

Hans Christian Anderson, 'The Snow Queen'

Tess Maginess

Brief biography

Hans Christian Anderson was born in Odense, near Copenhagen, on 2 April 1805. His parents were not well off. He was helped, however, by Jonas Collin, one of the directors of the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen who paid for him to go to a boarding school. He entered the University of Copenhagen in 1828.

He published his first story the next year and it was immediately successful; Anderson tried his hand at poetry and playwriting. He also wrote novels. But he is nowadays most famous for his fairy tales, the first collection of which appeared in 1835. 'The Snow Queen' was published in 1845.

Anderson was given a grant by the Danish Royal Family and this enabled him to travel extensively in Europe, Africa and Asia Minor (roughly speaking, modern Turkey). He visited Dickens in 1847 and again, then years later. During these years he also wrote travelogues.

Anderson never married though it seems he fell in love many times – both with women and men. It seems he had a strong Christian faith. He died of liver cancer.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hans-Christian-Andersen-Danish-author>

<https://www.biography.com/writer/hans-christian-andersen>

Fairytales in context

Most fairy tales are, ultimately adapted from oral tales. As with all oral storytelling, different tellers or performers, offer different versions of the same tale or even combine bits from different stories. Anderson's stories are memorable perhaps because they retain the shape and sound of old oral stories but also add elements of literary tuning. Fairytales, for children, were important in Victorian Britain as a vehicle for instruction – the tale always needed to have a clear moral. But, as we can see with this story, Anderson refuses to offer a simple or

straightforward 'message' and part of the appeal of the story, maybe especially for the present day, is its ambiguity, its mystifying qualities, the way it does not quite add up.

Fairytales and children's stories began to be studied very seriously in the early part of the twentieth century by scholars like Vladimir Propp who wrote a very influential book called *The Morphology of the Folktale* in 1928. Why was there such an interest in fairy tale at this time? This was perhaps due to a combination of factors – the rise of Jungian dream interpretation and the sense that fairy tales operated a bit like dream sequences, perfectly logical but not necessarily rational. So the tales can seem to be a conjunction, sometimes disquieting between the conscious and unconscious, the ordinary and the marvellous.

Alongside this was a certain nostalgia for a more primal 'innocent' world – almost always a rural world, unspoilt by industry and urbanisation. So perhaps the popularity of the fairy tale can be seen as part of a kind of fin de siècle nostalgia, elements of which we see also in the Celtic Revival (or Twilight) in Ireland. But, of course, alongside this nostalgia and maybe also a part of it, paradoxically, was the rise of new 'scientific' disciplines such as folklore studies and anthropology. We saw this in Ireland, for example, with the proliferation of scholars of Irish 'antiquities' beginning away back with Charlotte Brooke in the 1700s and reaching its florescence in the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century with such scholars as Robin Flower, Kuno Meyer and Estyn Evans.

The 'Snow Queen' - versions of the story

A very impressive number of 'versions' of Anderson's story have been produced since it was first published – including ballets, operas and most recently stories. Perhaps the most famous 'adaptation' has been the Disney Animation, 'Frozen'. It may be that the mark of a

story's endurance is indeed how it can be re-envisioned in different eras and, indeed across cultures. We certainly see this with Shakespeare.

As the Powerpoint images reveal, what is striking is how preeminent visual images of the Snow Queen are. In Anderson's story she is, in fact, rather a minor character, almost a kind of *deus ex machina* for separating the two young people, Kay and Greta, but it must also be said that Anderson's description of the snow queen is breathtaking in its beauty and it is clear that the figure of the woman has a mesmeric, haunting quality. In 'Frozen' the contemporary emphasis on sisterhood, applauded by critics like Caitlin Gallagher, is perhaps the most obvious difference since, in the original, there is no connection between the Snow Queen and Greta. Indeed the Snow Queen is down in Italy inspecting her volcanoes when Greta arrives at her palace. And, in 'Frozen' the Snow Queen is presented as much a victim as a wrongdoer, whereas in Anderson's story, while there is a certain ambiguity, she is clearly delineated as the villain of the piece. The anthemic song 'Let it Go' suggests that the Snow Queen embraces her own (American) individuality, not caring any more to be perfect but going her own way. The animation was the highest grossing Disney film ever ousting even *The Lion King*.

