]

Although Propp's analysis illustrates the flexible nature of character roles in fairy tales, showing how they can shift and overlap, it still remains structured and follows a consistent narrative pattern.

Having analyzed a significant number of Lithuanian folk tales, Bronislava Kerbelytė, a famous folklorist and fairy tale researcher, offered a structural-semantic classification that identifies and organizes folk tales based on fundamental plots. It is based on the concept of "elementary plots" (EP) which are defined as the simplest narrative units where the hero's action and its outcome are most stable. Kerbelytė believes that the complex plots have come down to us as products of a long development and they have grown into hierarchical systems of elementary plots. The plot elements can be categorized into three types of logical cause-and-effect relationship, each of them has different levels of narrative cohesion in the structural analysis of folk tales:

- *Associative relationships* rely on thematic and symbolic associations rather than direct causality. For instance, in a fairy tale, objects like a mirror or an apple may appear in different scenes but evoke similar symbolic meanings related to vanity or temptation.
- *Mechanical relationships* are based on direct, sequential cause-and-effect actions, i.e. one event leads to another in a linear way. They typically establish a straightforward progression in the plot: each action triggers another subsequent action.
- *Detailing relationships* is built through the elaboration or amplification of narrative elements. In a fairy tale, a character's backstory or specific trials contribute to the complexity of the story. [30, p.34-46]

There is another approach to the structure of fairy tales proposed by the Ukrainian literary scholar R.Volkov. However, it differs from Kerbelytė's in that he emphasizes the evolution from motifs to complex plots and views stories as algorithms of development. In the researcher's view, fairy tale theme is seen as a flexible creation of an individual storyteller, subject to change, while motifs act as more stable elements that can be reliably analyzed and compared. Each fairy tale theme can be divided into

a number of simpler narrative units – motifs and their variants. Yet, a comparison of fairy tale themes divided into motifs shows that variants of themes differ in terms of motif variations, motif substitution, new motifs, etc. The fairy tale plot, in contrast to the fairy tale theme, is a permanent unit [65, p.4]. Volkov states that folk tales, in the broad sense of the word, as a collection of all folk oral art, are divided into several types, which are often combined accidentally: a ‘fantastic’ fairy tale, a fairy tale about animals, a fairy tale-novella, a fairy tale-anecdote, a legend, a fairy tale-fable. While each of these types has its own peculiarities in form, style and composition, Volkov pays special attention to a ‘fantastic’ fairy tale, which he also calls a ‘magic’ tale. The scientist singles out 15 types of the story-lines in the fairy tale:

1. *Tales about the innocent persecuted.* They typically include motifs of exile, trials and eventual vindication.
2. *Tales about a hero-the-fool.* The presence of humorous or absurd situations is common, they showcase the hero’s luck or hidden virtue.
3. *Tales about the three brothers.* There is a tripartite structure, in which the youngest/least favoured brother succeeds and others fail. Sibling rivalry, magical assistance, moral lessons about humility and perseverance are recurring motifs.
4. *Tales about the snake fighters.* The plot revolves around a brave hero who battles a snake/dragon which symbolically stand for chaos and evil.
5. *Tales about winning a bride.* Themes of love, loyalty are prominent; the resolution features marriage as a reward. Facing trials set by the bride’s family or magical challenges is accompanied by three tasks or quests that a hero must complete.
6. *Tales about the wise maiden.* The narrative includes riddles or tests on intelligence and centers on a resourceful female character; wit is more important than physical strength.
7. *Tales about the cursed and the enchanted.* They involve a quest or special action to break the spell with motifs of magical transformations, hidden identities; the journey is cyclical. In the end, the character returns to their original form.

8. *Tales about the lord of the talisman.* The plot follows the character's use and protection of the talisman (a powerful object that grants special abilities/protection) against adversaries stressing the themes of responsibility, power and moral implications of supernatural aid.
9. *Tales about the lord of miraculous objects.* Structurally, the tales hinge on the acquisition, use and sometimes loss of the magical object which are used to fulfill wishes, aid the hero in quests and grant power. The motif of greed, misuse, desire and its consequences is common.
10. *Tales about an infidel woman.* They center around themes of betrayal and follow a pattern of suspicion, investigation, discovery and resolve with punishment or reconciliation; the motifs of deception, trickery, moral retribution are present.
11. *Tales about the treacherous mother-sister.* The focus is made on familial betrayal by a close female relative who seeks to harm the protagonist. Structural elements include hidden danger within the family and eventual justice or restoration.
12. *Tales about the prophetic hero.* Exploring themes of fate, destiny, the tales feature a character who is foretold to face a particular destiny. There is always a certain prophecy, a period of exile or challenge, and the fulfillment of the foretold events.
13. *Tales about the doomed by fate.* They are often characterized by the themes of inevitability, acceptance since characters are marked by a curse or destiny which they cannot avoid.
14. *Tales about the miraculously solved crime.*
15. *Tales about cannibalism.* The narrative follows a hero's attempt to escape or defeat the cannibalistic figure; the motifs of horror, survival, boundary between civilization and savagery prevail [66, p.4-10].

Each of the aforementioned plot types builds around recurring structural motifs. As Volkov mentions, these elements form archetypal patterns that make them recognizable components of fairy tales.

All in all, the narrative patterns and motifs demonstrate their consistency, as explored by different scholars. V. Propp identified specific character functions and their roles in driving narrative actions laying the foundation for the structural analysis of folktales. Volkov's work on typology of the story-lines and his analysis of fairy tale retardation underscore the rhythmic repetition of motifs. The Aarne-Thompson-Uther tale-type index further supports the findings by categorizing global folktales according to universal narrative patterns and recurring motifs what provided a valuable system for comparative analysis. Kerbelytė's approaches contributed to the peculiarities of the plot and typical motifs showing how the patterns reflect broader cultural and social values. So, structural approaches, combined with the index's categorization, reveal how universal narrative mechanisms are.

1.3 Binariness as a conceptual phenomenon

The oldest method of organizing and understanding reality relies on dual structures, which form the basis of how humans categorize the world. They can be exemplified by such fundamental pairs, as good and evil, male and female, life and death, chaos and order etc. Lévy-Bruhl believed that the dual principle of perception of the world is equally inherent in primitive peoples of all times and races [33, p.133]. These oppositions are deeply embedded in cultural narratives, shaping mythologies, religions throughout history, and referred to as the 'binary' ones.

For G. Smith 'binary oppositions' represented a system in both language and thought by which two theoretical opposites are set off against each other and strictly defined [46, p.383]. A Dictionary of Media and Communication also stresses a dual nature of the term describing it as a pair of mutually exclusive signifiers within a paradigm set which are logically opposed, but together form a complete discourse universe; each term inherently suggests its counterpart and leaves no room for an intermediate state. [11, p.55]

The concept can be traced back the early philosophical roots. Plato's dialectic works explored oppositional forces, such as light and dark, knowledge versus ignorance, to help define the world through contrasting ideas. Aristotle further

formalized this approach in his logical principles, especially through his law of non-contradiction, which states that contradictory statements cannot both be true simultaneously.

Despite the fact that the concept of opposites has been common to the authors of some fundamental works, it was not until the early 20th century when the term ‘oppositions’ was used in the linguistic discourse as a part of theory which viewed language as a system of relations. The phenomenon originated in structuralism and was researched by a Swiss linguist, semiotician, philosopher and ‘father’ of structuralist theory Ferdinand de Saussure, who viewed the theory of language from two different approaches: as a semiological system, or a system of signs, and as a product of the language community [7, p.15]. He believed that the means through which language units gain value or meaning, with each unit defined in a mutually dependent relationship to its counterpart, similar to binary code, can be referred to as ‘binary oppositions’: ‘good’ is defined partly by not being ‘bad’; ‘big’ is understood only in relation to something seen as ‘small’. Rather than a relation of pure contradiction, this opposition is complementary [17, p.12]. Saussure showed that a sign’s meaning relates to other signs in its immediate context (syntagmatic dimension) and within the broader system it belongs to (paradigmatic dimension). Another contribution concerns the principle of opposition as a means of organizing language. It is based on contrast, that is meaning arises from differentiation rather than inherent qualities. The researcher distinguished between ‘meaning’, the core of a concept, and ‘value’ which is derived from a concept’s contrasts with related ideas within a language. In the system, every element whether a phoneme, morpheme, or part of speech gains unique value by its difference from other elements [43, p.49-58]. Other binary oppositions that lay in the core of Saussure’s theory include sign-signified, language-speech and synchronic-diachronic perspectives.

The relationship within binary oppositions, or ‘markedness’, also cannot be overlooked. One element is often ‘marked’ carrying specific characteristics, while the other is ‘unmarked’ and more neutral. This distinction reflects asymmetrical nature of ‘value’. For example, in pairs like ‘lion’ and ‘lioness’, the latter is marked because it

specifies gender, whereas 'lion' is unmarked and can refer to lions in general. Markedness indicates the hierarchy within oppositions showing how terms can stand out due to their additional layers of meaning [22, p.36]. It can be said that meaning and value are not just oppositional but also weighted, with certain terms carrying an extra degree of semantic specification. In addition to this, binary oppositions have the potential to carry a deeper level of binaries in the narrative, that is the concept of *hero* comprise such secondary binaries, as good - bad, liked - disliked, handsome – ugly [18, p.54].

Greimas developed a structural approach to meaning in which he emphasized oppositions within a system of semantic relations. His concept of archisémes represents a hierarchy of semantic oppositions, where the significant unit of meaning (sème) is embedded in lexical pairs. Unlike the simple binary oppositions of 'marked' and 'unmarked', Greimas proposed a more complex four-term homology. The structural model accounts for deeper semantic relationships where meaning emerged through a network of four interrelated terms which are often described as a semiotic square: A (a positive term), -A (its direct negation), B (a related but distinct term), -B (the negation or B, creates a secondary opposition). The model in question can be applied to myths, narratives, as well as linguistic structures, as it shows how opposing concepts are mediated through their interrelations [23, p.49-88].

Another leading figure in structuralism, a notable figure of the Prague linguistic circle Roman Jakobson, expanded on Saussure's concepts of synchrony (studying language at a fixed point) and diachrony (analyzing its historical development) applying the binarity to both linguistics and literary criticism [8, p.246]. The scholar argues that each literary period is tied to a historical era, they are mutually complementing, so synchrony and diachrony should be studied as interdependent processes [65, p.21]. Jakobson also linked the oppositions to the communication model differentiating between message and receiver: message can take various forms (written, auditory, visual) and be decoded by the receiver. If one opposition stops existing, there is no sense in the other. Studying the sender - receiver dynamic, Jakobson emphasized a need in the connecting element, such as a shared code or contact. While message -

receiver represents a partial or passive opposition, the sender - receiver pair requires contact between binary oppositions [8, p.235].

The ideas of Ferdinand de Saussure and the Prague School were highly influential for subsequent studies in linguistics, anthropology, literary theory and other fields. One of the most eminent key contributors to the development of binary opposition theory was French ethnologist and anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. He suggested that structural patterns in linguistics align with those in anthropology, as they are deeply embedded in the unconscious mind. The systematic organization found in language on phonological, grammatical, lexical levels, also exists in other fields of our life, particularly in culture which we unconsciously reflect through language.

The view of Lévi-Strauss was supported by his analysis of mythology which he viewed as language functioning on an especially high level, e.g. where “meaning succeeds practically at ‘taking off’ from the linguistic ground on which it keeps rolling” [32, p.210]. Some tales share similarities across cultures, and rejecting the idea of a single authentic myth, the anthropologist considered all variations as expressions of the same underlying structure. Moreover, the meaning of myth does not lie in its individual elements, like events or specific characters, but in how these elements are interrelated and structured. It is also a subset of language which shares its fundamental nature but possess unique characteristics. The latter exist at a higher level of complexity than ordinary language which means that myths share more intricate structural patterns than typical linguistic expressions. [32, p.210-211]

In order to claim the aforementioned features, Lévi-Strauss deconstructed myths on the sentence level with each sentence representing a ‘relation’ between a function and a subject, and uncovered ‘gross constituent units’, or mythemes, as they were called later. Certain myths, such as Oedipus, revolve around opposing concepts: overlapping and underrating of blood relations, affirmation and denial of humanity’s autochthonous origins. [31, p.215]

In addition, Hegel’s dialectics put emphasis on how human thought processes contradictions and their resolution. The German philosopher suggested a framework in which ideas (thesis) inevitable generate opposing ideas (antithesis), and their conflict

is resolved in a higher-order synthesis that encompasses elements of both. This model of thinking laid a basis for Lévi-Strauss's structuralist approach to mythology and originated into an idea that binary oppositions are the underlying components of myths. The anthropologist proposed the idea of mediating contradictions, or mediators, that is myths do not truly rely on fundamental oppositions, rather they create the illusion of resolution. This phenomenon is achieved by linking an irreconcilable binary opposition (life - death) with a more manageable or culturally reconcilable opposition (young - death). For instance, the analysis of the Zuni origin myth shows how myths mediate contradictions, particularly the tension from nature to culture. The myth presents a binary opposition between the chaotic underworld and the structured world above, with twin culture, or the pairs of divine messengers, ceremonial clowns and war-gods, heroes as mediators. There is also a contrast between homogeneous pairs (two brothers) and heterogeneous pairs (grandmother and grandchild) which reflects myth's role in structuring social relationships [31, p.219-223]. Thus, myths encompass things that contradict or oppose each other and elements that mediate the oppositions.

All in all, binarity serves as a fundamental cognitive and structural principle that shapes cultural systems and language. From early linguistic theories to structuralist approaches, binary oppositions have been recognized as essential mechanisms for meaning-making.

1.4 Classification of binary oppositions and their functions

The binaries manifest in various forms, ranging from character roles and moral contrasts to structural patterns with the plot. A systematic approach to understanding the narrative functions and symbolic significance of the oppositions resulted in different categorizations proposed by scholars. Notable researchers V.Propp, K.Lévi-Strauss, Yu.M.Lotman, N.Bohr, W.Heisenberg stressed that a set of binary oppositions approximately includes 10-20 pairs of opposite features that carry positive and negative meanings [68, p.31].

In mythological thinking, the world is perceived as a unified whole rather than a fragmented or purely dualistic. The use of a limited set of binary oppositions, such as

life - death, reality - illusion, lie - truth, indicates that mythological consciousness organizes reality through fundamental contrasts [29, p.117]. However, these oppositions are not strictly rigid. Instead they become neutralized, or mediated, as pointed out by Lévi-Strauss, within the mythological realm. This means that myths operate in space where logical and rational distinctions lose their dominance [31, p.3]. The fact that myths are actualized when rational thought is diminished implies that mythology helps understand the world beyond strict logical dichotomies.

The aforementioned universal oppositional pairs form the basis of primary classifications, as they represent constituents of any mythological picture of the world. Kamienieva singles out 4 main groups of binaries that encompass the essence of specific features:

- 1) *Spatial oppositions* are mainly associated with movement, interaction and deal with how individuals orient themselves in physical environment: *top – bottom, front – back, right – left*.
- 2) *Parametric contrasts* help categorize objects based on measurable properties due to comparison and evaluation: *wide – narrow, big – small*.
- 3) *Color-based dichotomies* carry both symbolic and perceptual connotations: *white – black, light – dark*.
- 4) *Temporal oppositions* represent most widespread and recurring motifs in narratives. They mirror natural cycles and can be found within seasonal activities. The emphasis is put on the passage of time: *day – night, morning – evening, winter – summer* [29, p.118].

The object of research for Kamienieva was romantic literature and the place of the concept ‘universe’ in it. In fact, it also borrowed a lot from mythology. For instance, antinomies characteristic of the spatial image (such as *whole – part, diversity – uniformity, flatness - volume, earth – sky, here – there*) always appear axiologically coloured. Another opposition of *chaos – space* is also important, as its origin goes back to the ancient understanding of the universe. Its multi-level nature found embodiment in many folktales [29, p.120].

Another categorization of dualistic systems was identified through lexical-semantic analysis. It closely parallels the groups proposed by Kamienieva, since both frameworks underline spatial, temporal and qualitative (*black – white, good – bad*) oppositions as organizing principles. However, the second classification expands the scope by including additional dimensions, such as genealogical (*man – woman, mother – father, daughter – son*), social (*city – village, master- servant, noble – commoner*), action-based (*locked – unlocked, give – take, build – destroy*), relating to natural phenomena (*dry – wet, warm – cold, drought – flood, fresh – rotten*), evaluation (*true – false, right – wrong*), taste and texture (*sweet – bitter, rough – smooth*), quantity (*few – many, full – empty*). Another category involves general worldview oppositions, previously referred to as the universal ones: *life – death, heaven – hell, fate – free will, chaos – order* [44, p.160-161]. These antonymic pairs are mainly situated within historical and cultural contexts.

While analyzing verbal and symbolic objectification of binary oppositions in folklore texts, T. Honcharuk also traced the connection between opposite pairs and categories they represent defining such fields of binaries as spatial, temporal, colour and social. Unlike the previous classification with its genealogical group, Honcharuk's arrangement includes the oppositional pair of *masculine – feminine, old – young* and *inner – outer* into the social one which covers the ideas of gender and age into a more general field. [68, p.31]

One of the most significant binary oppositions which manifests in various ritual and symbolic contexts is *male – female*. It is rooted in gender categories, folklore symbolism, ritualistic and ceremonial functions. The opposition is presented as another fundamental concept of life itself, which, when projected onto the cosmos, leads to its sexualization, dividing it into male and female spheres. This cosmic duality is mirrored in ancient traditions, where male and female principles play a crucial role in the functioning and creation of the world. However, the scientist emphasizes that the polarity of the *male – female* binary does not imply strict opposition but rather dynamic interaction. The idea is evident in numerous mythological narratives, such as the Slavic belief in Rod, the primordial deity, who was accompanied by two Rozhanitsy – female

goddesses associated with birth and fate. [68, p.31-33] It implies that the male and female principles underpin the continual renewal,

Another oppositional pair *I – Other* serves two main functions: 1) defines personal boundaries, 2) distinguishes between one's own (familiar, ordered, safe) and the foreign (unknown, chaotic, dangerous). *The own – foreign* opposition carries a cosmogonic role and may be conceptualized as a contrast between cosmos and chaos. From the mythological point of view, *the self* (one's own space, people, culture) stands for order, civilization and light, while the *other* is connected to disorder, danger, darkness. This opposition is implied in war rituals, initiation ceremonies and purification rites. In folk and fairy tales this binary is transitioned upon the protagonist (the *I/self*) and the antagonist (the *Other*). For instance, "Red Riding Hood" is built on the antithesis between the familiar and innocent world of the Little Girl, while the wolf is the dangerous, deceptive *Other*. Similarly, many tales exemplify the opposition between *home*, or safe and known, and the *outside*, or *unknown* and *risky*. In "Hansel and Gretel", children leave their familiar and protective space – home, and enter the dangerous and unpredictable world – the forest.

