PREFACE

Hans Christian Andersen once said: "Every man's life is a fairy tale, written by God's fingers". Hans Andersen's remark clearly underlines a moral and ethical approach to the thematic content of the fairy tales. Fairy tales handed down from generation to generation gradually pass through two different stages of transformation: oral and graphological. We may somehow accept the working of "God's fingers" (which may symbolically refer to the ancient tribal and ethnic imagination) in the oral stage of the formation of fairy tales. But "God's fingers" seem to disappear the moment it comes to be written down. As it passes through the graphological stage, fairy tales begin to be remodulated in terms of distinctive narrativistic features. It is true that these folk tales are essentially self-governed and self-evolving in so far as the original nucleus of these stories, generally conceived in terms of distinctive folk tale formula, comes to be expanded and elaborated in course of its journey through different parts of the world.

But fairy tales collected and written down by Brothers Grimm may reveal specific narratological features. Todorov's work
on the science of narratology and Propp's examination of narrative features in the Russian fairy tales may be regarded as essentially helpful in determining the narrative design of the fairy tales collected by Brothers Grimm.

In chapter 1, I have tried to form a critical perspective through an extensive discussion on the available body of criticism on fairy tales in general. This chapter seeks to present various types of critical negotiations in relations to the growth and development of fairy tales. We have also discussed how these fairy tales, including those of the Brothers Grimm, come to be functional in sociological, moral and didactic terms. In chapter 2, I have tried to concentrate on the socio-political framework of these fairy tales. It is true that the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm can never be analysed in terms of acceptable historical framework. In other words, these fairy tales can never be interpreted by the parameters of authentic history. But we may situate a distinctive socio-cultural pattern which is sporadically reflected through these fairy tales. In chapter 3, I have extensively discussed the nature and function of narratology with reference to recent critical trends. Narratology is
the science of narrative. We have tried to concentrate primarily on the critical principles formulated by Todorov, Propp, Levi-Strauss, Genette, Chatman, et al. The discussions contained in this chapter largely work as the basis for my narratological analysis of the fairy tales in the next chapter. In chapter 4, my emphasis is on projecting the narrative design in the tales of the Brothers Grimm. Here we have tried to locate five different narrative variants which help us to interpret various thematic clusters used in these fairy tales.

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