Julia Serebrinsky sardonically comments:

Leave it to Disney to surgically reconfigure Anderson's allegory and mould it into a flawlessly stitched script that transforms the eerie into the adorable, and the unsettling into [the] heartfelt. <https://www.readitforward.com/essay/book-to-film-frozen/>

Modern fiction retellings of the story abound, including one by Irish writer, Emma Donoghue,

Anderson's story

Now, what strikes you about 'The Snow Queen'? Like all decent fairy tales, it is a mix of the banal and the marvellous, and/ or the miraculous. As Margaret Rustin comments, the story

both enchants and disturbs. (*Books for Keeps*).

<http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/152/childrens-books/articles/other-articles/a-re-reading-of-the-snow-queen>)

Structure

First story, which deals with the mirror and the shards of glass

Why does Anderson divide his story into seven mini- stories? One reason may be that he wants to mark changes of mood and even mark the progression of the plot or meaning of the story. We begin with what we might call a kind of frame story. This really provides a kind of logic *or raison d'être* for the stories which follow, creating a sort of framework of meaning. We may note that the moral architecture to the opening story draws as much on secular myth and folktale as it does in orthodox religious texts – the ogre is not a recognisable Biblical figure and angels do not generally feature in traditional fairy tales. Indeed it could be said that this blend of religious and secular of the literary and the oral that we encounter here gestures towards the narrative structure of the story. More specifically, we have God at the beginning and the end, framing all that happens in between but also offering a curiously disquieting disjuncture between two kinds of belief, two kinds of narrative.

There is no shortage of drama, urgency even. The first and last sentence in this first story are, grammatically speaking, imperatives:

'Right then! Time to start'./Listen now'

So this enacts another sort of framing or symmetry in terms of tone. We are drawn in, beguiled by the excitement in the narrator's voice; the excitement of going on a journey, an adventure; even though we are sitting in the house, not moving at all. Anderson's manoeuvre here helps us understand why Kay is also drawn into the spell of the fantastical Snow Queen but I think Anderson may also have a deeper purpose – and that is to place teller and reader in the same imaginative space; their shared excitement.

The evil ogre quickly becomes 'the devil', fusing Christian and Pagan, but in an odd way, because the devil is in quotation marks, as if Anderson's narrator was mocking Christianity or the idea that the world is divided neatly into good and evil. 'The devil' is a stock villain – which the audience – collusively recognises. And that opening apostrophe, 'Listen', the direct invocation, converts readers into listeners and, contingently, we have a sense that we are listening with others to the story. We are part of a kind of in crowd or audience at this performance. But 'the devil' is also curiously humanised and individualised. He happens to be in a really good mood and makes a mirror, but it is with the intent of cruelly distorting beauty and virtue. His attitude is wanton, cynical. The effect of the distorting mirror is beautifully registered in the very ordinary, domestic comparison; 'The loveliest landscapes looked like boiled spinach'. This is followed by the more menacing grotesquerie of 'the best of people . . . stood on their heads with no stomachs' before a return to the near banal; if a person had a freckle it spread out over both the nose and mouth.

The same mix of the homely and banal with the extraordinary and fantastical is evident too in the casual information that there is an ogre school, run by the devil. But, the level of distortion encouraged in that educational establishment is so extreme as to have convinced the scholars that a 'miracle' has taken place. In a clever inversion of the normal religious phenomenon of 'miracle', as a result of the mirror, people now see truly. But, of course, what they see is a distortion towards seeing only the ugly – beauty is, as it were, despoiled. On their way to mock God and the angels, the ogre scholars drop the mirror and it shattered into 'millions' billions and even more pieces'. Even a speck, a fragment of this distorting glass is lethal in its effect – because in making the person see the world as ugly, their heart is turned to a lump of ice' a collocation, however unprepared for, is, nonetheless, necessary for Anderson's plot in the stories to come.

It may be noted also, that while ogres and angels leave little room for ambiguity in terms of representing good and evil, the business of the mirror suggests a rather more modern

understanding – for what we have here is the notion of perspective – it is about how people see things as much as how they actually are – an almost Berkelean concept and certainly a quite relativist one for the nineteenth century. This is quite like Swift's use of distorting optics in *Gulliver's Travels* – most graphically perhaps when we consider how Gulliver falsely sees humans as Yahoos towards the end of the book, even though, of course, there have been many passages where Swift has excoriated human nature – showing men in a very unfavourable mirror – here the mirror reveals, exposes corruption and ugliness.