The common struggle between *light* and *darkness*, often mapped onto the opposition of *I – Other* is also commonly renewed cosmic conflict. Mythological traditions tend to incorporate rituals of renewal, in which the forces of chaos, or the *Other*, had to be temporally confronted, expelled, transformed to restore the harmony of the cosmos. [68, p.33] Additionally, in tales, the *Other* often takes the form of supernatural and magical creatures what further creates the binary of *the ordinary – the extraordinary*.

The binary opposition of *own- alien* space is closely tied to spatial perception and human cognition. Here, alien space is positioned behind an individual what makes it unseen and, consequently, perceived as dangerous. This notion leads to the emergence of another fundamental opposition of *front – back*. It is considered to be one of the most archaic horizontal contrasts. The distinction is rooted in human vision: what is visible is deemed safe, while the unseen is associated with threat and uncertainty [83, p.362-364]. Additionally, the *right* side in early belief systems

regarded as the *front* and was associated with visibility, daylight, the realm of living, while the *left* side was linked to the back representing invisibility, nighttime, and the domain of the dead. Beyond its perceptual and spatial significance, the *right – left* oppositional pair also held a profound sacred meaning: many religious rituals were structured around directional movements, with the right perceived as positive, and *left* – with the negative.

Fairy tales reflect a mythological and sacral space, which is often exaggerated compared to real-world perception. These narratives frequently include chthonic elements, where ordinary household objects acquire magical properties in the realm of supernatural [84, p.94-95]. This transformation of everyday items into mystical artifacts underlines the symbolic power of space in folklore and mythology.

In his book “Metaphor and reality” (1962), the literary theorist and philosopher Philip Wheelwright dwells on the role of metaphor in human thought and perception of reality. He argues that metaphors are not just ‘decorative’ elements of speech but are central to meaning-making and conceptual understanding. Two basic concepts he introduces are ‘epithor’, or a metaphor of similarity, and ‘diaphor’, or a metaphor that reveals unexpected, often opposite connections). The latter plays a crucial role in the myth discourse.

Wheelwright provides a classification of archetypal symbols and highlights that owing to the fact that they were all drawn from nature, human experience or spirituality, they often emerge in paired contrasts:

1. Cosmological symbols: *light – darkness, sun – moon, earth – sky*;
2. Temporal symbols: *day – night; ages of man (childhood – maturity; youth – old age)*.
3. Spatial symbols: *right – left; front – back; center – periphery, up - down*.
4. Anthropological symbols: *head – heart; blood – stone; eyes – blindness, body – soul* [55, p.121-142].

Specifying the *up – down* opposition, Wheelwright stresses that the folklore notion of *up* is connected to magical abilities, divine forces, whereas the down is associated with malevolent chthonic powers, ailments and misfortune. [69, p.136] In

fairy tales, protagonists encounter magical benefactors at the summit of a mountain, where they may receive gifts that significantly affect their fate. Conversely, falling *down* evokes a sense of fear and despair.

All in all, across various domains – spatial, temporal, qualitative, social and symbolic – binary oppositions reinforce hierarchies and relationships between concepts. There are fundamental pairs that serve as the core structures of human understanding of the world and are mirrored in the mythological and folklore narratives.

1.5 The semantic potential of the binary component

The basis of the linguistic research is the identification of the linguistic nature of symbols, the study of the processes of their formation and subsequent semantic transformations, and the peculiarities of their functioning in the text. The symbol is considered as a category of semantics, has an external expression and is associated with denotations and signification. The peculiarity of the symbol as a semantic unit is the multiplicity of meanings that manifest themselves in different discourses. The choice of one particular theme from the set of meanings inherent in a symbol determines the function of delimitation, which is based on a binary semantic opposition. [68, p.31]

Various binary oppositions in the verbal and symbolic objectification are widely represented in folklore texts. They are commonly attributed to a certain evaluative meaning. For instance, in the *up* – *down* pair, the *up* carries positive meanings: a source of healing and restoration; a mystical space where magical transformations occur; an embodiment of power, authority; a sacred force that aids the protagonist. Sometimes it also stands for the origin of life [69, p.213-214]. In contrast, the *down* concept is predominantly negative, as it refers to peril or chthonic entities, a destructive sacred force, a domain where illnesses and afflictions originate [69, p. 214].

Some cosmological symbols also provide the polarity of connotations: the *sun* – *moon* pair is associated with male and female principle, while *earth* – *sky* depicts the opposition between material and spiritual realms [55, p.123].

It is also worth mentioning that the opposed notions of the male and the female are seen as essential for creation and balance in the universe. The combination of these forces generates life and fosters transformation indicating that, at the fundamental level, both elements possess positive meanings. However, within the verbal–symbolic framework, the *male – female* opposition is frequently hierarchical, with male-associated attributes often carrying more positive connotations. The *masculine* principle is traditionally connected to notions of happiness, goodness, health, daylight, sacred power, elevation, the east, the front, the external, the right side and the protective strength in general. At the same time, the *feminine* tends to have antonymic evaluative categories which include misfortune, evil, illness, night, chthonic forces, the low, the west, the rear, the internal, the left side, and danger [69, p.215]. This symbolic dichotomy shows an axiological hierarchy in many cultures where the male element is dominant and sacred while the female one is connected with the unknown and internal. Despite this, folklore recognizes the necessity of both principles, as their union ensures the continuity of life.

The duality reflected in natural cycles also carries distinct connotations. Light and dark are two classes of supernatural powers localized in space, “on one side life emerges and ascends in brilliance, while on the other, it declines and fades into darkness” [27, p.166]. The opposition covers different antonymic concepts, such as *white – black, day – night, sun – moon, red – black, summer – winter, home – forest, happiness – unhappiness, life – death, heaven – earth, old – young, warm – cold, ground – water, fire – water* with *good – bad* serving as a general axiological opposition [5, p.39]. The evaluation depends on visual perception and mental activities, but the generally accepted connotatives attribute the *light* concept with clarity, intelligence, education and civilization, while *darkness* - with ignorance, uncertainty, lack of cultural refinement [5, p.40]. In folklore, the journey to the *underworld*, or dark realm, and return to *light*, or the upper world, is a common rite of passage and is positively evaluated as the hero’s transformation.

In his work “Motif-Index of Folk Literature” (1932), Stith Thompson posits the struggle in question in motif A107 (“Gods of darkness and light: darkness thought as

evil, light as good”), so from the fairy tale perspective, *light* is associated with divine power and appears in the form of a hero, while villains disguised as wicked witches and other antagonistic creatures appear at night, live in dark forests, caves and underground. Additionally, day and night cycles mark transitions in the plot with magical events happening at midnight or during twilight when the boundaries between the real and supernatural worlds fuse. The transformation part of the journey can be characterized by heaven – earth or home – forest oppositions which often mark the movement of the hero from the familiar into the unknown place.

Seasonal and elemental associations, such as *summer* and *fire* are positively evaluated in myths, as *summer* is perceived as a life cycle and fertility, and *fire* as purification or a force that helps the hero. The oppositional pairs of these binaries, *winter* and *water*, are rarely neutralized and signify struggle with life or death, barrenness and a barrier correspondingly [44, p.16-18].

One of the most important binary oppositions that serves as both the narrative device and a structural-psychological element is a *protagonist - antagonist* pair which is found in motifs A525 (“Good and bad culture heroes”), A50 (“Conflict of good and evil creators”), A106 (“Opposition of good and evil gods”), A106.0 (“Revolt of evil angels against god”). The antagonist – whose name derives from the Greek *agonistis* (‘wrestler in the games’, ‘contestant’) and *anti* (‘against’) – as a primary source of obstacles, opposes the protagonist (*prot* – ‘first’) what creates tension and difficulties. This conflict is a central theme in folk tales and culture-forming stories,

The archetypal English *villain* is rooted in the French word *villaine*, or ‘rustic’. [Barnhart, Steinmetz, p.978] Over time, the meaning shifted to encompass notions of a ‘slave’ [1, p.353] and later – an ‘unknightly and treacherous person’. [34, p.118] Nowadays, *villain* is used to denote ‘a violent wrongdoer, culprit, criminal and an evildoer’ with the adjective *vile* implying ‘morally wrong or evil, having no value or respect, morally disgusting’ [2, p.979]. Antagonist is also seen as an embodiment of the Shadow – an archetype developed by Carl Jung – which represents a collective image of evil and its destructive behavior, darker or amoral facets of human personality [28, p.8–10]. Classic fairy tales express this concept: the hero’s journey is defined by

a confrontation between good and evil, which serves as a formidable challenge. Encountering dangerous obstacles and hopeless situations, the hero undergoes profound inner growth; his character and destiny are reshaped and altered [11, p.3-4]. At the same time, despite their opposition, both characters are driven by certain desire – whether stemming from loss, scarcity, innate aggressiveness – that serves as a catalyst for the plot [10, p.31].

The semantic organization of the *protagonist* – *antagonist* binary opposition was presented by the Ukrainian scholars Minenko, Krichker and Yeremeieva in the form of the continuum – an axiologically graded spectrum of character roles in English folk and fairy tales, ranging from clearly positive to overtly negative figures. On one end, there are characters who embody positive character traits, while on the other, there are figures with the negative ones. In between lies a range of intermediate or ambiguous roles – such as the neutral hero or pseudo-hero – whose characteristics merge elements of both good and evil. The continuum is visually and conceptually illustrated by Greimas' semiotic square. The authors place the *protagonist* within the [+] positive field and provide common evaluative adjectives, such as *brave*, *valiant*, *resourceful*, *wise* and *selfless*. However, they note that the protagonist may also take on characteristics of a sought-for character [+(-)] or a magic helper [+(-)], depending on the role in the narrative: 1) in folk tales, the hero is the object of a quest or a chosen figure whose fate dictates the direction of the story; 2) in fairy tales, when the protagonist is under a curse or magical transformation, they may initially be passive or unaware of their heroic destiny, thus aligning more with the sought-for character role. Sometimes there is also a neutral protagonist which may begin their journey without a clear moral orientation, driven by curiosity or external pressures rather than a defined heroic mission [57, p.192].

Thus, different binary oppositions define moral, psychological and existential conflicts in narratives, but their semantic potential goes beyond mere opposition. The protagonist, often positioned at the center of the axiological continuum, entitles positive traits like heroism, virtue and perseverance, while the antagonist is presented with contradictory characteristics and is negatively evaluated.

1.6 Binary oppositions and postmodernism

Post-structuralist scholars critically re-evaluated and significantly expanded the scope of the study of binary oppositions by introducing new analytical approaches that emphasize their unstable nature. Starting from the middle of the 20th century the philosophy of postmodernism, characterized by the rejection of rigid dichotomies, has been challenging the cultural systems traditionally built upon them both in formal logic and dialectical reasoning.

The idea of the deconstruction was introduced by the famous French philosopher Jacques Derrida who examined how text and meaning interact. In Plato's philosophy, 'true' forms, or essences, exist beyond the material world, and appearances, or what we see and experience, are just imperfect copies of these higher truths. Derrida rejected this hierarchical structure, arguing that meaning is not fixed or absolute but rather dependent on context. The process of deconstruction follows a few steps: identifying the oppositions within a text; equalizing their elements; defamiliarizing them to determine the possibility or impossibility of such an opposition [14, p.41-42]. Moreover, scholars assume that rejecting rigid oppositions requires not just reversing their meaning but challenging the very notion of opposition itself by relativizing the relationships between elements [76, p.145].

The era of postmodernism is marked by the emergence of feminist, postcolonial, multicultural and multi-ethnic literature [72, p.151]. In addition to this, it introduced new features into the fairy tale genre by reshaping its traditional structure and creating fragmented and intertextual narratives. All the rewrites "redesign, relocate, reevaluate the classic protoworld" [15, p.206]. They appropriate a classic work, its familiar setting and well-known characters challenging the established fictional world with modern aesthetic and ideological ideas, placing the reader into "a familiar space within the strange landscapes of radical postmodernist experimentation" [15, p.206]. One of the key characteristics of postmodernist fiction is the blurring of boundaries – between genres, between 'high' and 'low' art, between fiction and reality [72, p.151].

Another specific feature is intertextuality that reflects the presence of internal textual connections between a postmodernist text and other works from world culture.

The adaptability of the postmodern fairy tale depends on the ‘activation’ of intertextual; references, imagery and allusions. Citation, as one of its vital characteristics, merges the original author’s narrative with quotations from various sources, collectively forming a new textual space [77, p.36-39].

Traditional fairy tales are rooted in spaces, where characters navigate clear topological boundaries. In contrast, postmodern fairy tales often present a disconnected, polymorphous fictional space, where different realities, levels of consciousness, and discourses overlap [74, p. 347]. This strongly correlates with Derrida’s principle of meaning that is never fixed but constantly deferred through signs. The narrative speed also varies unpredictably, with techniques like repetition, nested and embedded narratives, concurrent syntactic structures contributing to this phenomenon [72, p. 151]. The classical tales, on the contrary, follow a linear progression without multiple perspectives, unresolved endings or self-referential storytelling.

In traditional realist and modernist literature, the fictional world is carefully structured around a central observer, either a character or an omniscient narrator, who provides coherence and perspective. Nevertheless, “in the heterotopian zone of postmodernist writing, space is less constructed than deconstructed by the text, or rather constructed and deconstructed at the same time” [37, p.45]. The effect is achieved through various techniques:

1. By juxtaposing seemingly unrelated or opposite elements (real and fictional spaces, different historical periods or contrasting ideologies) fiction breaks down traditional distinctions showing that the antonymic concepts are mutually dependent. The strategy challenges geographically and conceptually distant worlds merging these disconnected spaces.
2. The interpolation approach involves asserting an alien or any unexpected space within a familiar one, or placing a new ‘in-between’ space where none originally existed. It deals with 3 divisions: *inside – outside* (an imaginary world intrudes into a realistic setting), *order – chaos* (structures reality is disrupted by absurd elements), *reality – illusion* (dream-like spaces within a rational world).

3. The process of layering two familiar spaces on top of each other is done within the superimposition strategy. It creates a third space that is neither fully one nor the other but a paradoxical mix of both. Underlying binary oppositions, such as *past – present, reality – fiction, here – there*, become indistinguishable which leads to a space where meaning is unstable.

4. The idea of creating unexpected or ironic meanings can be traced in the misattribution approach that implies assigning attributes to places in ways that contradict conventional associations. Distorting what is ‘natural’ or ‘expected’, specifically in *center – periphery* and *familiar – foreign* binary pairs, misattribution questions preconceived hierarchies [37, p.45-49].

The role of feminist literary theory in dismantling traditional archetypes should also be stressed, since feminist criticism views binary oppositions as instruments of power, where the male-associated dominant term subjugates the subordinate term. Stereotypical dichotomies such as *mother – stepmother, strong – weak* are deconstructed, showing that these categories are socially constructed. In some fairy tales, instead of a clear-cut evil stepmother figure, both mother and stepmother can share negative traits. This idea challenges the notion that maternal figures must be either wholly nurturing or wholly wicked. For instance, in the fairy tale “Peckish” (2014) inspired by unedited pre-Grimm folk tales and written by the British writer Robert Shearman, the witch, typically the embodiment of pure evil, is portrayed with sympathy, as she kidnaps children out of necessity rather than malice. Likewise, traditionally innocent victims Hansel and Gretel become executioners and cannibals [21, p.207-212]. Space is also reinterpreted: *forest* as a place of danger and chaos is subverted into a place of belonging, while *home* is redefined as psychological imprisonment and a place for alienation from society.

Thus, the deconstruction of binary oppositions is a common feature in postmodern fairy tales. Moral absolutes become ambiguous, with traditionally good characters displaying flaws and evil figures gaining complexity or sympathy. Space, both physical and psychological, transforms into the reality blended with the surreal. Through

intertextuality, irony and narrative fragmentation, postmodernism questions the traditional foundations and offers various interpretations.

Conclusion to Chapter 1

After analyzing the theoretical basis of the research, it is possible to conclude that fairy tales combine cultural, societal and structural elements that have shaped their evolution over time. Fairy tale is a distinct narrative form with clearly defined characteristics, such as the presence of magical elements, a clear distinction between good and evil, a quest or transformation.

The study of narrative patterns and motifs further confirms their structural consistency. Vladimir Propp identified specific character functions and narrative roles and laid the groundwork for structural analysis. Volkov, Kerbelyte, Braude contributed to understanding plot structures embedded in fairy tales. The Aarne-Thompson-Uther index categorized folktales based on recurring motifs what facilitated comparative studies.

Binarity, as a fundamental cognitive and structural principle, shapes cultural systems and language. Ferdinand de Saussure introduced the idea of binary oppositions in linguistic structures underlining their role in meaning-making. Claude Lévi-Strauss applied the concept to mythology and folklore, while Jakobson further developed this approach within structural linguistics and Greimas illustrated the complexities of oppositional relationships in narratives. Across spatial, temporal, qualitative, social and symbolic domains, these oppositions establish hierarchies.

In narrative structures, oppositions define moral, psychological and existential conflicts. Protagonists are often positioned on the positive end of the axiological spectrum and embody virtue, while antagonists contrast with negative traits. However, their semantic potential extends beyond simple opposition.

Postmodern fairy tales challenge traditional binary oppositions through Derrida's deconstruction concept. Moral absolutes blur, heroes display flaws and villains gain sympathy. Space merges reality with the surreal. Through intertextuality,

irony and fragmentation, postmodernism reinterprets fairy-tale structures and creates multiple meanings.

Thus, binary oppositions shape the foundation of meaning-making in language and narrative structures. They evolve further in postmodern fairy tales.

Chapter II. The use of binary oppositions in traditional narratives

2.1 “English Fairy Tales” by Flora Annie Steel.

The use of binary oppositions in folk literature will be examined through the analysis of “English Fairy Tales” (1918) – a collection of the British folklore which encompasses 41 traditional tales. They were retold by Flora Annie Webster Steel (1847 – 1929). The writer was born in the United Kingdom but lived in British India for 22 years. She is known for her works set in the Indian subcontinent and produced the collection “Tales of the Punjab” (1894) which preserved Indian folk tales and a novel about the Indian Rebellion of 1857 called “On the Face of the Waters” (1896). Steel also authored a well-regarded history of India and made significant contribution to Anglo-Indian literature. Her novel “The Hosts of the Lord” (1900) was recognized as one of the most notable works on the subject of Indian missionaries [42, p.179].

Most of the contents of “English Fairy Tales” were drawn from other collections, specifically “English Fairy Tales” (1890) and “More English Fairy Tales” (1894), which were compiled by the Australian-born folklorist, historian and literary critic Joseph Jacobs (1854 – 1916). He gathered the tales from a combination of written and oral traditions. In “More English Fairy Tales”, the folklorist describes certain tales as skillfully constructed pieces of nonsensical storytelling, intentionally putting together to amuse children. He stated that humor is a defining characteristic of the English folk tradition [40]. Notably, 37 of the tales featured in Steel’s book also appeared in Jacob’s works. It is difficult to trace the origins of folk tales as only their literary forms have endured, but researchers from the Universities of Durham and Lisbon suggest that some of these stories may have ancient roots, potentially dating back thousands of years to the Bronze Age [19]. Steel may have intended her book to offer young readers comfort and a temporary escape from the hardships of the time, as it was published during the First World War [19].

Given Jacob’s role as the primary preserver of British folk tales and Steel’s commitment to making them widely available, our choice to analyse English Fairy Tales (1918) is well-grounded. The collection is not only a reliable source, but also presents tales in a form that remains close to their original versions.

2.2 Tales structured around social hierarchy and justice

One of the intentional focuses on British folklore, particularly in the context of the book's publication during WWI, suggests an underlying theme of nationalism. This patriotic element is evident from the very first tale, "St. George of Merrie England", which recounts the adventures of an English knight who undertakes heroic quests, including a rescuing a princess from a dragon, as one of the Six Champions of Christendom which include knights from France, Italy, Spain, Wales. They symbolize some of the nations that allied during WWI in opposition to Germany.

There are several important binary oppositions in the tale. The most pronounced one is **good** – **evil** embodied by St. George and the sorceress Kalyb. From the beginning, she is portrayed as a sinister force and agent of darkness:

In the darksome depths of a thick forest lived Kalyb, the fell enchantress. [...] Terrible were her deeds, but above all things she delighted in carrying off innocent new-born babes, and putting them to death [39].

In contrast, St. George is depicted as a child of destiny and divine blessing who later kills Kalyb rejecting her attempt to lure him with magical gifts:

But the babe was marked from the first for doughty needs; for on his breast was pictures the living image of a dragon, on his right hands was a blood red cross, and on his left leg showed the golden garter [39].

The binary carries an additional semantic potential of **light** – **dark** which is entitled in the description of Kalyb's abode and St. George's markings which also serve as an allegory for **righteousness** overcoming **wickedness**. The temporal opposition of **day** – **night** further reflects the dichotomy of light as salvation and darkness as peril, since St. George's heroic battles and travels take place during the day: "*And as soon as the sun arose, he set forth upon his journey* " [39]. While night represents danger, as "*the cruel destruction waged by a terrible dragon, who ranges up and down, the country by night, as the sun sets*" [39].

The **top** – **bottom** opposition is quite crucial in the folk tale. In order to rescue Princess Sâbia, the daughter of the King of Egypt, who was "*held fast in a tower high above the ground, where none could reach her*" [39], St. George needs to beat the

dragon which lives in the valley. During the battle, the dragon “*rose high upon its mighty wings, spitting fire from above*” [39], establishing the dominance from an elevated position. Yet, the protagonist ultimately turns the battle in his favor. The tale follows the chivalric and patriarchal structure with the male hero proving his worth through the battle, and the female character serves as the reward. The oppositions of **protector – protected** and **male – female** may be also applied.

Another tale “Tom-Tit-Tom” has a number of variations. J.Jacobs believed that the German fairy tale “Rumpelstilzchen” (1812) by the Brothers Grimm originated from it [40]. Generally, the whole tale is built on the **truth – deception** opposition. The mother deceives the King by claiming her daughter spun five skeins, the daughter continues the deception but ultimately has to rely on trickery to save herself, and Tom-Tit-Tot himself tries to keep his name a secret, but is unraveled. The opposition of **wealth – power** is realized through other contrasts. The King is depicted as a ruler with the authority to make life-changing decisions:

Though for eleven months of the year she shall be Queen indeed, [...], in the twelfth month she must [...] spin five skeins a day, and if she does not she must die [39].

There is a stress made on the precarious position of **peasant** woman compared to the control of the **nobleman**. He enforces strict rules, demands obedience and productivity. At the same time, the girl’s excessive appetite, in its both figurative and literal sense, is the story’s inciting event which symbolizes indulgence and thoughtlessness. Tom-Tit-Tot’s demand for her as payment demonstrates another form of control, so we may single out the **hunger – control** and **male – female** opposition.

The mother and daughter are portrayed as simple and greedy. The daughter never learns a basic household skill, so they both rely on **luck** rather than **wisdom**:

So the mother agreed. She thought what a grand marriage it was for her daughter. And as for the five skeins? [...] There was many a skip between cup and lip, and, likely as not, the King would have forgotten all about it by then [39].

While the girl is unaware of spinning, the King’s serious intentions and the creature’s name, learning Tom-Tit-Tot’s name grants her freedom what creates an **ignorance – knowledge** binary pair with the latter becoming a key to survival.

Moreover, the helplessness of the girl is highlighted in the daytime, while the magical acquaintance and a conversation takes place in the dark, what contributes to the **day – night** opposition. Finally, the **human** world is opposed to the **supernatural** being Tom-Tit-Tom which intervenes and bends reality by spinning the impossible.

The tale “The Golden Snuff-Box” opens up with the **home - alien** opposition:

He read, and he read, and then, because his parents lived in a lonely house in a lonely forest and he never saw any other folk but his father and his mother, he became quite crazy to go out into the world and see charming princesses and the like [39].

Jack’s initial isolation contrasts with his desire to see the world, it reflects the classic motif of leaving home to seek fortune and self-discovery. His decision to prioritize material needs over spiritual well-being foreshadows future misfortune, here the oppositional pairs of size (**big – small**) and **blessing – curse** are combined:

Then his mother asked him if he would rather take a small cake with her blessing to eat on his journey, or a large cake with her curse. Now Jack was very hungry lad, so he just up and said: “A big cake, if you please, ‘m’ [39].

In the real world, the protagonist faces challenges due to the cruel king whose daughter Jack can marry only if he accomplishes some impossible tasks, such as building a castle overnight, digging a huge lake and building large man-of-war vessels and firing a royal salute with “*the last shot which must break the leg of the four-post bed on which [...] daughter sleeps, for she is always late in the morning*” [39], or else he will be the forfeit. The golden snuff-box and its three magical helpers manage to solve the impossible tasks blurring the line between **magic** and **reality**. The three men function as magical **servants** to Jack as their **master**. However, their eventual rebellion suggests limits to this dominance. In addition to this, Jack’s success earns him status, love, but his earlier choice ensures that punishment will eventually follow. It represents the **reward – punishment** binary pair and exemplifies the inevitability of fate.

The morality of the tale “Lazy Jack” is also structured around a number of binary pairs. The general opposition between **mother** and his **son**, or **parent – child**, is manifested in several ways. The woman is **hard-working**, as she “*got her living by spinning*” [39], while her son “*was so lazy that he would not do nothing but bask in*

the sun” [39]. Then, **authority** and **obedience** are opposed, since Jack’s mother sets expectations and scolds Jack for his foolishness:

His mother [...] at last told him, [...], that if he did not begin to work for his porridge she would turn him out to get his living as he could [39].

The **wisdom** – **naivety** opposition, which falls into a larger category of **knowledge** – **ignorance**, is stressed multiple times throughout the tale, when the woman gives practical advice, while her son doesn’t apply it sensibly. Ironically, his foolish actions lead him to fortune, he marries a rich girl and moves into a grand house. So, extreme **poverty** at the beginning of the tale is contrasted with **wealth** in the end.

According to J.Jacobs, “Jack and the Beanstalk” is regarded as an Australian folk tale, but has many variations [40]. The protagonist Jack and his mother are **poor**, struggling to survive after his father’s illness. They live on the ground level of society, both literally and metaphorically, depending on the land’s resources (milk, butter, herbs, fodder) and benefiting from them only in **summer** which brings life and food. But when **winter** arrives, their poverty is more pronounced, and reinforces despair. The **top** – **bottom** (**earth** – **sky**) contrast becomes significant in Jack’s journey. The magical beans grow into a towering beanstalk and link the earthly **poor** world with the sky, a symbol of **wealth**, where the ogre and his wife live:

[...] he walked, walked, [...], till he came to a tall, shining white house with a wide white doorstep. [...] So the ogre ate his three sheep, and when he had done he went to a big oaken chest and took out three big bags of golden pieces [39].

Importantly, the ogre, a man-eating **giant**, whose breakfast was “*a fat boy grilled on toast*” [39] or “*the kittle boy for supper*” [39], embodies **evil**. Ordinary **humans** Jack and his mother represent **goodness**, their descriptions include positive adjectives: *good, wise, kind, hard-working*. At the same time, there is an unmarked character – ogre’s wife – who neutralizes the opposition, as she helps Jack despite being married to the ‘evil’ character. The **wisdom** – **foolishness** binary pair should also be stressed: Jack’s initial decision to trade the milky cow just for beans is questionable. The **giant** with great physical power, deceived by Jack, is opposed to the **small** man, so this also emphasizes how intelligence overcomes brute strength.

The core binary opposition of the tale “Mr. and Mrs. Vinegar” is **male – female**. They are a “worthy couple” and live in the state of **order**. The woman is portrayed as a “*sharp, bustling, tidy*” [39] housewife, but one day she causes **chaos** “*losing her temper with a cobweb*” [39], and is in despair because of destroying their house – a glass pickle-jar. The man, on the other hand, is depicted positively:

Mr. Vinegar was of different mettle: though a small man, he was a cheerful one, always looking at the best side of things, so he said, ‘Accidents will happen, lovey!’[39]

Later in the tale, their roles are reversed: Mrs Vinegar acts practically, while Mr. Vinegar makes a series of bad trades that leave them for nothing. Moreover, he is easily manipulated, while the individuals who trade with him exhibit wit, so the opposition **cleverness – gullibility** is expressed. They also find money under a tree at **night**, but lose them at **daytime**, what aligns darkness with unexpectedness, and day – with rationality, which the man lacks.

The most obvious opposition in the tale “The True History of Sir Thomas Thumb” is **big – small**, as the boy is no bigger than a thumb in a world of normal-sized people. This outlines the tale’s humor and conflict. Tom constantly disrupts the world around him, whether by falling into batter, being swallowed by animals, or stealing cherry stones. His misadventures contrasts with the structured world of adults, what sets an **order – chaos** tone of the tale:

Now as he grew older – though, mind you, he never grew bigger – he was full of antics and tricks that he was for ever getting into trouble [39].

Importantly, each time, Tom is entirely incapable of escaping on his own, his mother, a frightened tinker, the giant’s discomfort, and pure **luck** are the only things that ensure his survival. However, the course of happy resolutions is over when the man tries to fight a spider and fails, creating pure **misfortune**:

Thus Tom was once more in favor; but he did not live long to enjoy his good luck, for a spider one day attacked him, and though he fought well, the creature’s poisonous breath proved too much for him; he fell dead on the ground [39].

Overall, Tom was **defenseless**, compared to **strong** ordinary people.

According to J.Jacobs, the folk tale “Dick Whittington and his Cat” is loosely based on a real historical figure: Richard Whittington (1354-1423) was a wealthy merchant and philanthropist who served as Lord Mayor London three times [40].

Although there is no historical evidence that R.Whittington was ever poor, the primary opposition of the tale is **rich - poor** depicting Dick as a poor orphan living in a **village** with no possessions. The initial poverty, however, contrasts with his later success, as he eventually becomes the Lord Mayor of London. Another representative of wealth and prosperity is “*a rich merchant*” Mr.Fitzmann. He lives in a **city** which, contrary to Dick’s dreams, was dirty, what adds to **reality – illusion** binary pair:

[...] Dick found himself in the wonderful city which he [...] pictured to himself so grandly. But oh! How disappointed he was. How dirty it was! He wandered up and down the streets, [...], but one did he find that was paved with gold [39].

Generosity is represented by villagers, Dick, Mr.Firzmann and his daughter Alice, while the city residents embody **meanness**, as they refused to help Dick calling him ‘lazy’. There is also a cook-maid who mistreats Dick showing no compassion. The **kindness** of the man contrasts with her **cruelty**, as he cares for the cat:

Dick went upstairs and fetched poor puss, but there were tears in his eyes when he gave her to captain. [...] The ill-tempered cook began to use him more cruelty than ever, and was always making game of him for sending his cat to sea [39].

All in all, Dick’s goodwill is rewarded due to the combination of luck, when the cat’s rats-catching ability brings him fortune, and perseverance, marked by returning to the house and enduring hardships, so the **luck – hard work** binary may be outlined.

The folk tale “The Old Woman and her Pig” is structured around a chain reaction of events, so **action – inaction** binary opposition is of a crucial role. Each character or objects the woman encounters refuses to act until another condition is met. The cow, however, is the only one who breaks the cycle and its decision to cooperate serves as a catalyst for resolution. The **chaos – order** binary pair may also be implied: at first, the world is in disorder, but through the sequence of events everything falls into place.

The tale “How Jack Went out to Seek his Fortune” is based on the motif ‘fortune-seeker’. A protagonist Jack and his animal companions embark on a journey to gain

wealth. They use strategy, rather than rely on brute force like robbers, creating a **cunning** – **strong** opposition. This also helps him to be **brave**, while the burglars “*jumped up in a fright and ran away*” [39]. The **dark** – **light** binary pair is also salient and is realized within two frameworks. The robbers operate under the cover of night:

[...] It was dark, [...] what they see through the window but a band of robbers seated at a table counting over great bags of gold. [...] in the dead of the night, the robbers sent one man back to the house to look after their money [39].

Moreover, the robbers misinterpret the animals’ presence in the dark, while Jack wisely plans the situation, which leads to **ignorance** – **knowledge** opposition. Lastly, the morning brings resolution, so good triumphs over evil.

The structure of the tale “The Wise Men of Gotham” differs from other stories in Steel’s collection, because it follows a repetitive episodic format with each presenting a self-contained anecdote. Though the Gothamites believe themselves clever, their actions lack logical reasoning, thus, the unifying characteristic of stories is **foolishness** – **wisdom**. In “Buying of Sheep” they argue over an imaginary flock. In “Sending Cheeses”, they think food can travel. The **action** – **inaction** pair can also be identified. In “Counting” the Gothamites fail to act sensibly and rely on an outsider to solve a simple issue. In “Drowning Eels” they, vice versa, do unnecessary things:

They went to another pond, and cast the eel into the pond. ‘Lie there and shift for yourself, for no help thou shalt have from us’; and they left the eel to drown [39].

Finally, the **human** – **nature** opposition is observed in two tales. The “Of Hedging a Cuckoo” shows the absence of **common sense**, as men want to contain a bird’s song by putting it into a hedge, while in the story “Of Sending Rent” the **absurdity** comes from entrusting a hare with a task.

The tale “The Red Ettin” parallels the motif of the aforementioned tale “The Golden Snuff-Box” in which a hero setting off to seek his fortune chooses between a **blessed small** cake or a **cursed large** one. Consequently, the **elder** brother disregards warnings and suffers a grim fate symbolizing **ignorance**, while the **younger** demonstrated **wisdom** heeding advice and succeeding. The two also entitle the **cowardice** – **bravery** contrast correspondingly:

So the young men [...] saw a multitude of very dreadful, terrible. Horrible beasts [...] And he was so sore frightened, and ran away from them as fast as he could [...] So the youngest brother went on his way; but when he came to the place where the [...] beasts were standing, he did not stop nor run away, but went boldly against them [39].

The **good – evil** binarity is central, as the brother's virtue opposed to the Red Ettin's tyranny. The victory of the man is connected to the opposition of **magic – reality**, as fairy's gift and the enchanted wand helped him.

Finally, the spatial opposition concludes the tale. The imprisoned ladies are kept **upstairs** as a sign of their separation from the outside world; meanwhile, the hero descends into a **low** room to revive his brother which allows to outline another binary pair – **death – life**.

The principal binary opposition **rich – poor** is deeply connected with **fate – free will** in the tale “The Fish and the Ring”. The Baron believes that his wealth grants him control over fate, so he tries to reshape his son's and his future wife's destinies:

[...] this much-loved, much-prized heir to all the great lands and castles was to marry a low-born maiden. So the Baron was dismayed, and set to work by more arts and charms to discover if this maiden were already born, and if so, where she lived [39].

However, fate repeatedly intervenes, and the girl not only survives but ultimately ascends to her rightful place as the Baron's son's wife. It metaphorically represents her transition from **low** to **high**. The **land – water** pair is notable, since the Baron uses the river and the sea to get rid of the girl, but water becomes an agent of salvation.

In “Master of all Masters”, the **master** has the power to rename the world, while the girl, or the **servant**, is expected to comply:

When she got there, he told her that he had something to teach her, for that in his house he had his own names for things [39].

In this way, the man tries to impose an artificial **order**. In the end, the girl subverts this hierarchy. When an actual emergency happens, this system causes confusion and **chaos** rather than clarity, so **logic** turns into **nonsense**.

The underlying binary opposition in the tale “The Ass, the Table, and the Stick” is **rich – poor**, but it starts with a **home space – alien space** one, as the protagonist Jack leaves home to “*seek fortune in the wide world*” [39]. But every time he gains wealth, he loses it due to **deception**. The only character that preserves **sincerity** to him is his beloved woman. When Jack tests the women by asking them to display their riches, she has only two copper pennies, yet still participates:

‘Stand aside, lass,’ said Jack to her, speaking roughly. ‘Thou hast no silver nor gold – stand off from the rest.’ She obeyed, and the tears ran down her cheeks, and filled her apron with diamonds [39].

So, the girl’s true unconditional **love** contrasts with Jack’s father **rejection**, since he refuses to let him stay at home and marry unless he proves his financial worth.

The folk tale “The Well of the World’s End” posits a traditional rivalry between a hard-working girl and her cruel stepmother. Her obedience leads to the **reward** – a prince and royal life, but before that the stepdaughter experiences **suffering** at the hands of her stepmother and has to do an impossible task:

She used her to make her do all the servant’s work, and never let her have any peace. At last, the stepmother thought to get rid of her altogether, so she handed her a sieve and said to her: ‘Go, fill it at the Well of the World’s End and bring it home to me full, or woe betide you’ [39].