The second story. A little boy and a little girl

We have a very distinct change of focus – and indeed narrative style.

In the big city, where there are so many houses and people that there is not enough space for everyone to have a little garden, and where most people, for that reason, have to make do with flowers in pots, there were two poor children who nevertheless had a garden that was a bit bigger than a flower-pot.

We seem to be encountering a very straightforward social realism. And, we may even read this as a kind of 'ecofiction' of sorts, commentating as it does on urban congestion in the nineteenth century and the lack of 'green spaces'. And as Brian Young notes, the garden is a splendid example of biological diversity and that this is intrinsic to old fairy tales; more broadly the whole world of the story itself is teeming with species - hobgoblins, devils, angels, bees. <https://placesjournal.org/article/fairy-tale-architecture-the-snow-queen> And we may add, kissing reindeers, tender crows and yes, a Snow Queen. We may note also that the children are poor; Anderson often wrote stories about poor people and outsiders. So there may well be a moral level here and, of course, we recall that the imagery of the beautiful garden invokes Eden and, contingently, a child-like state of innocence and goodness. In the description of their garden in the guttering, much attention is focused on the rose tree that grows from each box, bending towards each other through their long branches. Roses are frequently used as symbols of God's presence in nature and in Catholic tradition, the rosary is, apparently, a protection against evil. Miracles and encounters with angels often involve roses and for Pagans, the rose represents the heart.

And, of course, even today, we give roses as a sign of love.

<https://www.learnreligions.com/sacred-roses-spiritual-symbolism-rose-123989>

In that sense, nature is endowed or invested with a metaphysical set of meanings. The children play happily in this Edenic *mise en scene* – the fact that it is a little cramped, makes it, perhaps, all the more intensely precious. But, of course, the garden cannot flower in winter and this, in the logic of the plot, is the dangerous time when cold temptation enters their world. For a while, the little girl and boy counteract their separation and the cold by placing a hot coin on the frozen window pane, making a little peephole ‘behind which a wonderfully mild eye would peer out, one from each window’. In a wonderfully subtle set of transformative shifts, we see the old grandmother suggest that the flakes of snow are white bees swarming. Prompted by the questions of the children, whose imaginations are also very rich and capacious, she agrees that there is a queen bee and that she flies towards the windows, and then they freeze over, as if with flowers (maybe a bit like the fern frost patterns that could be seen on windows before there was such a thing as central heating). The little boy, Kai, is all bravado, promising to defend the little girl, Greta, from the Snow Queen by putting her on a hot stove. The grandmother soothes him from this kind of violent response and tells them other stories.

But then one night, half-undressed (and hence vulnerable) he does see the snowflake turning into a ‘whole woman’:

She was very fine and beautiful, but made of ice, of blinding, twinkling ice, and yet she was alive; her eyes stared like two bright stars, although there was no calmness or rest in them.

This, in structural terms, is the first event of the story, or as Propp would have expressed it, the first ‘function’. To put this into modern dramatic terms: Enter man with gun’ So we have a happy equilibrium disturbed by the arrival of a stranger – often attractive and always destabilising. The order of the 31 ‘functions’ in Propp’s classification is not followed completely by Anderson, but that is not necessarily a bad thing at all.

The wee boy takes fright and jumps down. He is, apparently, saved. The next summer is especially beautiful and, almost as a talisman, Greta, teaches Kai a hymn:

The roses are in blossom in the vale;
There the Christ child too speaks without fail.

Apparently, Anderson is using an actual hymn here; the quote is from 'Den yndigste Rose er funden' by the Danish poet Adolph Brorson, 1732.

<https://andersen.sdu.dk/forskning/motiver/vismotive.html?vid=68&id=46>

However, the lines of the hymn do not seem to correspond.

One commentator notes:

The symbol of the rose is so powerful, so ubiquitous in fairy tales, that it goes almost without notice; and yet, its petals, as described in Taschen's wonderful dictionary *The Book of Symbols*, form the womb of the Self. This is echoed by a poem the children recite: *Where roses bloom so sweetly in the vale, There you shall find the Christ child, without fail.* <https://paintedblindpublishing.com/2016/12/23/spelling-eternity-the-alchemy-of-the-snow-queen/>

But then, one day, ominously, as the clock strikes five on the *church* steeple this is the second main event. A splinter of the wicked mirror glass hits Kai in the eye and another tiny shard goes into this heart; Soon his heart would be like a lump of ice'. Kai immediately changes into a spiteful, wanton and violent, he sees the roses now as ugly and breaks off two of the roses, shoving at the box.