There is a helper which provides solution to the challenge, and the girl and the frog stand in contrast: one is **human** force into servitude, the other is a **magical creature** that holds the key to her fate. Finally, the traditional **day – night** can be distinguished. Night represents trial, but as dawn approaches, the frog asks the girl to chop off its head, leading to breaking the spell and the prince’s transformation.

Finally, the underlying theme and idea of the aforementioned fairy tales is reflected in the frequency and diversity of social, moral and cognitive binary oppositions which reflect the characters’ social status, cleverness and the rewards or consequences of their actions. The social oppositions, such as rich – poor, master – servant, poverty - wealth are especially stressed and are followed by related moral oppositional pairs, like justice – injustice, power – weakness, cunning – foolish,

deception – truth, blessing – curse. Some cognitive oppositions like knowledge – ignorance, common sense – absurdity underscore the value of practical wit and life experience over rigid social rules. At the same time, spatial and temporal dichotomies, like top – bottom, village – city, day – night stand for symbolic hierarchies and transitions, while fate – free will and order – chaos posit existential reflection on one’s role in society.

2.3 Tales focused on morality and transformation

The “The Story of the Three Bears” heavily relies on the size-based triadic oppositions with the pair **big – small** neutralized by **middle**:

Once upon a time there were three Bears, who lived in a house of their own, in a wood. One of them was a Little Wee Bear, and one was a Middle-sized Bear, and the other was a Great Big Bear [39].

The contrast extends to objects: bowls, chairs, beds. The recurring adjectives emphasize it: *largest, loudest and strongest; medium, in-between; smallest, weakest, most vulnerable*. This repetition provides a sense of order in their world, the bears are presented as well-mannered. Goldilocks, on the other hand, is a disruptive force:

So she seated herself in it, and there she sate till the bottom of the chair came out, and down she came, plump upon the ground; and that made her very cross, for she was a bad-tempered little girl [39].

Within the **order – chaos** opposition, she violates the belongings of each bear and entitles the **suitable – unsuitable** idea, as it is the smallest bear who suffers the most – his porridge is eaten, his chair is broken, and his bed is occupied, - since the girl constantly prefers things of small size being little herself. She is also an **outsider/foreigner** who intrudes the **stable and familiar** space of the Bears, this opposition reflects a deeper **domestic – wilderness** contrast, where the home is safe, while the woods and Goldilocks’ actions represent danger and unpredictability. The pairs fit within the larger **I – Other** oppositional framework. The moral opposition is explicitly underlined in the final paragraph of the tale and is actualized with the help of the evaluative adjectives:

Now the window was open, because the Bears, like good, tidy Bears, at they were, always opened their bedchamber, [...]. So naughty, frightened little Goldilocks jumped; and whether she broke her neck in the fall, ..., or found her way out of the wood and got whipped for being a bad girl and playing truant, no one can say [39].

The Bears, despite being animals, are civilized, while Goldilocks, a human child, is wild and undisciplined. This reversal challenges the typical **human – animal** binaries found in folk tales, where humans are usually the rational ones.

The binary opposition of **light – dark** is central to the tale “The Three Feathers” which tells the story of a woman whose mysterious husband turns into a bird who leaves her, demanding she serve faithfully for seven years and a day. It can be analyzed literally and metaphorically. The husband visits his wife only at night and leaves before the dawn to ensure that he is never seen in the light, so his presence is confined to darkness which stands for mystery. The girl use of a candle to reveal her husband’s face symbolizes curiosity, truth, enlightenment, but also leads to unintended consequence – his transformation and departure. As a result of it, the **faithfulness – betrayal** question is raised:

Because you have done this faithless thing, you will see me no more, unless for seven years and a day you serve me faithfully. [...] I will place you in service, and there you must remain and do good work, [...], you must listen to no man who may seek to beguile you to leave that service. If you do I will never return [39].

The wife’s initial obedience comes into contrasts with her eventual betrayal when she lights a candle. However, when her husband demands for loyalty to test her commitment, she remains steadfast.

Another interpretation of the light – dark lies within the **envious - kind** opposition which may be found in the behavior of girl’s friends and other servants, they are described negatively: “*some of her friends, doubtless full of envy for her good luck*”, “*other servants grew jealous of her*” []. The protagonist navigates through trials, and ultimately reunites with her husband, with a final revelation in daylight.

The underlying motif of another story – “Jack the Giant-Killer” – is **good – evil**. The brave and clever protagonist Jack battles with Cormoran, Blunderbore and the

Welsh giant which embody evil with their brutality. The size opposition of **big - small** in this **human – monster** relations is particularly stressed:

The Mount of St. Michael in Cornwall was the fastness of a huge giant whose name was Cormoran. He was full eighteen feet in height, some three yards about his middle, of a grim fierce face, and he was the terror of all the country-side. [...] The poor folk were in despair, for none could put an end to the giant Cormoran [39].

While being much smaller physically than the giants, Jack defeats them through his wit. The **wisdom – foolishness** binarity is also emphasized by the fact that the man uses strategic thinking. From the perspective of the **weak – strong** opposition, intelligence compensates for physical weakness.

The **own – alien** space should also be stressed, as the giants live in isolated, dangerous locations – a mountain, an enchanted castle, a dreary house – while Jack comes from the village. So the protagonist makes a journey from the familiar and **orderly** world into the other, **chaotic** realm. The spiritual **top – bottom** hierarchy is also crucial to the tale. Lucifer is situated in the lower realm (Hell), while the Prince and Jack ascend towards goodness and heroism. The seven devils are exorcised from the lady, which marks the movement from demonic possession (a fall into **darkness**) to spiritual purity (riding into the **light**). This correlates with the traditional Christian symbolism, where **Hell** is below and **Heaven** is above. Apart from this, Jack has a special attire – “*a coat of darkness and shows of swiftness*” [39] - which positions him as a liminal figure who navigates between the **seen** and **unseen**. He has the ability to function in both realms entering the supernatural world at **night** and bringing his gains into the **daylight**, where they are exposed and validated.

The beautiful lady initially occupies a position of power over the Prince, as she is the one setting the deadly challenges:

Now she was very beautiful, for all she was possessed of seven evils, and [...] when the repast was over she took out her own handkerchief and wiped his lips gently, and said with a smile: “I have a task for you, my lord! You must show me that kerchief tomorrow morning or lose you head [39].

This temporary role reversal places her in a dominant position, subverting the traditional expectations where the woman needs salvation. However, her power is framed as unnatural because it stems from demonic possession. Her apparent authority is deceptive – it is a deeper struggle between **good** and **bad**. Once Jack exorcises the seven devils, she is restored to her true state. Generally, the tale exemplifies the classic motif of hero's arc: an ordinary man becomes a **hero** and kills the **villains**.

Another folk tale “The Three Sillies” is organized around a series of contrasts that mainly highlight **absurdity** and **logic** opposing a wise young squire to silly people. Each character he encounters is more foolish than the last. The metaphorical essence of this binarity is stressed within the **light** – **darkness** opposition:

Now every morning he would stroll over from the Hall to see her and stop to supper in the farm-house and every evening the daughter would go down into the cellar to draw the cider for supper [39].

The cellar is a dark, enclosed space, and stands for the unknown and, in this particular tale, narrow-mindedness. It contrasts to the well-lit, open world above and, consequently, knowledge. This spatial opposition can also symbolize the conscious, the known (above, or **top**) and the unconscious, repressed (below, or **bottom**).

The **knowledge** – **ignorance** framework can be expanded further by **reality** opposed to **imagination**. The daughter's and her parents' fear about a hypothetical future tragedy (the mallet falling on a non-existent child) contrasts with the practical, real-life actions needed to solve the issue and conducted by the wise man who “*reached up to the old mallet and pulled it out, and put it on the floor*” [39]. The villagers' belief that the moon has fallen into the pond also contributes to an inability to distinguish reality from illusion. In both cases, the squire's reaction is the same:

Then the young squire burst out a-laughing, and laughed till he was tired. [...] Then the young squire burst out laughing, told them they were fools for their pains, and bade them look up over their heads where the moon was riding broad and full [].

It marks his growing realization that foolishness is not confined to one household but is widespread, so the man abandons his original plan to find more silly people than the family and embraces the absurdity.

The tale “Golden Ball” begins in an **ordinary** world where two sisters receive golden balls from a handsome young man, with the warning that if they lose them, they will be hanged. **Chaos** enters when the youngest sister loses it triggering the chain of events that lead to her near execution. The ball is lost when it rolls **inside** the mysterious house and separates the girl from safety. The house marks a space where supernatural forces reside, at the same time, it contrasts with the **outside** world where social rules apply. Moreover, inside the house, the young **man** encounters **supernatural** forces - bogles and giants - three **nights** in a row, while during the **daytime** they are not visible. The **big – small** contrast is also emphasized: “*Then in came a big giant five times as tall as the lad*” [39]. Despite this, the man manages to kill the monster and they are literally cut into two halves:

With one blow of his sword he cut him in twain, so that the top part of him fell in the years, and the bottom part remained standing looking out of the window, [...], its legs walked on to the fire and went straight up the chimney [39].

This **top -bottom** opposition of the divided bodies shows disunity and loss of power – the creatures are rendered harmless once split. It also plays on the idea of bodily control versus lifelessness, as the severed parts move unnaturally before their final defeat, so **life** is constantly opposed to **death**. The end of the tale is marked by the **familial ties** opposed to **love**, as the girl’s family, one by one, refuses to help her: “*I have neither brought thy golden ball/Nor come to set thee free*” [39]. They passively accept her fate, while her sweetheart is the only one who takes action.

The motif of transformation is found in the tale “The Laidly Worm”, as the King’s daughter is turned into a dragon as a form of curse. This creates a **beauty - ugliness** opposition:

So it came to pass that Princess May Margaret went to her bed a beauteous maiden, full of grace, and rose next morning a Laidly Worm, [...] which uncoiled itself, [...] crawled and crept to the sea, [...] there it curled itself round the stone, and lay basking in the sun [39].

The confrontation between **good** and **evil** is transmitted in the form of the contrast between the virtuous May Margaret and her brother Childe Wynde and their

wicked stepmother, who is both a witch and a usurper. Their mother, “*a fair woman, was dead, and the King mourned her long and faithfully*” [39], what contributes to a **mother – stepmother** pair. Additionally, it creates an **insider – outsider** opposition, since May Margaret is the rightful daughter of the King. She represents legitimacy and continuity, while stepmother is a foreigner who enters the royal family through marriage and brings deception and chaos. Her use of dark **magic** underlines her status as an external force and is contrasted with the **natural world**, i.e. protective rowan wood, which the Childe Wynde’s ship is made of. Lastly, the Queen’s jealousy and **hatred** drive the conflict, while sibling **love** restores harmony.

The story “Titty Mouse and Tatty Mouse” begins with the **life – death** scene: two mice live harmoniously, but Titty Mouse’s sudden death sets off a chain reaction of destruction, culminating in Tatty Mouse’s burial. The narrative suggests that this event disturbs **order** with grief spreading uncontrollably and creates **chaos**:

‘Oh!’ said the little bird, ‘Titty’s dead, and Tatty weeps, the stool hops, and the broom sweeps, the door jars, and the window creaks, the old for, gallops around the house, the walnut tree sheds all its leaves, the little bird moults all its feathers, and so I spill the milk.’ [39]

The **individual** tragedy quickly escalates into the **collective** catastrophe. The final stage shows another death of the old man who falls off the ladder and breaks his neck, after which the whole house falls down burying the Tatty Mouse beneath the ruins. This pattern reflects the traditional motif of inevitable fate.

The Scottish retelling “The Black Bull of Norroway” starts with the **rich - poor** opposition based on social hierarchy. The eldest sisters seek noble husbands (Earl, Lord), while the youngest wants to marry the Black Bull defying expectations. The latter exemplifies **animal – human** contrast, since the Bull is both a beast and a prince.

The tale is built on spatial opposition. The **journey – destination** motif is cyclical and occurs three times. Each time an **open** space is followed by the **closed** one:

Thus they journeyed on, [...], through many dreadful forests and many lonely wastes, and the Black Bull never paused for bite or sup. Now at last they reached a noble castle.

[...] They journeyed on through many tangled woods and over many high mountains. [...] So at last they came to a magnificent mansion [...]

[...] and they rode away, [...], through thick briar brakes and up fearsome cliffs. [...] Just as the sun was setting, they came to a beautiful palace [39].

The protagonists travel through the open spaces at **darkness**, so they are evaluated negatively and stand for transition and isolation. Each castle is conversely a rest point and a defined space, described as **light** and welcoming. The final castle serves two opposing functions. On the one hand, it is a place of revelation which intensifies **beauty – ugliness** opposition:

[...] to every one's surprise, there appeared, not a frightful monstrous bull, but one of the most beautiful Princes ever beheld [39].

On the other hand, it becomes a symbol of curse, deception and **captivity**, opposed to **freedom** in other mansions. The prince is bound by an enchantress who intends to marry him (**wrongful bride**) and resumes his form of a bull. Here, **action – inaction** binary opposition plays a crucial role, as to rescue the prince the **true bride** has to sit still, while he fights the Old One. The color symbolism in the battle – blue for victory, red for defeat – stresses the fight between **good** and **evil**. However, the girl forgets the prince's instructions, which results in their separation. She searches actively until they are reunited:

He told her he had been in the power of the witch-woman and had forgotten everything, but that now he remembered all and that the spell was broken [39].

Thus, the motif of **forgetting – remembering** concludes the tale.

The key opposition in the tale “The Three Little Pigs” is **strength – weakness**. It is represented in the instances of the materials used to build the houses and the first two pigs who cannot defeat the wolf. Being a good **hunter** and a strong predator, the wolf easily finds its **prey**. However, this traditional opposition is later reversed”

[...] just as the wolf was coming down the chimney, the little piggy off with the lid, and in fell the wolf into the scalding water. So the little piggy put on the cover again, boiled the wolf up, and ate him fir supper [39].

The antagonist is outsmarted by the pig which reinforces the **cleverness – force** opposition. So, weakness paired with intelligence triumphs.

Another tale “Nix Nought Nothing” constantly revolves around the topic **human – supernatural**, as the King and Queen as ordinary humans are contrasted with the giant and its magical abilities. The seemingly **generous** and helpful giant turns out to be **mean** and demanding, and outwits the King who doesn’t how his son is called:

The giant smiled and was very polite: ‘Pay? [...] What do you take me for? Give me Nix Nought Nothing and I’ll do the job with a glad heart [39].

It is also closely connected with the **obligation – deception** opposition, as the Queen and the King refuse to give their son and trick the giant substituting children of the hen-wife and the gardener. This leads to **danger – safety** binary pair, where palace (**ground**) is seen as safety, while the river and whirlpools (**water**) entitle peril - a house of the giant who kills people.

The deception in the tale also lies in the fact that the Giant is in fact the Magician whose daughter falls in love with Nix Nought Nothing. To prevent their marriage, he gives them some impossible tasks. Instead of **helping**, the hen-wife takes on **revenge** and reinforces other opposition, like **false magic – true magic**:

The hen-wife thought it would be a rare revenge to marry the King and Queen’s long-lost son to a gardener’s ugly daughter; [...] so she gave her a charm by which she could unspell the Prince or spell him again at her pleasure [39].

The Magician’s daughter true love and sacrifice breaks the enchantment and makes her the **true bride**, unlike the **false bride** - gardener’s daughter - who is exposed and remains unhappy. Finally, Prince’s long **sleep** as a form of the dark magic opposes the motif of **awakening**:

For the moment Nix Nought Nothing opened his eyes. [...] He remembered the castle, he remembered his father and mother, he remembers the Magician’s daughter and all that she had done for him [39].

Thus, the truth is restored and magic and manipulation are overcome.

The story of “Henny-Penny” is driven by the hen’s mistaken belief that “*the sky is falling*” [39] after an acorn falls on her head. Her **perception** is flawed, what in

reality leads to unnecessary panic and misguided actions. The hen's companions are **foolish** and fall **prey**, as they follow an unfounded belief. Fox, in contrast, represents **cunning** wisdom and a **hunter**, takes advantage of their ignorance and devours them:

This is the short cut to the King's palace: you'll soon get there if you follow me. I will go first and you come after. [...] So Foxy-woxy went into his burrow [39].

The spatial opposition underscores the theme of **trust** – **betrayal**: the open countryside, where animals start their journey, is **safety**, while a predator's burrow, a dark and narrow hole, symbolizes **danger**.

“The Wee Bannock” is a Scottish folktale about a small oatcake that comes to life and escapes from an old couple's home. Throughout the story, the **tiny** and seemingly powerless bannock, outwits **larger** beings, leading to the **cleverness-foolishness** opposition. The idea of **trust** – **distrust** is constantly stressed:

At this the wee bannock turned and ran; it wasn't going to trust itself with the miller and his cheese. [...] but at this the wee bannock began dodging about, and it dodges so craftily thst the goodwife overset the churn in trying to grip it [39].

In addition to this, **desire** contrasts with **fulfillment**, for every character wants the protagonist for food. Eventually it seeks shelter in a fox's den, trusting the cunning animal, only to be tricked and eaten. So, bannock's attempt at **freedom** leads to **captivity** and death, marking the end of his journey

The tale “The Bogey Beast” revolves around a poor woman who consciously reinterprets her discoveries as fortune. So, the binary pair **illusion** – **reality** is of a main focus. The protagonist perceives the pot as gold, silver, iron and finally a stone, which ultimately turns out to be a living creature. Her perception is fluid and unreliable. It makes the opposition **wealth** – **poverty** subverted, as her material situation remains unchanged, but the idea of wealth makes her rich:

'Well! I never!' she cried, full of smiles. 'And to think I mistook it for iron. [...] but here's luck indeed, and me wanting a stone terrible bad to stick open the gate. Eh my! But it's a change for the better! It's a fine thing to have good luck [39].

During the **daytime**, the woman lives her normal life running her errands, but all the mysterious transformations happened in the **evening**:

'It will soon be dark. [...] So much the better! The neighbours will not see what I'm bringing home, and I shall have all the night to myself.' [39]

So, darkness stands for mystery and is the best time for a woman to conceal her discovery. Finally, the protagonist herself represents the everyday, while the Bogey-Beast embodies the unpredictable. Although **human** faces **supernatural**, they coexist harmoniously. Instead of reacting with **fear**, she embraces the event with **joy**.

The underlying binary opposition of the tale "Little Red Riding-Hood" is **good** represented by a girl, her mum and grandmother, and **evil** - the wolf. This framework covers the theme of **truth** and **deception**, for at first the girl is too naïve:

[...] little Red Riding-Hood was not so very much alarmed when she saw a great big wolf coming towards her, because she knew that wolves were cowardly things [39].

But when the wolf deceives the grandmother and disguises himself as her, the girl's questions about the wolf's appearance reflect her gradual realization of the truth. While **day** represents safety, the concept of **darkness** is also connected to deceit:

[...] and there, she thought, was her grandmother in the bed; for the cottage was so dark one could not see well. Besides, the crafty wolf turned his face to the wall [39].

Thus, the **human** – **animal** relations in the tale symbolize the opposition between morality and innocence and predatory instincts and danger.

"Childe Rowland" is a Scottish fairy tale about a young prince who embarks on a quest to rescue his sister. The striking moment happens when Burd Helen unknowingly transgresses a spatial boundary by moving *widershins*, or anticlockwise:

Now the ball had trundled to the right of the church; so, as Burd Helen ran the nearest way to get it, she ran contrary to the sun's course, and the light, [...], sent her shadow behind her. Thus that happened which will happen at times when folk forget and run widershins, that is against the light, so that their shadows are out of sight and cannot be taken care of properly [39].

This marked a transgression of cosmic **order**, marking Helen as susceptible to otherworldly forces. **Light** as safety opposes **darkness** as danger; being **visible** was essential for the girl's protection, and her **unseen** shadow made her vulnerable. Moreover, moving to the **right, to the sun**, and thus **moving deasil**, signifies

correctness, while running **to the left, against the sun** is linked with misfortune. Consequently, the girl moved from the **real world** of Middle Earth into the **supernatural world** of Elfland where normal rules don't apply. The only person who understands the laws governing both worlds is a wizard Merlin - a mediator in the story. He symbolizes **wisdom** which is opposed to Helen's **unawareness** of laws.

The Dark Tower, as a place of imprisonment, highlights the opposition **Christian – non-Christian**, as the King of Efland finds "*the blood of a Christian man*" [39] threatening. Symbolically it also stands for a coffin, which apart from being dark, is illuminated with the carbuncle's red light inside. The **life – death** opposition can be traced, Burd Helen is alive but seems lifeless:

But her face was all set and wan, as if it were made of stone. When she saw Childe Rowland she never moved, and her voice came like the voice of the dead [39].

The brothers were dead too, but their **paleness** is later contrasted with **vitality**, when Rowland anoints them with a blood-red liquor. This also makes them **remember** everything what is opposed to their **forgetting** of Merlin's warns.

To conclude, moral dilemmas and transformative journeys are typical of traditional fairy tales. Most prominently, the binary oppositions belong to the moral/ethical group: good – evil, truth – deception, faithfulness – betrayal, wisdom – foolishness, justice – injustice, which serve to illustrate the core values rewarded or punished within the narrative. Spatial and ontological binaries, such as order – chaos, human – supernatural, ordinary realm – supernatural realm, open – closed stress the contrasts between known – unknown, real – magical; they suggest that change, personal development require crossing some boundaries. Some unique pairs (trust – distrust, sleep – awakening) also help to stress psychological shifts the characters undergo. All the aforementioned peculiarities contribute to the process of transformation.

2.4 Tales centered around gender roles and identity

Classified as a type 510B (the persecuted heroine) in the Aarne-Thompson-Uther index (1910), "Tattercoats" is a tale about a neglected girl who, despite being scorned,

captures the heart of a prince with the help of a mysterious gooseherd and his magical music. The opposition between **wealth** and **emotional emptiness** is pronounced, as the rich old lord lives in a grand palace but is emotionally desolate. His deep **love** for his deceased daughter turns into **hate** towards his granddaughter:

He hated her bitterly, because at her birth his favourite daughter died; and when the old nurse brought him the baby he swore that it might live or die as it liked, but he would never look on its face as long as it is lived [39].

There is an opposition between **life and death**, as the granddaughter's birth symbolizes new life, but it is overshadowed by the death of her mother, creating a paradox where **joy** and **sorrow** coexist. Social injustice is highlighted with lord's **wealth** opposed to the poor-looking and mistreated child:

His granddaughter grew up with no one to take care of her, or clothe her; only the old nurse [...]; while the other servants of the palace would drive her home from the house with blows and mocking words, calling her "Tattercoats", and pointing to her bare feet and shoulders, till she ran away, crying, to hide among the bushes [39].

However, everything changes when she meets the Prince. The gooseherd's music acts as a magical force. The **magic** element contrasts with the harsh **reality** of her earlier life and allows the Prince see her inner beauty:

It was a curious tune, it made the strange young man stare and stare at Tattercoats till he couldn't see the rags – [...] see anything, but her beautiful face [39].

Thus, the opposition of **beauty – ugliness** is implied. In the end, the girl is loved by the man and admired by the court, but still rejected by her grandfather, what can be linked to the binarity of **rejection – acceptance**. Another important detail in the story is the fact that the King remains stagnant, imprisoned by his hair:

So there he still sits by the window, [...], weeping more bitterly than ever. And his white hair has bound him to the stones... [39].

Thus, his grief immobilizes him, this **passivity** renders him powerless in shaping her life. While Tattercoats takes control of her fate by leaving the palace and attending the ball, an **act** that leads to her transformation and happy ending.

The next folk tale “The Two Sisters” is completely built on antithesis **younger sister** – **elder sister** and their behaviors which directly influence their fate. The “**good**” is represented by the younger sister who’s described by the adjectives of the positive evaluative meaning: *good, kind, obliging little girl*, while the elder sister entitles the “**evil**”: she is *bad-tempered, ill-tempered, very jealous of this good luck*. There is one more antagonist in the plot – an old witch-woman. Her **cruelty** is opposed to the younger sister’s **kindness**:

The witch used to have boiled babies for supper, and bury bones under some stones in the garden [39].

As to the witch’s rule not to look up the chimney, the younger sister acts and helps with **obedience** but forgets it unintentionally, while the elder sister intends to **disobey** from the start to get “*a big bag of gold*” [39]. However, curiosity leads both girls to find gold, but only the kind one benefits from it. She secretly takes some and flees, and on her way back, the oven, the cow, and the tree protect her from the pursuing witch, because she was **helpful** to all of them once. Whereas the older sister acts in a **selfish** way and, thus, receives no help and likely meets a terrible fate. This also correlates with the opposing ideas of **reward** and **punishment**.

Another tale “Catskin” was collected by J.Jacobs and is internationally classified as 510B type in the Aarne-Thompson-Uther index. It tells a story of a girl who flees her home to escape an unwanted marriage, disguising herself as a servant in another household. Her father plays a central role in the **male** – **female** opposition, as he sets the chain of events and is portrayed as rejecting his daughter simply because she is not a son: this **valued** – **devalued** contrast stresses the fact that male offspring are preferred over the female one. The **recognition** – **ignorance** pair is found when the man ignores her existence until she becomes valuable in a societal sense:

‘Let me never see her face’. So she grew up to a beautiful maiden, but her father never set eyes on her till she was fifteen years old and was ready to be married [39].

Within the male framework, one more binary opposition can be recognized – “*a nasty, horrid old man*” and “*young lord of the castle*” [39]. They symbolize forced marriage and romantic love correspondingly. Within the female category, a cook

represents an internalized form of female **oppression** being “*very cruel*” and is contrasted with the kindness and **innocence** of the girl:

‘[...] You dirty, impudent slut!’ said the cook, ‘you go among all the fine lords and ladies with your filthy catskin?’ and with that she took a basin of water and dashed it into Catskin’s face. But Catskin only shook her ears and said nothing [39].

Thus, the **castle** symbolizes hierarchy and restriction, and also the place, where the girl’s identity is **hidden** due to her cat-skin coat. Originally, she comes from a wealthy background but is forced to work as a scullion. While **forest** becomes a refuge where her identity is **revealed** to the young lord.

“The Three Heads of the Well” is another folk tale collected by F.A.Steel in which a King of Colchester marries another woman after his wife dies. The binary opposition **beauty** – **ugliness** is central to the folk tale:

Now the very first thing she did was to poison the King’s mind against his own beautiful, kind, gracious daughter, of whom the ugly Queen and her ugly daughter were dreadfully jealous [39].

The protagonist’s physical beauty aligns with her inner **goodness**, while stepmother’s unattractive appearance mirrors her **cruel** nature. The **modesty** of the King’s daughter is stressed when she receives an extremely pitiful dowry and “*returns her thanks*” [39] to her stepmother, later sharing all her food with the man:

When she pulled out her provisions he ate them nearly all. But once again she made no complaint, but bade him eat what ne needed, and welcome [39].

In contradiction to this, stepsister incorporates **flamboyance**, her dowry includes silken dresses, furs, hearty provisions which she refuses to share with the man:

Not a bite, not a sup, lest they should choke you: though that would be small matter to me [39].

Lastly, **obedience** – **disobedience** is manifested in the way the Princess follows the old man’s advice and does everything the well heads asks for, while the stepsister ignores warnings, what leads to her downfall. So, kindness is ultimately rewarded.

Another folk tale “Mr.Fox” initially features Lady Mary who is soon going to marry the mysterious man whose identity is **hidden**:

There was a certain Mr.Fox, handsome, young and rich; and though nobody quite knew who he was, he was so gallant and so gay that every one liked him [39].

However, it is later **revealed**, and he turns out to be a disguised villain, as Lady Mary found his castle and what it concealed:

A wide saloon lit with many candles, all around it were the skeletons and bodies of beautiful young maidens in their wedding-dresses all stained with blood [39].

The motif of **light - darkness** recurs in the story. The bright, **open** areas (Lady Mary's home, the wedding banquet, streets) which stand for safety and **life** are opposed to the dark and **closed/narrow** spaces, representing secrets, horror, **death**:

Now at the top of the staircase there was a wide, empty gallery at one end of which were wide windows with the sunlight streaming through them from a beautiful garden, and at the other end a narrow door [...] in a narrow, dark passage. At the end there was a chick of light [39].

The overall framework of the tale concerns **good** and **evil**. The opposition **bravery – fear** is also important: the woman displays courage by investigating castle, even when faced with ominous warnings: *“Be bold, be bold, but not too bold”* [39]. Mr.Fox, on the other hand, felt *“pale and silent”* [39] when being exposed. Initially presented clear-cut **murderer – victim** opposition is disrupted by Lady Mary turning her from prey into a survivor. This contrast flips the expected **male - female** roles.

The main motif in the tale “Caporushes” is the disguised heroine who starts as a rich young lady in **home space** but is cast out by her father into the **other space**:

[...] he turned her out of the home where she had been born and bred, and shut the door in her face. Not knowing where to go, she wandered on and on ... [39].

She is forced into a lowly position of a scullion, but the opposition **wealthy – poor** is still expressed when she changes her outfits. During the **day**, the lady works in the kitchen, but the **nighttime** marks her transformation, as she is beautifully dressed and dances at the ball. However, her identity is **hidden** under the rushes until it is **revealed**. The prince realizes Caporushes as a mysterious dancer through the ring in the gruel. Another significant detail is her father's blindness. At first it is metaphorical, as he fails to see his daughter's wisdom *“I love you as fresh meat loves salt!”* [39]. At

the end, it becomes literal as punishment for his ignorance and regret. Thus, the fairy tale motif of **blindness** leading to **insight** may be identified.

The tale “The Babe in the Woods” manifests the traditional **good – evil** opposition. The parents’ love for their children contrasts with the uncle’s selfishness, corruption and greed who values **wealth** more than their lives:

He had not kept these pretty babes

A twelvemonth and a day.

But, for their wealth. He did devise

To make them both away [39].

Innocence is evident in the trusting nature of the children, who believe they are being taken to London. Later on, the children’s inheritance from their deceased parents contrasts with their eventual **destitution** and suffering, as they are brought to forest to be murdered, creating a **home – wilderness** opposition. However, **compassion – cruelty** emerges in the differing reactions of the two killers – one repents, while the other remains merciless. In addition, within the **day – night** binary pair children perish in darkness. Finally, **justice – injustice** is reflected in the uncle’s downfall, as divine punishment restores moral balance.

The folk rhyme “Lawkmercyme” is also included into the F.A.Steel’s collection. It presents a **self – other** conflict: the old woman awakens and no longer recognizes herself saying: “*This is none of I!*” [39]. She goes home “*all in the dark*” [39]. The phrase is ambiguous. On the one hand, it stands for woman’s confusion, thus creating a **knowledge – uncertainty** binary pair. On the other hand, it equals a **day – night** oppositions. Unlike the communal atmosphere of the market, nighttime leaves her alone and exposed.

Another folk tale “Molly Whuppie and the Double-Faced Giant” begins with the description of the extremely poor couple who can no longer provide for their children, so they decide to abandon three daughters in the forest. This creates the first spatial opposition **home space – alien space** which also marks the contrast between girls:

Now the two eldest were just ordinary girls, so they cried a bit and felt afraid; but the youngest, whose name was Molly Whuppie, was bold [39].

Throughout the story, the opposition between the passive **elder sisters** and their resourceful **younger sister** is constantly stressed. Due to her **cleverness**, she manages to outsmart the giant, despite his enormous **physical strength**. His wife tries to mediate the striking antithesis:

‘Don’t put yourself about, me dear,’ said the giant’s wife, trying to make the best of it. ‘See for yourself. They are only three poor little girlies like our girlies. [...] Now be a good giant and don’t touch them’ [39].

The giant’s double-faced nature intensifies the opposition, as he pretends to be hospitable but is ultimately murderous. He attacks under the cover of **darkness**, but Molly and her sisters escape into **daylight** and seek shelter in the king’s palace which is associated with protection and ultimately reward. A significant element in the tale is the One Hair Bridge – a liminal space between danger and safety. Molly’s ability to cross it symbolizes her eventual victory of **good** over **evil**.

“The Rose Tree” is another tale which has multiple versions worldwide, the best known of which are “Orange and Lemon” and “Juniper Tree” by the Brothers Grimm.

The key binary opposition is **love – hate**. While the girl and her stepbrother share a close bond, the stepmother is motivated by malice:

But the boy’s mother was really a wicked witch-woman, and so jealous that she wanted all the boy’s love for herself, and when the girl-baby grew white as milk, with cheeks like roses and lips like cherries [...], the stepmother fairly hated her [39].

The extraordinary beauty of the girl is opposed to the stepmother’s inner ugliness. Later on, she murders the girl and tries to erase her existence. Interestingly, both **men** in the story are passive figures, so the plot revolves around **female** power – both positive and negative. The symbolic opposition **summer – winter** connected to the rose tree, initially a symbol of joy, is well-pronounced and fits into the concepts of **life** and **death**:

And all the summer he sate [...] under the wild rose tree and listened to the white bird’s song. But when the winter came [...], the white bird came no longer and the little boy grew tired of waiting for it. So one day he gave up altogether, and they buried him under the rose tree beside his little playmate [39].

Even after the girl's death, her essence is transformed into the singing bird, and when the boy dies, their spirits seem to live on through the blooming tree. It suggests that death does not mark the end in the tale; rebirth and transformation are possible.

All in all, in this group of traditional fairy tales, binary oppositions are used to present issues of identity and gendered roles. The gendered (male – female, elder – younger) and ontological (hidden identity – revealed identity, recognition – ignorance, self - other) binaries dominate because the tales explore mainly female characters in transformation, disguise, rebellion while they navigate spaces of domesticity, secrecy, emergence, so spatial (home space – other space, castle – forest, open – closed) and temporal (day – night, summer - winter) binaries intensify the importance of their journey from marginalization to recognition. At the same time moral oppositions (good – evil, helpful – selfish, cruelty – kindness, obedience – disobedience) should not be undermined, as they signal the character's internal or social growth.

Conclusion to Chapter 2

The “English Fairy Tales” (1918) by Flora Annie Steel is a collection of folk tales that are deeply rooted in oral traditions and rely on stark contrasts to communicate moral lessons, define character roles and drive the plot forward.

Among the 41 traditional fairy tales analyzed, 3 thematic groups with common motifs were singled out: 1) social hierarchy and justice (16 tales); 2) morality and transformation (15 tales); 3) gender roles and identity (10 tales). The division of the tales is not absolute, since tales combine multiple underlying motifs and suggest various interpretations. The number of binary oppositions identified is 242. The research has shown that some of them repeat, the most recurring oppositions include good – evil (30), day – night (20), human – supernatural (11), light – darkness (10), big - small (9), order – chaos (8) and life – death (7). In contrast, some binary oppositions appear only once, such as paleness – vitality, widershins – deasil and a color-based dichotomy blue – red. The dominant themes in these oppositions can be grouped into 9 specific semantic categories: moral and ethical oppositions (good – evil, righteousness – wickedness, honesty – deception, generosity – meanness, kindness –

cruelty, reward – punishment, justice – injustice, hidden identity – revealed identity), social (city – village, master – servant, nobility – peasantry, rich – poor, insider – outsider, individual - collective), spatial (top – bottom, right – left, open – closed, home space – alien space, castle - forest), genealogical (male – female, parent – child, elder siblings – younger siblings, mother – son, stepdaughter – stepmother), cognitive (wisdom – foolishness, knowledge – ignorance, courage – cowardice, cleverness – gullibility), universal (life – death, fate – free will, heaven – hell, chaos – order), natural and temporal (light – dark, day – night, summer – winter), supernatural (magic – reality, human – supernatural), physical (strong – weak, big – small).

The distribution of oppositions correlates with the genre and structure of the tales. The group of tales on social hierarchy and justice is the most numerous, since justice and class relations were one of the themes in oral storytelling traditions and were often used to express hopes, fears and moral lessons of common people who navigate rigid social systems. They are mostly characterized by social, cognitive and ethical binaries. Heroic tales are rich in physical and moral contrasts, emphasizing the battle between good and evil and journey between the ordinary and supernatural realms. Another group of tales with the emphasis on morality and transformation leans on moral, existential and temporal pairs to show internal and external transformations. The smallest group about gender and identity issues is dominated by gendered and ontological oppositions which are closely connected to spatial and temporal ones. The genealogical oppositions are recurrent in all 3 thematic groups.

Overall, the analysis highlights how binary oppositions serve as a foundational narrative device in fairy tales. The high frequency of moral, social and spatial contrasts reflects the deeply ingrained dualistic worldview that shapes the fairy tale tradition.

Chapter III. The use of binary oppositions in postmodern fairy tales

3.1 “The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories” by Angela Carter

Widely regarded as one of the most influential British writers of the 20th century, Angela Carter (1940 - 1992) is known for the feminist, gothic, and postmodern reworkings of traditional fairy tales and myths. Her work is celebrated for its rich symbolism, subversive storytelling, and exploration of themes such as gender, power, and sexuality. Often associated with magic realism and feminist literary criticism, Carter challenges conventional narratives by exposing and deconstructing deep-seated cultural binaries.