Kay is keen to explore the world of boys and me, and, for Rustin, his masculinity is associated with a turning away from domesticity, kindness and the fragile beauty of flowers. Kay opts for daring, spitefulness.

Here is another commentary on the symbolism of the rose:

The literary symbol is used in three ways:

- According to medieval tradition, it represents chastity / virginity and thus was associated with young girls
- It signifies love, especially romantic passion
- It is also linked with mortality, a sign of the transience of human love and beauty, because it blooms, smells sweetly and then dies. It therefore links sex and death.

The penetration of the rose by the hidden canker worm can, therefore, be understood as the covert sex which destroys the virginity of an 'innocent' and thus corrupts her own expression of love. <https://crossref-it.info/textguide/songs-of-innocence-and-experience/13/1571>

Perhaps rather oddly, the narrator comments that the games the boy plays are now 'so dictated by reason'. This seems, somehow, a little outside the logic of the structure and suggests that Anderson is equating reason and iciness and distortion. Perhaps this is a little like the contraries of William Blake- who also used rose symbolism in his, *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1789). I have not come across any article which draws similarities between the two writers, but their joint interest in religion, nature and specific flower symbolism, does seem to suggest that Anderson may have drawn upon Blake.

Kay goes off skating with the other boys and almost randomly fastens his sledge to a large sleigh, painted completely white and, of course, this turns out to be the sleigh of the Snow Queen. Some commentators have argued that Kai is abducted – or seduced, but I think this is not quite borne out by the story, for Kai voluntarily hitches his sledge to that of the Snow Queen. Though, of course, he is then captive, he tries to unhitch himself but cannot.

In Propp's taxonomy, this is the 'absentation' function, where the hero or a member of the hero's community, leaves the security of home. I think this leaving creates a nice dramatic symmetry to the earlier incident where the Queen enters the community. And, following

Propp's functions, Kay has ignored the quiet interdiction of the grandmother, he enacts a 'violation' by defying her. And we have also a complicity between villain and Kay is forced to concede that he has been duped, that he is not a hero but a victim. While we may, as audience, admire the darkly sublime nature Kay has entered, we are left in no doubt about who is boss:

They flew over forests and lakes, over seas and lands; beneath them the cold wind roared and the wolves howled, the snow glittered, with black screeching crows flying above it, but above everything the moon alone shone so large and bright, and Kay gazed at . . . the long wintry night; during the day he slept at the Snow Queen's feet.

And though the Snow Queen is actually not cruel to him – indeed spares him from more kisses because she would kill him with her cold breath, he is captive and in another sense too, his desires can never fully be fulfilled – in a sort of Faustian way, he longs to know much more to please the Queen.

Perhaps the scene might also be read as a metaphor for desire. And, as noted earlier, fairy tale seems to inhabit a liminal world between the conscious and the unconscious.

And this is, I think, in moral terms, quite an important juncture in the overall story; Kay's notions of masculine heroism are seen to be ineffective, so, in a sense, he loses the traditional male place as heroic protagonist. Rather, it is Greta who is to emerge as the real hero – and with a very different set of capacities and virtues. Structurally, we move inwards to what we might call the third frame – the first frame being the narrator's tale of the ogre, the second frame being the tale of Kay's disappearance from his home and the third being the story of Greta's quest to find her playmate.

Third story. The flower garden of the woman who knew the art of sorcery

So, at this point of realisation – a kind of Joycean epiphany, we turn back to Greta. She mourns the loss of her friend. Then the spring comes and the sun grows warmer, she is

assured by the sun, the swallows that Kay is not dead. We cannot fail to notice that, while Kay is now literally surrounded by ice and that, internally, his heart is becoming icy and rational, Greta, on the contrary, is associated with heat, warmth and nature. She has, contingently, access to a quieter magic – an animated and friendly nature, consoling and encouraging.

She puts on her new red shoes, resolving to go to the river and ask her about Kay. As the slides reveal, red shoes carry a range of symbolic meanings – in Anderson's own story, they represent a dangerous vanity and ambition, in *The Wizard of Oz* we may see the shoes as representing a certain sexual and psychological maturity which can conquer evil. In the 1948 film the tragic outcome of the conflict between female romance and ambition is emphasised. The pope uses red shoes to signify the blood of Jesus and how that will conquer the devil. Satanists use red shoes, apparently, to question that line and now we have the female empowerment Red Shoes Movement.