It is important to note that Angela Carter’s approach to fairy tale resembles the Grimms’ rather than the French tradition: she views ‘fairy tale’ as a broad and flexible term which encompasses a variety of narratives [53, p.9]. According to Zipes, her stories subvert conventional roles, with powerful male figures controlling female characters or women seeking liberation from predetermined fates. Unlike the Grimms, who edited their material to align with middle-class values, she embraces the transgressive aspects of folklore, rejects censorship and, more importantly, sees fairy tales as part of an ongoing, transnational cycle of reinvention, continuously reshapes by each new generation [53, p.10-12].

In 1977, Carter translated Perrault’s fairy tales into English in “The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault”. It inspired her to produce her own feminist reimagining of classic fairy tales “The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories” (or “The Bloody Chamber”) (1979). Her extensive engagement with folk and fairy tales resulted in a number of publications: a collection of tales from around the world “The Old Wives’ Fairy Tale Book” (1990), “The Virago Book of Fairy Tales” (1990, 1992) and “Wise Children” (1991) – a combination of elements of Shakespearean and folkloric motifs with the emphasis on the themes of fate, performance and identity.

Among the aforementioned works, “The Bloody Chamber” (1979) is of particular interest, since it is not just a compilation, but an authorial interpretation of 10 traditional fairy tales through the feminist and Gothic lens. While Carter draws from

folklore and earlier literary traditions, she critically reinvents narratives, that is why they vividly exemplify the conventional binary oppositions and their deconstruction.

3.2 Tales of power, violence and female agency

The first story in the book in question is “The Bloody Chamber” which is based on the folklore tale AT 312 (“Bluebeard”) and shares much similarity with another tale “Mr.Fox” which was analyzed previously in part II (2.4) and tells about a young woman who discovers her suitor’s room of horrors and outwits him.

Apart from the most direct folklore intertext, the postmodern *naturergft7yu* of the tale is evident in its allusions to other literary works. The repeated references to “Tristan and Isolde” serve multiple functions. The “Liebestod”, or “Love-Death”, is the climax in Richard Wagner’s opera, where Isolde, consumed by love and grief, dies in a moment of transcendence. The protagonist initially associates this scene with passion and romantic **love** and believes she feels something for her future husband:

The night before our wedding – a simple affair, at the Mairie, because his countess was so recently gone – he took my mother and me, curious coincidence, to see “Tristan”. And, do you know, my heart swelled and ached so during the Liebestod that thought I must truly love him. Yes. I did. On his arm, all eyes were upon me [9, p.10].

However, as the story unfolds, the “Liebestod” becomes a foreshadowing of the girl’s near-death at the hands of her husband. While searching through his office, she finds a file marked “Personal” with the letters from other women:

I could have wishes, perhaps, I had not found that touching, ill-spelt note, [...]. The diva had sent him a page of the score of “Tristan”, the “Liebestod”, with the single, cryptic word: “Until...” scrawled across it. But the strangest of all these love letters was a postcard with a view of a village graveyard, among mountains, where some black-coated ghoul enthusiastically dug at a grave. [...] On the other side, the message: “On the occasion of this marriage to the descendant of Dracula – always remember. ‘the supreme and unique pleasure of love is the certainty that one is doing evil’ [9, p.26].

The fatal inevitability suggested in the founding is obvious and underlines the Marquis's pattern of eroticizing death as a part of his **perverse aesthetic**. Additionally, Carter blends gothic horror, operatic melodrama and dark humor in the passage. The postcard referencing Dracula and the last sentence quoting Charles Baudelaire imply the man's self-conscious adoption of the gothic villain persona. However, his ultimate failure undermines the supposed omnipotence of such figures in traditional literature. The author deconstructs the binary of **life – death** inextricably linked to **love** by having the protagonist escape her tragic fate rather than succumb to it.

Another significant element in the story is the young girl's attitude to marriage. The narrator suggests a sense of uncertainty rather than pure romantic idealism; instead of granting **security**, marriage endangers her, and is compared to **entrapment**:

[...] away from girlhood, away from the white, enclosed quietude of my mother's apartment, into the unguessable country of marriage. [...] Into marriage, into exile, [...] I would always be lonely [9, p.7].

The romantic adventure quickly shifts into a claustrophobic nightmare within the isolated castle. The **home space** is opposed to **alien space**:

And, ah! His castle. The faery solitude of the place; with its turrets of misty blue, its courtyard, its spiked gate, his castle that lay on the very bosom of the sea with seabirds mewing about its attics, [...], that castle, at home neither on the land nor on the water, a mysterious, amphibious place, contravening the materiality of both, [...], with the melancholy of a mermaid who [...] waits endlessly, for a lover who had drowned far away, long ago. That lovely, sad, sea-siren of a place! [9, p.13]

Interestingly, the **land - water** dichotomy is not absolute, as a castle is a liminal space between two realities. This is an example of Carter's postmodern rejection of fixed categories. The 'spiked fate' and the castle's physical separation from the land endow it with a prison-like nature. This peculiarity is evident in other instances: in the description of the husband - "*a great man, whose key was as crowded as that of a prison warden*" [9, p.19]; of the woman herself - "*the keys to the interior doors of this lovely prison of which I was both the inmate and the mistress*" [9, p.24], "*the tide that would take him away to the New World would let me out of the imprisonment of the*

castle” [9, p.31]. Such comparisons demonstrate a **master – slave** dynamic, since the heroine must fight for her own escape from captivity.

The spatial component of mirrors in the bedroom should not be underestimated. They are symbols of identity and objectification. From the traditional perspective, mirrors reveal truth, so the protagonist is both a **subject** watching herself and an **object** being watched, however she sees herself multiplied:

And there lay the grand, hereditary matrimonial bed, [...]. And surrounded by so mane mirrors! The young bride, who had become that multitude of girls I saw in the mirrors... [...] I could not meet his eye and turns my head away, [...], and watched a dozen husbands approach me in dozen mirrors... [9, p.15]

The protagonist’s identity is fluid and disrupts the stable **self – other** dichotomy. Later on she mentions that “*the memory of his presence trapped in the fathomless silvering of his mirrors*” [9, p.30], so she cannot escape husband’s influence even when alone. This idea leads to the fact that the whole castle serves as a metaphor for patriarchal oppression. It is worth mentioning that mirrors recall Susan Gubar’s idea from her essay “The Blank Page” (1981) that a woman’s story is written onto her body, i.e. the protagonist’s reflection becomes a site of inscription by her husband’s desires. This **power – vulnerability** framework stresses traditional gender roles, with the Marquis controlling his wife both physically and emotionally. However, it becomes vague as the plot unfolds and the woman starts questioning her identity:

*I was not afraid of him; but of myself. I seemed reborn in his unreflective eyes, reborn in unfamiliar shapes. I hardly recognized myself from his description of me and yet, and yet – might there not be a grain of beastly truth in them? [...] I blushed again, unnoticed, to think he might have chosen me because, in my **innocence**, he sensed a rare talent for **corruption** [9, p.20].*

So, she entertains the possibility that his version of her might be true, suggesting the internalization of external judgements. Initially being the object of man’s manipulation, the woman slowly deconstructs the **male authority – female passivity** opposition with her growing awareness of her position and curiosity:

And what, precisely, was the nature of my desirous dread for his mysterious being who, to show his mastery over me, had abandoned me on my wedding night? [9, p.22]

The woman's further movement through the castle depicts her psychological journey from **passivity** to **agency**. Initially, she wanders through the well-lit, luxurious rooms, admiring their beauty, yet feeling disconnected from her new role. The **light** in these rooms stand for illusion and constructed reality of wealth, privilege, making them a space in which she is expected to conform to a decorative role. However, when she descends into the forbidden chamber, challenging the **obedience – disobedience** binary pair, she moves away from the **false** light or luxury into the **darkness** of hidden **truths**. This transition from **upper, visible space** to **lower, concealed spaces** parallels her movement from **naivety** to **knowledge**. It may be assumed that the path from the maze-like castle becomes a descent into the horrors of patriarchal violence. It is also evident in the change of colors: the heroine is described in terms of whiteness – her pale skin, **white** bridal dress and lilies that fill her room; during her journey she wanted to light the castle using *“a thousand of candles”* [9, p.24] to create an artificial white **daylight**. The husband's opulence, on the other hand, is marked by **black** – his black beard and his preference for the **night**: *“My little love, you'll never know how much I hate daylight”* [9, p.36] – and by deep reds – the ruby choker, the red interiors. The chamber itself is a bloodstained space where his previous wives' corpses are kept and where his power reaches its most violent extreme, as there are *“the instruments of mutilation”* [9, p.28], *“a metal figure [...] spiked at the inside [...]: the Iron Maiden”* [9, p.28], *“a catafalque, a doomed, ominous bier of Renaissance workmanship”* [9, p.28], *“the latest dead, the Romanian countess”* [9, p.29], *“skull strung up by a system of unseen cords”* [9, p.29]. The key stained with blood serves as a marker of the uncovered truth, so the Marquis' power is no longer absolute. Her knowledge of his crimes threatens his control, and the final act of rescue by her mother ultimately destroys his authority entirely, what contributes to the deconstruction of another binary pair – **male protector – female victim**, since this expectation is subverted.

There is one more crucial character worth mentioning. Unlike typical fairy tale male figures, the blind piano tuner Jean-Yves does not rescue the heroine in a physical sense. He represents an alternative model of masculinity: supportive and free from patriarchal control:

'I can be of some comfort to you,' the boy said. 'You don't deserve this' [9, p.37].

His **blindness** paradoxically allows him to 'see' the heroine more clearly than Marquis does, for he perceives her not as an object of desire or possession but as a person. This contrasts with the husband, who uses his **gaze** to dominate. Jean-Yves' presence in the story hints at a new kind of relationship, based on mutual **respect** rather than **submission**.

Drawing on folklore and the mythical German figure of the Erlking, or Elf King, Carter presents another fairy tale "The Erl-King". The story is structured around the spatial opposition of **open space** and **closed space** which parallels the entrapment motif of the plot itself.

The story begins in the natural landscape which is **light**, but nevertheless doesn't provide comfort. The subversion lies in the fact that lightness becomes paradoxically obscuring, so the danger of what appears beautiful or clear is foreshadowed:

The lucidity, the clarity of the light that afternoon was sufficient to itself; perfect transparency must be impenetrable, these vertical bars of a brass-coloured distillation of light coming down from sulphur-yellow interstices in a sky hunkered with grey clouds that bulge with more rain. [...] Now the stark elders have an anorexic look; there is not much in the autumn to make you smile but it is not yet, not quite yet, the saddest time of the year. Only, there is a haunting sense of the imminent cessation of being... [9, p.84]

The prison-like space suggests **dark** undertones and underscores a psychological shift – it is not just a physical space but a mental state. The claustrophobic effect is gained by another metaphor:

The woods enclose. You step between the fir trees and then you are no longer in the open air; the wood swallows you up. There is no way through the wood any more, this wood has reverted to its original privacy [9, p.84].

Moreover, the author compares the forest to “*a system of Chinese boxes opening one into another*” [9, p.85] implying its labyrinth-like and **chaotic** form. It contrasts with **order**, i.e. the linear forest path.

Another significant detail is multiple allusions to “Little Red Riding Hood” evident in the girl’s initial quest and phrases like “*a young girl would go into the wood as trustingly as Red Riding Hood to her granny’s house*” [9] or “*what big eyes you have*” [9]. The dangerous wood and the cottage of the Erl-King, despite being rustic and ‘spick and span’, becomes another trap. Its domestic comfort hides the violence and control, similarly to other Carter’s postmodern retellings of the tale in question.

It should be noted that the Erl-King combines the characteristics of **nature** and **civilization**. Being a part of the forest, he shows domesticity:

He is an excellent housewife. [...] He chops fallen branches for his fire and draws his water from the stream in a tin pail. [...] When he combs his hair that is the colour of dead leaves, dead leaves fall out of it; they rustle and drift to the ground as though he were a tree and he can stand as still as a tree... [9, p.87]

His appearance represents a threshold between **life** and **death**. The women he seduces are turned into birds and caged, what symbolizes a kind of living death and erasure of identity. When the protagonist says: “*He strips me to my last nakedness, that underskin of mauve, pink and ivory, the color of the dead*” [9, p. 89], she also means the dissolution of the self-blurring eroticism with morbidity. Additionally, Carter deploys the recurring motif of eyes and reflection to reinforce the binary oppositions between **subject** and **object**, **presence** and **erasure**, as well as **vision** and **blindness**:

The gelid green of your eyes fixes my reflective face. It is a preservative, like a green liquid amber; it catches me. [...] Your green eye is a reducing chamber. If I look into it long enough, I will become as small as my own reflection, I will diminish to a point and vanish. [...] I shall become so small you can keep me in one of your osier cages and mock my loss of liberty [9, p.90].

So, the Erl-King acts as a **seducer** and at the same time as a **captor**. The overall framework of **entrapment** is obvious throughout the tale, but the realization and action of the female protagonist lead to its deconstruction. Her strive for **freedom** and firm

decision to strangle the King is driven by her desire to “*open all the cages and let the birds free; they will change back into young girls*” [9, p.91]. Thus, the woman doesn't remain a **victim**, but confronts and imagines destroying the force that would consume her, turning into a **killer** herself.

The next fairy tale in the collection is “The Werewolf”. It a subversive retelling of the classic tale “Little Red Riding Hood” which is characterized by clear-cut oppositions: good – evil, human – animal/beast and truth – deception. In the rewriting, however, Carter reconfigures the roles of hero, villain and victim.

The underlying binary opposition is **good** – **evil** and its deconstruction. The girl becomes an active agent of violence, while her grandmother, originally a helpless **victim**, is a werewolf and, by implication, a witch:

But it was no longer a wolf's paw. It was a hand, chopped off at the wrist, a hand toughened with work and freckled with age. [...] By the wart she knew it for her grandmother's hand [9, p.109].

The binary of **human** – **beast** is similarly blurred. The werewolf is not an external entity but a hidden, monstrous part of the human world. This leads to **weakness** – **strength** question. The seemingly weak and sick grandmother secretly possesses power; the girl, despite her youth, is neither helpless nor afraid. She acts as a **victor**, but kills not out of fear but with an almost ritualistic acceptance of the world's cruelty, i.e. all the witches must be brutally exterminated. The idea here is that the survival in the society doesn't depend on morality, but on ruthless pragmatism due to which the girl inherits the house and prospers.

Space intensifies all the aforementioned binaries. The opening lines already establish a harsh landscape of hostility describing it as a country in the North where “*they have cold weather, they have cold hearts*” [9, p.108]. The mention of Walpurgisnacht, a night of witches and the Devil feasting of corpses, shows the villagers' deep-rooted fear of the supernatural. Moreover, the girl moves through the **forest** with confidence:

She knew the forest too well to fear it but she must always be on her guard. When she heard that freezing howl of a wolf, she dropped her gifts, seized her knife and turned on the beast. [...] and slashed off its right forepaw [9, p.109].

So, the true danger lies not in the wilderness but in the **home** itself which doesn't provide protection. This signifies the opposition between **safe** and **dangerous** spaces.

All in all, the tales "The Bloody Chamber", "The Erl-King" and "The Werewolf" are united by their exploration of dominance, transgression, redefinition of female identity. Each story stages a process of resistance or reversal, where the female character challenges or escapes domination. It is reflected through a set of recurring binary oppositions. The most prominent ones are gendered (male protector – female victim and its reversion passivity/male authority – female agency, seducer – captor, victim – killer); moral/ethical (good – evil, innocence – corruption, respect – submission, power – vulnerability) and ontological (life – death, self – other, presence – erasure, human – beast). Spatial binaries frame the character's psychological and physical journeys reflecting their inner states. The perceptual oppositions, such as blindness – vision/gaze, visible – concealed, are unique to this set of fairy tales and the book as a whole; they show how knowledge and desire are mediated through vision and perception, often connected to gender dynamics.

3.3 Tales of metamorphosis and death

"The Tiger's Bride" is one of Carter's interpretation of the fairy tale "The Beauty and the Beast", in which the heroine's father loses her in a game of cards to a mysterious, wealthy Beast. This image of a **selfish** father who treats his daughter as property provides an instant contrast with the weak but **loving** one in "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon" analyzed in part 3.4. During the card game, there appears a recurring mirror element:

My father said he loved me yet he staked his daughter on a hand of cards. He fanned them out; in the mirror, I saw wild hope light up his eyes. [...] A queen, a king, an ace. I saw them in the mirror. Oh, I knew he thought he could not lose me; besides, back with me would come all he had lost... [9, p.54]

The self-destructive obsession with cards creates a **reality – illusion** opposition. The heroine is not directly looking at the cards what suggests a distancing effect, as if she is an **observer** of her own fate rather than an **active participant**. The mirror forces her to confront her **objectified self**, emphasizing that she exists in a world where women are traded for material gain. Her **autonomous self** is lost in the fragmented perspective: the cards, her father's face, his disheveled state and the “*cold, biting atmosphere*” [9, p.52]. It also reflects her lack of control over her fate. The **identity** of the Beast is also initially **hidden** under his eccentric look:

Only from a distance would you think the Beast not much different from any other man, although he wears a mask with a man's face painted most beautifully on it. Oh, yes, a beautiful face; but one with too much formal symmetry of feature to be entirely human: one profile of his mask is the mirror image of the other, too perfect, uncanny. He wears a wig, too, [...] He is a carnival figure made of papier-mache and crepe hair; and yet he has the Devil's knack at cards [9, p.53].

His house is depicted as a hollow, abandoned, **other place**, “*as if its owner were about to move house or had never properly moved in*” [9, p.57], which entitles his state of existence - neither fully part of the **human** world nor entirely at **home** in his **animal** nature. Its maze-like structure and “*vaulted chambers opening like systems of Chinese boxes*” [9, p.57] create a feeling of a trap. It resembles heroine's experiences of caged tigers in the Czar's menagerie – a clear binary of **captivity – freedom**. Another example is the **mechanical figure** of a clockwork maid, obedient and voiceless, which contrasts with the **living person**. She represents a parody of femininity and cannot assert her agency. The location of the house also adds to the spatial binaries: the heroine and her father come from the **North**, which equals cold, logic and patriarchal contract, while the Beast's domain lies in the **South** – a warmer and wilder place. The latter is the natural habitat of the Beast where his identity is revealed, as he unmask and sheds his human disguise and turns out to be a tiger. The Beauty's **nudity**, in its turn, is not an act of submission but of equality, it helps her to connect with the Beast on an honest and instinctual level, stripping away the societal pretenses that **clothing** represents.

Finally, it becomes obvious that the father's greed makes him more monstrous than the Beast himself, that is why the heroine undergoes profound transformation:

And each stroke of his tongue ripped of skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world, and left behind a nascent patina of shiny hairs. [...] My earrings turned back to water and trickled down my shoulders; I shrugged the drops off my beautiful fur [9, p.67].

It vividly exemplifies how Angela Carter challenges gender roles and subverts traditional fairy tale structures and questions the dichotomy between human and beast: the heroine's metamorphosis suggests that 'beastliness' is not inherently negative. The human embraces her animalistic nature turning into a tiger and achieving freedom.

"The Snow Child" is a direct reference to the Brothers Grimm's' fairy tale "Snow White", but in its more brutal and macabre form. The structure does mimic traditional fairy tale motifs of wishes, trials and transformation and can be divided into three distinct episodes: 1) the creation of the child as a result of the Count's desire of a sudden, magical appearance of his daughter; 2) rivalry and the Countess' attempt to get rid of the girl through dangerous tasks; 3) the death and disappearance of the child followed by the act of necrophilia by the Count.

One of the most striking binaries that Carter challenges is **innocence** versus **sexuality**. Traditionally, young girls symbolize innocence. In the tale, however, the girl's nakedness, which would indicate vulnerability, instead marks her as an object of male possession:

As soon as he completed her description, there she stood, beside the road, white skin, red mouth, black hair and stark naked: she was the child of his desire and the Countess hated her, [...] had only one thought: how shall I be rid of her? [9, p.92]

The Countess and the child appear to be rivals, as if in a typical love triangle. The woman initially tries to dominate with each attempt backfired. When the girl dies and her creator Count loses interest in her, his wife regains her position. It makes the binary of **strong woman** – **weak woman** false, as both women are confined within the same patriarchal system, reliant on the Count's attention, leading to another opposition of **male power**, embodied by the Count, between the **female submission**.

Additionally, the binary of **purity** opposed to **corruption** is disrupted by the use of symbolic colors – snow, blood, roses – which are also evident in the child’s description. White associated with virtue, does not protect her from harm, while bleeding leads to **death** with the fairy tale trope of blood as **vitality** or rebirth inverted.

Lastly, the Snow Child is an unnatural being, created by a wish, not nature; she melts away just as suddenly as she appeared. The author, thus, fuses **creation** and **destruction**, as the girl is born to disappear, what questions the stability of the binary.

In “The Lady of the House of Love”, Carter reimagines the vampire myth. The tale centers on a young and beautiful vampire Countess, descended from the infamous lineage of Vlad the Impaler. She is compelled to feed on unsuspecting male visitors, so the story constantly balances between **life** and **death**. The protagonist herself embodies this opposition:

She is so beautiful she is unnatural; [...] for none of her features exhibit any of those touching imperfections that reconcile us to the imperfections of the human condition. Her beauty is a symptom [...] of her soullessness. [...] In a white lace negligee stained a little with blood, the Countess climbs up on her catafalque at dawn each morning and lies down in an open coffin [9, p.94].

Leading a nocturnal life, her environment is predominantly **black**, while her appearance features include **white** and although wearing a bridal dress of her mother, she resembles a ghost: “*the white hands of the tenebrous belle*” [9, p.94], “*teeth as fine and white as spikes of spun sugar*” [9, p.94], “*a hooped-skirted dress of white satin*” [9, p.100], “*her stark white face*” [9, p.101]. Moreover, she is trapped in her ancestral castle which symbolizes decay and confinement, as its descriptions contain recurring images of cobwebs, shadows and dust. The spatial confinement contributes to her entrapment within her identity and lineage, for she cannot escape both the castle and legacy. The mansion is set apart from the modern world, untouched by time and progress, thus, standing for a liminal space between **past** and **present**. There are also smaller spaces of enclosure dominated by **dark** colours with no **light** at all, such as her room, the garden of roses and the birdcage with a lark, each symbolizing degrees of captivity:

The castle is mostly given over to ghostly occupants but she herself has her own suite of drawing room and bedroom. Closely barred shutters and heavy velvet curtains keep out every leak of natural light. [...] She sits in a chair covered in moth-ravaged burgundy velvet at the low, round table and distributes the card [9, p.107].

Mirrors are significant details of space in the fairy tale. In a gothic tradition they are often used to emphasize the supernatural; specifically, the lack of reflection as a marker of the undead. Yet Carter twists the trope: the Countess does not look into mirrors, not because she lacks a reflection, but because she is repulsed by what she might see, i.e. the truth of her condition. Her avoidance symbolizes the inner conflict and her disconnection from a coherent, human identity. She is suspended between **woman** and **monster**, **subject** and **object**:

[...] in a derelict bedroom where a cracked mirror suspended from a wall does not reflect a presence; [...] an old mute looks after her, to make sure she never sees the sun, [...], to keep mirrors and all reflective surfaces away from her [9, p.95].

At the same time, being seemingly indifferent to her identity, she starts questioning herself: “*In her dream, she would like to be human; but she does not know if that is possible*” [9, p.95]. It signifies the inception of the **indifference** – **agency** motif.

But the most important moment which destabilizes the aforementioned oppositions is the arrival of the soldier who brings with him the force of reason, clarity and light. His bicycle as a symbol of modernity and Enlightenment progress, innocence and disbelief serve as a light against the dark traditions that bind the Countess. Water becomes a main catalyst of the episode and creates a **skepticism** – **credit** binarity, for “*the sense of strangeness that had been growing in him since he buried his head under the streaming water in the village, since he entered the dark portals of the fatal castle, now fully overcame him*” [9, p.103]. The opposing ideas of **sight** and **blindness** may be stressed in its metaphorical and literal ways:

He might have said: it is folly to believe one's eyes. Not so much that he does not believe in her; he can see her, she is real. If she takes off her dark glasses, from her eyes will stream all the images that populate this vampire-haunted land, but, since

he himself is immune to shadow, due to his virginity – he does not know what there is to be afraid of [...]. And though he feels unease, he cannot feel terror [9, p.104].

So, the soldier doesn't play the expected role of the terrified prey. He sees just a lonely, pale girl, and thus breaks the binary of **predator – victim**. His **innocence** also contrasts with the vampire's sexual **predation**, corrupted immortality and ultimately makes her repulse her own desires. As a result, the girl's identity falters: her gestures become clumsy, she is shaking trying to take off her mother's wedding dress. Her dark glasses shattering marks a turning point, a symbolic end of her undead stasis and an entrance into the mortality: *“this unexpected, mundane noise of breaking glass breaks the wicked spell in the room, entirely. She gapes blindly down at the splinters and ineffectively smears the tears across her face with her fist. What is she to do now?” [9, p.106]*

All in all, Carter complicates the binaries: the soldier is not a typical masculine savior, and his rationality doesn't destroy the Countess but frees her and she begins to see herself more clearly what points to the fact that **internal** reflection replaces the **external** one that she avoids. His clear-sightedness becomes an instrument of liberation. In the end, her transformation by **morning** into a mortal woman and her death coincide with the return of reflective selfhood, or the ability to be seen, to exist and to vanish on her own. This underlines the **supernatural – rational** and **male – female** and oppositions.

All in all, the fairy tales “The Tiger's Bride”, “The Snow Child” and “The Lady of the House of Love” have the underlying theme of transformation, identity and mortality. Frequently appearing oppositions include ontological (life – death, living person – mechanical person, creation – destruction, supernatural – rational and reality – illusion), existential (subject – object, objectified self – autonomous self, observer – active participant, wild – tame, skepticism - credit), gendered (male/monster – female, strong woman – weak woman, purity – corruption, innocence – sexuality), spatial (internal, external, home space – other space, North – South). The temporal semantic category is the most important one with oppositions, such as light – darkness, morning/day – night, because they symbolize the thresholds between states of being.

Darkness and night represent stasis, mystery or death, while light and morning suggest transformation, awakening or rebirth.

3.4 Tales of love and subversion

The fairy tale “The Courtship of Mr.Lyon” is the retelling of the tale “The Beauty and the Beast” and resembles “The Black Bull of Norrway”. The opening scene situates Beauty in a bleak, snow-covered landscape, where **winter** symbolizes isolation. The description of the road intensifies a sense of untouched purity: “*the road is white and unmarked as a spilled bolt of bridal satin*” [9, p.41]. She waits for her father, a once-**wealthy** man who has fallen into **financial hardship**. Unable to get back home because of the bad weather and desperate for shelter, he stumbles upon a mysterious house which seems “*deserted but for a light that flickered in an upstairs window*” [9, p.42], where he is cared by an unseen host. It creates a **home space – alien space** opposition which also contributes to another opposing concepts of **civilization**, i.e. London, and **nature**, mythical rural setting or Mr.Lyon’s home. The father takes a single white rose for his daughter, but is confronted by the house’s owner. The **human – beastly** contrasts becomes evident and leads to **big – small** difference:

The being who now confronted Beauty’s father seemed to him, in his confusion, vaster than the house he owned, ponderous yet swift, and the moonlight glittered on his great, mazy head of hair, [...] great paws that grasped his shoulders so that their claws pierced the sheepskin as he shook him like an angry child shakes a doll [9, p.44].

The Beast also rejects any attempt to soften his nature:

‘Good fellow? I am no good fellow! I am the Beast, you must call me Beast, while I call you, Thief!’ – ‘Forgive me for robbing you garden, Beast!’ [9, p.44]

In such a way the **guilt – innocence** opposition is established, but it is an example of an inversion of traditional fairy-tale morality where the monster is expected to be the villain, yet here he claims **justice**, while the human has committed the **wrongdoing**.

When the Beauty arrives at the house, her feelings are ambiguous:

Yet wild things have a far more rational fear of us than is ours of them, and some kind of sadness in his agate eyes, that looked almost blind, as if sick of sight, moved her heart [9, p.45].

Within her perception, the Beast is portrayed as vulnerable and weary, but at the same time, the **predator – prey** contrast is preserved:

[...] a constant human presence would remind him too bitterly of his otherness [...] How strange he was. She found his bewildering difference from herself almost intolerable; its presence choked her. There seemed a heavy, soundless pressure upon her in his house, as if it lay under water, [...] she thought: they are the death of any tender herbivore. And such a one she felt herself to be, Miss Lamb, spotless, sacrificial [9, p.45].

The heroine, thus, embodies **innocence** and **vulnerability**, while the Beast represents **raw power** and **violence**. He also stands for an exaggerated form of masculinity, which leads to a **male – female** opposition. However, her discomfort with their difference suggests that these roles are not fixed, but oppressive, making their separation unnatural. The comparison of the house to being ‘under water’ adds to the sense of suffocating otherness. Generally, the **I - other** binary pair is crucial in the fairy tale and is linked to the concept of identity. Like in the previous tale, it is realized through mirrors and reflection. First, she appears innocent and tender, her ‘**self**’ is unspoiled:

He drew back his head and gazed at her with his green, inscrutable eyes, in which she saw her face repeated twice, as small as if it were in bud [9, p.47].

Later, in the human world of luxury, the mirror reflects her **socially constructed identity**, she adopts the polished qualities of a pampered animal. The feline imagery deconstructs the **human – animal** binary, leading to the assumption that identity adopts to environment:

You could not have said that her freshness was fading but she smiled at herself in mirrors a little too often, these days, and the face that smiled back was not quite the one she had seen contained in the Beast’s agate eyes. Her face was acquiring, instead

of beauty, a lacquer of the invincible prettiness that characterizes certain pampered, exquisite, expensive cats [9, p.49].

Importantly, this realization confronts her with a **loss of authenticity**, making her long for the sincerity and depth she experienced with the Beast. Despite the fact that the departure from the his palace initially appeared as a form of liberation, she ultimately realizes that **true fulfillment** lies in returning to Mr.Lyon, though this time by **choice** rather than **obligation**. Symbolically, this happens in **spring** – a season of **renewal** and reconsideration, and is opposed to winter, when she first arrived at the Beast’s palace, characterized by **stillness** and suspended reality. The ending of the fairy tale resolves key binary oppositions – **wild** – **tame**. As the Beauty finds the Beast dying, she embraces his animal form, which paradoxically allows him to shed it, completing the beast – man oppositions by merging both identities into one.

Another fairy tale from the collection is “Puss-in-Boots”. Carter draws from Perrault’s version but radically reimagines it with her feminist and postmodern twist. Rather than focusing on social climbing and material gain, the tale centers around desire, bodily pleasure and rebellion against patriarchal control. The essential structure of **master** – **servant** is kept: clever cat helps a man get a woman. Puss is cunning and lascivious. The **human** – **animal** opposition is obvious, as the boundary between feline instinct and human intelligence is blurred:

Figaro here; Figaro, there, I tell you! Figaro upstairs, Figaro downstairs and [...] this little Figaro can slip into my lady’s chamber smart as you like at any time whatsoever that he takes the fancy for, don’t you know, he’s a cat of the world, cosmopolitan, sophisticated... [9, p.68]

Another opposition of **rich - poor** is also preserved, for the man’s “*lodgings are poor, though he’s handsome enough and even en déshabille, nightcap and all, there’s a neat, smart, dandifies air about him*” [9, p.69], but the author undermines its seriousness by emphasizing erotic fulfillment over social ascent.

The female character, who the man falls in love with, is initially portrayed through a powerful opposition between **freedom** and **confinement**, her identity seems to be sacred and imprisoned:

There is a lady sits in a window for one hour and one hour only, at the tenderest time of the dusk. You can scarcely see her features, the curtains almost hide her, shrouded like a holy image [...]. Never a girl in all Bergamo so secluded except, on Sundays, they let her go to Mass, bundled up in black, with a veil on [9, p.71].

So, her public exposure is tightly controlled and policed by another woman being referred to as 'aged hag' and 'prison dinner' [9, p.71], she symbolizes a grotesque figure of repression and surveillance. The fact that the lady is literally trapped inside the husband's house contributes to the **inside – outside** oppositions and becomes a symbol of the patriarchal prison. Moreover, she sits in a **high** window and her fixed positioning gives her an iconic status, while Puss and his master are always **down** in the street, climbing, sneaking, moving, so their lowness represents activity. However, later in the tale Carter subverts the rigidity of the binaries through Puss's mischievous intervention. She responds to the cat's playful affection with a smile momentarily lifting her veil and revealing her face. That was her first act of rebellion and a signal of selfhood, of **repressed identity** opposed to **awakening self-expression**.

When the woman and the narrator's master scheme to kill her aged husband, she is no longer a prisoner of patriarchal control. She helps set the trap, and her joy afterward is expressed in open sensuality: her laughter, nudity and delight in her lover's presence. In such a way, one of the oppositions is **old – young**, because her husband represents decay and possessive power, while the young lover is connected to vitality, desire and her final liberation. Another one is **male power – female power**, as her agency is initially in the hands of Puss and his master, but she proves not to be a passive prize collaborating in her escape and seduction.

Finally, Puss' wit, manipulation and **cunning** nature are contrasted with the old husband's brute control, **force** and societal norms. The **life – death** opposition concludes the tale. The cat and his master orchestrate the death of the old, they disguise themselves and manipulate emotions:

'Oh, Doctor, oh, Doctor, come quick as you can; our good man's taken a sorry tumble!' And weeping fit to float a smack, she is, so doesn't see the doctor's apprentice is most colourfully and completely furred and whiskered [9, p.82].

Puss, instead of being merely a helper, is a clever trickster and unreliable narrator with his own motives, since the old man's fall is never shown directly, only the aftermath. This creates another binary opposition of **reality – performance**. The exaggerated theatricality aligns with the postmodern tendencies to blur authenticity and performance, which gives rise to the issue of identity and truth.

In “The Company of Wolves”, the second version of the “Little Red Riding Hood”, Angela Carter does not utilize violence as much as in the previous adaptation: instead of killing, the girl welcomes the beast being attracted to him.

Interestingly, the wolf is presented as a liminal creature that embodies the collapse of rigid oppositions, particularly those of **light - darkness, nature - civilization** and **human – beast**. He absorbs the darkness but returns the stolen light:

At night, the eyes of wolves shine like candle flames, yellowish, reddish, but that is because the pupils of their eyes fatten on darkness and catch the light from your lantern to flash it back to you – red for danger [9, p.110].

Upon the encounter with the creature, the girl doesn't realize the true nature of the werewolf, because he acts as a man. The **truth - deception** binary is represented through **seduction** and **danger**, the enticing and harmless is actually dangerous:

I don't believe you. Besides aren't you afraid of wolves?

He only tapped the gleaming butt of his rifle and grinned.

Is it a bet? He asked her. Shall we make a game of it? What will you give me if I get to your grandmother's house before you?

What would you like? She asked disingenuously.

A kiss [9, p.115].

Ultimately, the wager as a **harmless game** turns into an **alluring game**, the girl's attention is diverted from her original goal – **safety** – to the attraction she feels:

He went through the undergrowth and took her basket with him but she forgot to be afraid of the beasts, [...], for she wanted to dawdle on her way to make sure the handsome gentleman would win his wager [9, p.115].

Thus, girl's initial behavior stands for **youth**, while the moment she becomes more aware of the 'game' shifts her toward **maturity**. When she arrives at her

grandmother's house and discovers that she has been eaten by a wolf – “*carnivore incarnate*” [p.116] - the girl chooses **life** over **death**. Her act of burning her red scarlet shawl is a symbol of **liberation/action** rather than **passivity**. **Fire inside** the house contrasts with **icy snow outside** – the external, rigid world indifferent to her transformation. Her bold behavior and union with the werewolf further dissolve the line between civilization and the primal:

The girl burst out laughing; she knew she was nobody's meat. She laughed at him full face, she ripped off his shirt for him and flung it into the fire, in the fiery wake of her own discarded clothing [9, p.116].

The final scene, where the protagonist lies between the paws of the ‘tender wolf’, demonstrates her complete integration into the untamed world. This creates **sound** – **silence** opposition underpinned by changes in surroundings: “*the blizzard lied down, [...], all silent*” [9, p.118]; the howling wolves, which once signified chaos, gradually fade into silence as the girl embraces her new identity.

One more Carter's retelling of “Little Red Riding Hood” is called “Wolf-Alice” with the **human** – **animal** binary opposition at its core. The tale starts with a description of a creature labelled ‘she’ which “*is not a wolf herself, although suckled by wolves*” [9, p.119]. It is followed by other distinct features, such as animalistic physicality, heightened animal senses and non-human behavior. Her identity is hybrid and gives her otherworldly presence, for “*nothing about her is human except that she is not a wolf*” [9, p.119]. The lifestyle is driven by instincts and set in contrast to the future-planning human world, so **rational** – **irrational** binary can be also outlined:

Like the wild beasts, she lives without a future. She inhabits only the present tense, a fugue of the continuous, a world of sensual immediacy as without hope as it is without despair [9, p.119].