In this story, Anderson indicates that he is quite capable of attaching different emphases within his own work, his story, 'The Red Shoes', published in the same year as 'The Snow Queen'. So there is a kind of intertextual play between Anderson's stories.

At a conscious level, Greta believes Kay will find the shoes (and by extension the wearer of them) attractive, but they also seem to be a kind of symbol of Easter regeneration – death being conquered by life, winter conquered by Spring, cold conquered by warmth. At a more unconscious level, the shoes may represent the awakening of Greta's desire for Kay. At any rate, significantly, she offers the shoes as a sacrifice to the river – to nature (a rather Pagan gesture) and must go, literally and metaphorically barefoot, her feet exposed to cold and soreness. So this may help establish her as an enduring and determined heroine

However, it takes Greta a while to find her heroic vavavoom and, indeed, she ends up drifting along the river in a small boat. She is brought to shore by an old woman – who is a sorcerer– not wicked, but determined both to rescue her and to possess her. Again, there may be a sexual undertone here but the old woman is certainly one of several ambivalent figures who help Greta. Propp calls these helpers ‘donors’. The old woman wants to protect Greta from the dangers of the ‘great, wide world’ but, at the same time, she does not want to let her live her life as she must. She offers all manner of temptations – lovely cherries, beautiful flowers. But this is a rather curious Edenic – to be sure we have the garden imagery and even coloured glass – suggestive of the stained glass in a church, but there is something not quite right about it; is the old woman a little too caressive as she combs Greta’s hair ‘with a golden comb, and her hair curled and shone so beautifully round the small friendly face that was so round and resembled a rose. The old woman tucks her up in red silk duvets that were filled with blue violets – perhaps a sexual image? But the rose like Greta finally realises that there is a peculiar absence of roses because, as it transpires, the old woman had cast a spell on them so that Greta would say with her – frozen perhaps in childhood? But, eventually Greta does, with her tears and her thoughts turn to Kay. The roses are ‘donors’ too like the swallows and the sun, choric consolers.

Each of the flowers in the garden have their own stories – these are rather odd, unsettling stories, which dip in and out of the marvellous, shiver between myth and realism. The orange lily (quite devoid of the particular symbolism attached to it in Northern Ireland, where it is associated with the victory of the Protestant William of Orange over the Catholic James II at the Battle of the Boyne (1690)). Here we have, rather, a mythic tale of Hindu ritual and a woman burned on her husband pyre, still desiring another man. Another flower story seems to draw on medieval Romance and a maiden waiting in her old baronial castle for her lover. Then there are other stories, some attaching back to myth – like the story the Hyacinth. It may be that Anderson is having a wee bit of fun here, mocking the intellectual elite for their

rather too humourless scientific deconstruction of fairy tales. Structurally, these mini-tales serve to create a bit of a digression, building suspense for the quest that is to begin. And, indeed, in old anthologies of folk tales, there were often digressive stories loosely stitched into the main story – that was part of the compendial convention I suppose. But, while the digressions – and indeed all the stories were, in the oral forms, anonymous and collaborative or communal, here Anderson may be poking a bit of fun at the Romantic literary writers' insistence on originality – each one of the flowers only want to tell their own, individual story. And maybe, for Anderson, this goes rather against the fairy tale spirit. So the flowers are not helpers, they are a bit solipsistic. And we see the donors in, perhaps, a more favourable light.

Greta finally makes her way out of the garden – she is not, actually, she discovers, locked in. But as she entered the great world and begins her quest, she realises that vital time has passed and she is facing autumn, symbolically, a tougher *mise en scene* than glorious summer, nature reflects her mood – a lovely example of pathetic fallacy; her small feet are sore and tired and everything around her seemed to be cold and raw; the long willow leaves had turned quite yellow and mist dripped from them in drops of water, one leaf after another was falling, only the blackthorn still had fruit on it but so sour.

The wonderful, vivid detailing of the scene shows how good Anderson was at verisimilitude, at the narrative techniques of Realism. And this description also contrasts beautifully with the high Romantic image of Kay in the cold winter sky, pulled along by the sleigh of the Snow Queen.