The conflict between **civilization** and **wildness** is stressed further when nuns, being unable to fully acculturate the **child**, hand her off to the **old** Duke. Living in the gloomy mansion like an ordinary man during the **day**, he howls around the graves at **night** and resembles a monstrous, **man - beast** figure and suggests supernatural alienation: “*nothing can hurt him since he ceased to cast an image in the mirror*” [9,

p.120]. More importantly, he represents the **other**: “*he passed through the mirror and now, henceforward, lives as if upon the other side of things* [9, p.121]. His room is painted **terracotta**, but it turns **white** when the moon shines described as ‘governess of transformations’ what ties it to metamorphosis and werewolves blurring the line between **sanity** and **savagery**.

The girl, on the other hand, is reimagined as a wise and pure figure. Carter deploys numerous Biblical allusions suggesting she could have belonged in an unfallen Eden, but the world she inhabits is already broken, so she is an anachronism:

*If you could transport her, in her filth, rags and feral disorder, to the Eden of our first beginnings [...], she might prove to be the wise child who leads them all and her **silence** and her howling a language as authentic as any **language** of nature. In a world of talking beasts and flowers, she would be the bud of flesh in the kind lion’s mouth: but how can the bitten apple flesh out its scar again? Mutism is her lot* [9, p.121].

The description is deeply postmodern in its subversion of myths. It reclaims the wild, silent **female figure** not as a monstrosity, compared to its **male** representative Duke, but as a possible redeemer or prophet of a new order providing the **wisdom** – **ignorance** opposition and, specifically, pointing out to the gap between **fallen world** and **Edenic past**.

The moment of self-realization and the discovery of the protagonist’s dual nature takes place in Duke’s bedroom. It is a crucial point in the fairy tale, as her name is finally revealed – Wolf-Alice. Initially, she interacts with the reflection as if it were another creature, but when she recognizes the cold, unresponsive glass, she realizes her separation from the world of living beings creating, thus, a **self** – **other** binary. Her sensuality and an attempt to enter the human world is further stressed when she puts on Duke’s grandmother’s ball dress. Her main aim was to “*put on the visible sign of her difference from them [wolves]*” [9, p.125]. Moreover, the white bridal dress becoming a symbol of her new **femininity** and **purity**, while the Duke and his **masculinity** associated with blood, rot and cannibalism represents sheer **corruption**.

However, Carter deconstructs the last binary toward the end of the fairy tale. The motif of revenge and the opposition between **power** and **vulnerability** makes a turning point, as the Duke was wounded because the young widower – the husband of one of the Duke’s former victims – shot him with a silver bullet. The spatial component of the church, where the ritual takes place, contrasts with the Duke’s gothic palace, what reflects the deeper binary of **sacred** – **profane**. It also forces him to transform, to rise “*like any common forked biped*” [9, p.125] and become recognizably human, so his wound is both physical and symbolic.

Finally, Wolf-Alice embraces her liminal identity – part human, part animal, part woman; she is also a **healer** who nurses the Duke, the former **hunter**, without fear or disgust. Her care helps restore his humanity:

Little by little, there appeared within it, like the image on photographic paper that emerges, [...], as if brought into being by her soft, moist, gentle tongue, finally, the face of the Duke [9, p.126].

The story ends with quiet empathy, mutual recognition and becoming dissolving the beast – human, male – female and wild – civilized oppositions.

All in all, the binary oppositions across the tales “The Courtship of Mr.Lyon”, “Puss-in-Boots”, “The Company of Wolves”, “Wolf-Alice” are interrelated. They reflect social dimensions, such as poor – rich, master – servant, foregrounding the roles of class. They intersect with gendered binaries and show how economic hierarchies reinforce gendered control. Spatial binaries (inside – outside, home space – alien space, forest – home) amplify ontological (reality – performance, sanity – savagery) and existential (danger – safety, rational – irrational, loss of authenticity – true fulfillment) oppositions. The sound – silence pair should be stressed, since it is unique and quite meaningful. In the tales, silence symbolizes emotional repression and social expectation, or the internalized passivity of traditional romantic roles, while sound marks desire and emotional revelation. So, silence, when broken, represents the subversion of imposed roles in love and identity.

Conclusion to Chapter 3

“The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories” (1992) by Angela Carter is a postmodern reworking of classic fairy tales characterized by Gothic tradition and feminist critique.

Among the 10 postmodern fairy tales analyzed, there were 3 thematic groups outlines: 1) power, violence and female agency (3 tales); 2) metamorphosis and death (3 tales); 3) love and subversion (4 tales). Overall 150 binary oppositions were identified. The most recurrent binaries are light – darkness (8), passivity – agency (8), self – other (7), life – death (6), power – vulnerability (6), human – animal (5), predator – prey (5). Among the unique binaries that appeared only once are choice – obligation, living person – mechanical creature, reality – performance, creation – destruction, Fallen world – Edenic past, sound – silence, fire – ice and skepticism – credit. A semantic classification of binaries can be presented by 11 groups: moral and ethical (good – evil, respect – submission, freedom – confinement, justice – wrongdoing, innocence – predation, hidden – revealed identity), ontological (self – other, rational -irrational, reality – illusion, sacred – profane, subject - object), spatial (home – alien space, inside – outside, open – closed space, up – low, internal – external, North - South), social and gendered (rich – poor, master – servant, victim/protector – killer, seducer – captor, male - female), temporal and seasonal (day – night, past – present, winter – spring, stillness – renewal), cognitive (naivety – knowledge/wisdom, sanity – savagery), existential (life – death, human – beast, nature – civilization), perceptual (sight – blindness).

The topics of domination and female emancipation are explored with the help of gendered, moral/ethical, cognitive and ontological oppositions. The fairy tales on metamorphosis and death underline bodily and existential transformation with the stress on ontological oppositions, existential and temporal which often depict the threshold between different states. In tales of love and subversion, social, spatial, perceptual and ontological oppositions uncover the tension between internal desire and external constraints.

The use of subversive narrative strategies enabled Carter to deconstruct hierarchal binary oppositions stressing their instable and hybrid nature. Within gender binaries, agency, voice and power are given to female characters to resist patriarchal authority. Fixed moral categories are fused, for desire, power, fear exist on a spectrum and characters embody contradictions. The category of space is exemplified by familiar settings transformed into ambiguous and liminal spaces which are simultaneously threatening and liberating. The ontological oppositions are central to all the tales with a special focus on self – other oppositions and the issue of identity.

Overall, Angela Carter challenges fixed binaries revealing that identity and meaning are fluid and transformative.

CONCLUSION

Binary oppositions occupy an important place in the realm of the fairy tale genre. The dual perception of the world has long served as a principle of perceiving and categorizing the world. The peculiarity is inherent in the worldview of both ancient people and modern people. The phenomenon of a binary opposition was studied scientifically, anthropologically, and, ultimately, found its significance in literature as well. By positioning contrasting concepts, writers shape the moral, emotional and ideological landscapes of their works. Oppositions help readers navigate the text's values, dilemmas, character arcs, often being a mirror to the cultural and social beliefs of the time. Furthermore, by either reinforcing or subverting presumably rigid dichotomies, literature challenges reader's expectations and provoke critical reflection.

There were 51 fairy tales taken for the analysis, 41 of which are traditional gathered by Flora Annie Steel and 10 are postmodern written by Angela Carter on the basis of classical fairy tales. The study has shown that the phenomenon of binary oppositions is characteristic of both collections and are important tools in forming the underlying ideas of literary works.

With the help of the analysis of the traditional fairy tales "English Fairy Tales" (1918) [39] by F.A.Steel, 242 binary oppositions were singled out. The categorization helped to outline 9 semantic groups. The most significant and numerous categories are the moral/ethical and social ones. Oppositions such as good – evil, reward – punishment, obedience – disobedience, cruelty – kindness, rich – poor, master – servant, peasant – nobleman were especially frequent. This dominance reflects the didactic nature of traditional tales which aimed to teach clear moral lessons and stress social norms. Through moral oppositions, the tales transmit core values of honesty, bravery, kindness, humility. The reward of virtuous behavior and the punishment of vice are the most common motifs. Meanwhile, social oppositions highlight the hierarchical structures, social mobility or injustice typical of the society in which the tales were rooted. Spatial and temporal oppositions also play an important role but they mostly serve to support the moral and social narratives marking places of safety opposed to danger. The light – darkness opposition should be specifically stressed due

to its literal and metaphorical nature. On the one hand, light marks spaces of safety, home, civilization, while darkness stands for danger, wilderness, the unknown – areas, where magical, threatening encounters typically occur. On the other hand, light is associated with knowledge, goodness, virtue, truth, whereas darkness signifies ignorance, evil, deception, moral peril. This dual role underscores and links physical spaces and natural cycles to the internal ethical states of characters. So, the prominence of moral and social oppositions mirrors the key functions of folk narratives: to transmit moral values and maintain the stability of social order.

In contrast, A.Carter's postmodern fairy tales "The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories" (1992) [9] reframe and subvert traditional oppositions. Around 150 binary pairs were found in her tales. Despite the fact that the number of fairy tales is 10, they entitle a remarkable number of oppositions due to the complexity and layered nature of narratives. They were grouped into 11 semantic categories. The most frequent semantic groups are gendered, existential and ontological. Oppositions, such as male – female, power – vulnerability, innocence – corruption, self – other, subject – object, freedom – captivity, life – death appeared consistently throughout the tales. In such a way, the author focuses on deconstructing traditional gender roles, questions identity, agency and explores existential boundaries between humanity and animality, reality and fantasy, life and death. Moreover, cognitive, temporal and spatial oppositions are deeply intertwined, especially the latter ones, as they show the character's inner journeys: moving across physical spaces also marks shifts in perception, emotional awakening and existential awareness. At the intersection of the aforementioned binaries, the question of identity becomes central and appears in each of the tale. In 6 tales out of 10, characters undergo metamorphosis by confronting spaces of the unknown and times of uncertainty, where traditional categories are destabilized. This proves the fact that, from the postmodern perspective, identity is not stable, but is rather a fluid construct, reshaped by journeys and encounters with 'otherness'. Generally, Carter's postmodernist revision of the fairy tale traditions is evident in her technique to exaggerate, reverse and collapse oppositions. Gendered oppositions dominate because the writer interrogates how traditional narratives have historically positioned

women as passive, innocent and, most importantly, objectified figures. Instead, Carter offers alternative depictions of female agency, sexuality and subjectivity. Existential and ontological oppositions contribute to this, so transformation, instability and ambiguity are explored not as exceptions, but as natural states of being. Thus, the frequent use and deconstruction of classical oppositions shift fairy tales from rigid moral lessons to provocative examination of universal human experience.

When comparing the findings from “English Fairy Tales” [39] and “The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories” [9], it becomes clear that although both collections rely on binary, the use, function and meaning of the oppositions differ substantially. The binary pairs in traditional fairy tales are grouped around moral and social semantic categories to emphasize clear moral codes, underline stable social hierarchies and reflect a worldview where distinctions are absolute and transitions between categories are rare. They educate and establish the boundaries necessary for order. In contrast, postmodern fairy tales suggest another perspective. They mainly revolve around gendered, existential and philosophical groups, so their aim is to challenge traditions and provoke critical reading. Such narratives expose the shifting and, to some extent, illusory nature of binaries. The focus is made on subjectivity, inner conflicts and resistance to social prescriptions. These ideas are not found in traditional tales and appear contradictory to the conventional narrative patterns of the folk stories.

Despite their differing approaches, the tales of both F.A.Steel and A.Carter share commonalities in the use of certain types of oppositions. Their tales employ spatial, temporal, seasonal, cognitive and genealogical oppositions to intensify the most crucial ones. They help structure journeys, transformations and dynamics between characters.

Based on the conducted work, it is possible to conclude that such phenomenon as binary oppositions is a fundamental mechanism through which fairy tales structure meaning, conflicts and changes. Their presence across traditional and postmodern fairy tales proves their enduring role in narratives. The findings can be undoubtedly used not only in literary studies, but also in psychology, linguistics and other fields of research.

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SUMMARY

Магістерська робота присвячена дослідженню ролі, значення та функціонування бінарних опозицій у жанрі казки. Особливу увагу приділено тому, як опозиції формують наративний сенс, розкривають характер персонажів, відображають їхні дії та окреслюють проблеми різного характеру. Аналіз ґрунтується на прикладах із класичних народних наративів. У сучасному літературознавстві зростає інтерес до того, як опозиції трансформуються у постмодерністських переосмисленнях традиційних казок. Це дозволяє порівняти зміну казкових конвенцій від традиційної до постмодерної літератури.

Об'єктом дослідження є поняття «бінарні опозиції» як літературне явище.

Предметом виступає реалізація бінарних опозицій у традиційних та постмодерністських казках.

Актуальність теми зумовлена недостатнім вивченням бінарних опозицій, а також потребою в їхньому комплексному аналізі.

Метою цієї роботи є ґрунтовне дослідження типів, функцій і трансформацій бінарних пар на матеріалі традиційних англійських казок Флори Енні Стіл та постмодерністських авторських казок британської письменниці Анджели Картер.

Для досягнення поставленої мети до уваги взяті такі **завдання**:

1. Визначити теоретичні засади жанру казки.
2. Уточнити значення та особливості бінарних опозицій.
3. Проаналізувати використання опозиційних пар у традиційних фольклорних казках.
4. Розглянути особливості переосмислення опозицій у постмодерністських інтерпретаціях.
5. Порівняти отримані результати.

Розв'язання поставлених завдань забезпечується застосуванням системного підходу та низки конкретних наукових **методів** і прийомів: описового методу; методу порівняння, контекстуального аналізу, структурно-семантичної ідентифікації, якісного і кількісного аналізу.

Матеріалом для дослідження стали 51 казка, взяті зі збірок: “English Fairy Tales” (1918) [39] Флори Енні Стіл та “The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories” (1992) [9] Анджели Картер.

У традиційних казках збірки “English Fairy Tales” (1918) [39] Ф.Е.Стіл було виявлено 242 бінарні опозиції. Вони були згруповані у 9 семантичних категорій: морально-етичні, соціальні, просторові, генеалогічні, когнітивні, універсальні, часові, надприродні та фізичні. Найбільш чисельними виявилися моральні-етичні та соціальні опозиції. Особливо часто зустрічаються такі бінарні пари: добро – зло, нагорода – покарання, слухняність – непослух, багатий – бідний, пан – слуга, селянин – дворянин. Завдяки моральним опозиціям казки передають базові цінності: чесність, мужність, доброту, скромність. Соціальні ж протиставлення висвітлюють соціальну мобільність або несправедливість. Їхня домінантність підкреслює дидактичну функцію традиційної казки: навчати за допомогою чітких моральних настанов, відтворювати суспільні ієрархії, демонструвати винагороду за чесноти та покарання за порушення норм.

Просторові та часові протиставлення також відіграють важливу роль, хоч і переважно як допоміжні: вони окреслюють безпечний або небезпечний простір і відзначають межі змін. Особливої уваги заслуговує опозиція світло – темрява, яка функціонує як у буквальному, так і в метафоричному сенсі: світло символізує безпеку, знання, істину, тоді як темрява уособлює небезпеку, невігластво, оману. Такий поділ інтенсифікує моральні значення та пов’язує фізичний простір з етичними станами персонажів.

У постмодерністській збірці “The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories” (1992) [9] А.Картер було ідентифіковано 150 опозицій серед 10 казок, які було поділено на 11 семантичних груп: морально-етичні, онтологічні, просторові, соціальні, гендерні, часові, сезонні, когнітивні, екзистенційні та перцептивні. Найчастіше зустрічаються гендерні, екзистенційні та онтологічні дихотомії, що вказує на акцент авторки на деконструкції традиційних гендерних ролей, проблем ідентичності та меж буття. Такі опозиції, як чоловік – жінка, суб’єкт – об’єкт, свобода – неволя, життя – смерть систематично з’являються в текстах. Таким

чином, авторка ставить під сумнів питання волі та межі між людським і звірячим, реальним і вигаданим життям.

Крім того, когнітивні, часові й просторові опозиції тісно взаємопов'язані, адже фізичні переходи персонажів позначають також внутрішні трансформації, зміни світогляду та пізнання себе. Центральною стає проблема ідентичності, що реалізується через опозицію я – інший. У більшості казок ключові персонажі зазнають метаморфоз, що доводить: з постмодерністської перспективи ідентичність є нестабільною, гнучкою, і формується через контакт з «іншим». Таким чином, завдяки активній деконструкції класичних опозицій Картер переносить казку з площини повчальної ідеї у простір філософського переосмислення універсального людського досвіду.

Порівняння результатів демонструє, що хоча обидві збірки активно використовують бінарність як принцип, їхні функції та зміст суттєво відрізняються. Традиційні казки зосереджені на моральних і соціальних протиставленнях, що утверджують абсолютну систему цінностей і суспільний порядок. Натомість постмодерністські казки будуються навколо питань гендеру, філософії та екзистенції і ставлять за мету критику соціальних стереотипів та уявлень про норму. Опозиції, навпаки, проблематизуються: вони служать для переосмислення загальноприйнятих понять, відображення внутрішніх конфліктів та розширення меж інтерпретації.

Окрім наведеного, важливо зазначити, що в основі як традиційних, так і постмодерністських казок лежить глибокий символізм опозицій, які організують не лише сюжет, але й внутрішню динаміку персонажів: герой або героїня змінюється, схилиючись до дихотомії або долаючи опозиційні межі. Також помітною є тенденція до використання опозицій як способу створення напруги, розвитку конфлікту та розв'язання ключових ситуацій.

Обидва корпуси мають спільні риси, що відображено у використанні просторових, часових, сезонних і когнітивних, генеалогічних опозиціях. Вони допомагають структурувати сюжет, показати шлях героя, моменти перетворення, зростання та зміни в оповіді. Незважаючи на значні стилістичні

відмінності, саме принцип опозиційності об'єднує традиційні й постмодерністські казки, доводячи його універсальну цінність як інструменту художнього мислення.

Отже, бінарний принцип лежить в основі структурної та семантичної організації казок з найдавніших часів до сучасності. Результати роботи мають не лише теоретичне значення, а й практичну цінність – вони можуть використовуватися в літературознавстві, фольклористиці, когнітивній поетиці, культурології, а також у викладанні аналізу художнього тексту.