Fourth story. The prince and the princess

In the next story we return to the more magical nature where birds and animals can talk. We have quite a delightful crow who is most definitely a donor/helper, though he gets a wee bit embarrassed by her squeezing and kissing him. There are lovely moments of humour like this in the story. And Anderson, in having his crow declare his own shortcomings in talking, may also be having a little jibe at all the philological and folklore scholars. Greta admits her deficiency in crow language, but says her grandmother knows crow and P =--language too. This may be a sly allusion to Celtic studies where linguistic two strands had been identified – the P and Q Celts. The crow is quite a character; he has a tame sweetheart and she knows everything that goes on in the palace.

This ushers in another digression or embedded story. The princess is very clever and very much wants to marry but will only accept a suitor who is smart. There are, of course, newspapers in fairy tale palaces and they publish an advertisement. The wisest suitors bring sandwiches with them – another lovely homey detail within the magical *mise en scene*. The crow reckons that he has discovered Kay as the little fellow who successfully wins the hand of the Princess. But, alas, this proves to be a false start. Greta's heart pounds with fear and longing – it was as if she was about to do something bad. Of course she does not, and keeps herself, as it were, intact. The tame crow guides her into the palace, observing that Greta's 'vita' is extremely moving – perhaps a rather scholarly reference to the story of her life.

And, as they go, by the backstairs to the room where the prince and princess are, there is a delightful little 'eruption of the marvellous, as dreams come rushing past them, horses with flowing manes and thin legs, hunting lads, gentlemen and ladies on horseback – this is great fun – dream by a process of inversion, become real – swishing along the wall- the abstract and intangible is reified, made concrete.

But the rooms in the palace do not disappoint either in terms of the imaginative investment – their richness and singularity is breath-taking, we too fly along with Greta and the tame crow, landing in a bedroom where the ceiling is like a ‘tall palm tree with leaves of glass, precious glass, and in the middle of the floor, on a golden stalk hung two beds, each of which looked like a lily’. The visualisation is stunning in its originality and beauty. But, the prince is not, after all, Kay.

The princess is very sympathetic and asks the crows if they like a permanent position at court or ‘to fly freely’. Accepting the permanent position, they observe, in the most pragmatic and matter of fact way, ‘it’s a good idea to have something for one’s old age.’ Greta’s thoughts are primarily on the goodness of humans and animals – there is, for her, no distinction – they are all part of Creation. Sleeping in the prince’s bed, the dreams come flying by again, but now they look like God’s angels and they are pulling a small sledge and Kay is sitting on this sledge and is nodding. What an interesting foil this is to the earlier description of Kay ascending with the Snow Queen.

But, the next day, dressed beautifully by the princess, she embarks once again on her quest, accompanied for the first 20 miles or so by the crow. Logically, the crow sits next to her in the carriage because it cannot travel backwards! The female crow has a headache from eating too much, now they have a permanent position.

We return to the fantasia and magical – ‘the coach was lined with sugared pretzels, and there were various types of fruit and small spicy biscuits in the seats. As the crow bids farewell we have another lovely visual contrast: ‘it flew up into a tree and flapped its black wings as long as it could still see the carriage which gleamed just like bright sunshine.’ And

what comes across here so amazingly, is a kind of surge of emotion as we catch the crow's affection for the little girl.

Fifth story. The little robber girl.

Like all great fairy tales, the story is divided into a series of episodes where some kind of significant event occurs, marked here by the seven divisions into mini-stories. After the luxury and good treatment Greta has received she now, like all heroes, must also face obstacles and horrible encounters. The gleaming coach is captured by robbers. They are grotesque figures – a mother with whiskers a daughter who bites her mother. They seem types of the 'savage'. She is compared to Gerda and is 'stronger, more broad-shouldered and dark skinned; her eyes were quite black, so they almost looked sad. But Anderson is not satisfied with this kind of stereotyping these outsiders are also kindly, carnivalesque figures. The mother has her bottle and does somersaults. The girl is perhaps the most complex figure in the whole story – her black eyes almost look sad, she is madly affectionate towards Greta, but like the old grandmother, wants to possess her, 'smotehrcate her' as my niece used to put it. She is threatening and rough but also kindly. The robbers' castle is in graphic contrast to the aesthetically gorgeous palace of the princess in the previous section. This is a den much more menacing with huge fierce dogs, but yet, these dogs do not bark, 'for that was forbidden'. The robber girl is, like Greta, very much at home with animals, but, has a hint of teasing cruelty. Nonetheless, structurally, she is a foil for the real cruelty of the ogre – and indeed of Kay.

The robber girl steals the pretty muff from Greta, but gives her the mother's giant mitts as a consolation prize. Is this some kind of sexual transaction manqué?

The woodpigeons, which are part of the robber girls' retinue, tell her they have seen little Kay. The Snow Queen's carriage comes near them and her freezing breath killed all but two of the young birds.

The robber girl gives Greta her reindeer so that he can carry her to Lapland where dwells the Snow Queen, taking the precaution of tying her securely on to the reindeer's back. She gives her a plentiful supply of food but tells her not to be blubbering.

Sixth story. The Lapp Woman and the Finnmark Woman.

Greta and the reindeer stop at a very pitiful house – the roof going right down to the ground and the people having to crawl in and out. But the Lapp woman, another helper, is immensely kind. She writes directions on some split; a resourceful lady who does not happen to have paper. She tells them they have still a very long way to go – 600 miles and dispatches them on to another female helper, the Finnmark woman.

She turns out to be a little singular also – though not grotesque, just quirky. Her house is so hot that she goes round practically naked. She is tiny and has a muddy complexion. She looks after Greta beautifully and is tender also towards the reindeer, placing a piece of ice on his head to cool him down. She reads the split cod instructions three times, memorises them and pops the fish into her pot – 'for she never wasted anything' – again, the mundane and the fantastical are mixed, but here the effect is not disturbing but gently humorous. The Finnmark woman makes a very interesting pronouncement in response to the reindeer's appeal for help.

'I can't give her greater power than she already has'. She sees that Greta does not need any additional magical powers because she has the most important power of all - love. The reindeer seems an equally tender creature, for he deposits her by a large bush with red berries, kissing her on the lips while 'glistening tears ran down its cheeks'. Greta has forgotten her boots and mittens so is very exposed and must, indeed, act very heroically. As they near the palace of the Snow Queen, she sees all the live snowflakes that made up the outposts – the strangest shapes – large ugly hedgehogs, white coils of snakes, small fat bears with bristling hairs.

Greta is frightened and, just as her own power for love comes to the fore, the girl appeals to a power higher than herself, saying the Lord's Prayer. The angels come to her aid, patting her sore feet and hands, and she journeys on to the palace of the Snow Queen.

Seventh story. What happened in the Snow Queen's Palace, and what happened afterwards.

We return to the second frame of the story– Kay. He is now immobile, frozen, imprisoned. But it is a grim place, for all its gleaming beauty. There is no fun or gaiety in it, the polar bears walk on their hind legs and put on airs and graces, they have no time for a little bear-ball, the young white-fox ladies cannot even extend to a small card party with slaps and blows to the mouth or even a coffee party. A satiric description of high society in Copenhagen perhaps?

Kay sits in the middle of a frozen lake which has shattered around him. The deal the Snow Queen strikes with him is if he can put together the pieces to spell ETERNITY, she will make

him a present of the entire world and a new pair of skates. The non sequitur is delightful. It is a Faustian bargain he cannot fulfil – unless Greta helps him. The Snow Queen sits, when she is at home, in the middle of the lake, which she calls the mirror of reason. This is the second allusion to the limitations of reason. The puzzle cannot, in fact be solved by cold reason for it is cold reason, by implication, which has caused the freezing.

Greta kisses him and holds him tight and, backed also by prayer, she manages to unfreeze his heart her tears. The tiny fragment of mirror is thawed out and he can now see properly, truly. He joins Greta in singing the hymn they had sung at when they played together, and they are able to form the word Eternity. Thus, Kay finally, becomes his own master. They retrace their steps, with more kisses from the reindeer and they meet the red capped robber girl who teases Kay and wonders if he is worth recuing. The crow tame sweetheart is alas a widow, her husband having succumbed to a too easy life and the crow but in precious memory, she goes around with a little piece of black wool tied round her leg.

They return to the city and we are told, almost casually that the children, almost casually have become adults. They are welcomed home by the Grandmother who quotes to them from the Bible:

Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of God. The pair now understand the old hymn.

So, the story ends with these adults who still must retain the hearts of children to be human and to be loving. There is no word of them marrying. So that last vital function in Propp's taxonomy is frankly unfulfilled.

