The Ugly Duckling / The Tall Blonde

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Preface
“The Ugly Duckling”, a story written in 1843, is very popular around the world and all group members are familiar with the tale. It is for this reason that we have chosen to base our project on the story. Although the story was written as a children’s fairy tale, there were compelling reasons for choosing this particular story. The fact is that H. C. Andersen is one of the greatest story tellers not only in European but also in world literature. This year being the bi-centennial celebration of H.C. Andersen’s anniversary created even more interest in his stories. Although this classic story was written many years ago as a children’s fairy tale, it still has lessons that are applicable today, though it might be interpreted differently. The story’s themes are universal issues and H. C. Andersen is known to have said “I belong to the world”. For these reasons, we felt that we could identify with the themes of the story.

Our group comprises non-Danes, and we all in our own personal ways have to deal with these issues. The question remains, if H. C. Andersen was alive today, what would he think of our version and interpretations of his story?

Background to the study
Denmark is known worldwide as the homeland of one the most famous storytellers – H. C. Andersen. His stories have been told and retold as well as translated to touch many children and adults and have been even filmed. Studying in Denmark and at I.C.S. Program, we were inspired to rewrite one of his stories in a version that gave a different angle that the original story, one that will reflect on modern society and the cultural diversity of the world. Narratives are a common feature in our cultures
despite the fact that we come from countries situated two different continents. We were also motivated by what we all perceive as the role of the media in body image. We are from non-western cultures, cultures that have different perceptions of beauty and body image, and at times these seem to clash with the images that we see promoted around us. It has often been said that the media plays a very big role in how people perceive their body image (Wykes & Gunter, 2005). We were motivated by an interest in investigating the subject by looking at the narratives of body image presented by the media. We had the idea to write about media and body image, and the completion of the story “The Tall Blonde” gave us a head start in how to approach the issue. In writing this project we aim to gain a greater understanding of narrative theories as well as theories of media influence.

Last but not least, we wanted to use our creative abilities in writing our own versions of H.C. Andersen’s classic tale. By doing so we are using our knowledge gained from the Text and Communication and Media Audiences courses.

**Storytelling**
Human beings have often been referred to as Homo narrens - the storytelling animal (Watson, 2003). The story is therefore an important means of communication among us, humans. Stories are all around us. Our everyday life is full of stories.

> We seldom think about it, but we spend our lives immersed in narratives. Everyday we swim in the sea of stories and tales that we hear or read or listen to or see (or some combination of all these) from our earliest days to our deaths… ‘Our lives are ceaselessly intertwined with narrative, with the stories that we tell, all of which are reworked in that story of our own lives…We are immersed in narratives’ (Berger, 1997, p. 1)

Everyday in the life of humans is a story. A simple action, a word, a look can contain
a potential story. The following story illustrates this:

We were driving to work when a car behind us tried to overtake us on a one lane road. We did not give way, but the driver was able to zoom away when the road turned into a two lanes. At the traffic light, we looked to see who this impatient driver was. We were surprised to see a man brushing his teeth in the car. It was about 18.45, so his action left us wondering. Why was he brushing his teeth in the car? Why was he in such a hurry? A simple action led to story creation as we came up with different explanations and scenarios. (As told by a group member)

The above story illustrates that stories are an interesting (and sometimes curious) part of everyday life. It shows that narratives should not be perceived in their traditional sense only, i.e. fairytales, fables, and so on. They can also be real life stories. What though is the purpose of narratives? What function do they play in our lives? The following is a presentation on the purpose of narrative.

**Purpose of the narratives**
We are all exposed to narratives from an early age when our mothers and fathers sang to us lullabies and songs, taught us nursery rhymes, and read to us fairy tales or recounted folktales or fables to us.

Human narrative encompasses a rich array of motives and topics. Human beings narrate to remember, instil cultural knowledge, to grapple with a problem, to rethink the status quo, soothe, empathize, inspire, speculate, justify a position, tattle, evaluate ones own and each others identity, shame, tease, laud, entertain among other ends (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 60).

Narratives are written with many different purposes. It is difficult to find out all of them, since every narrator has his/her own meaning and opinions. The purposes of a certain text differ, depending on whether it is a scientific literature or a novel, a school text book or a film scenario. However, here we will give an account about the
aim of literary narratives. According to Aristotle, narratives give us pleasure by their imitation of life. The pleasure gained is linked to desire. We as readers have a desire to know and to discover the secrets in the narrative, to know the end, to find out the truth. In this case then, narratives serve as entertainment.

Narratives are also used for cognitive purposes, i.e. to give us, the readers, knowledge about certain objects, about certain life styles, about certain times in the past or future, etc. In cultural settings, narratives are used to pass on cultural knowledge. For example, animal metaphors used can introduce knowledge about specific features and abilities of the animal. Narratives therefore serve the function of teaching us about the world as well as a means of transmitting ideas, i.e. telling others what we have learnt. This function is further discussed in the third chapter.

Narratives are widely used in the educational field. They play an important role not only for improving people’s cognitive skills and thus giving knowledge but also for language development and moral education. By telling their stories the students/pupils develop their narrative skills and therefore learn to use chronology, causality, emotions, and so on. Besides that, by telling their personal stories, people learn to understand themselves better and thus to solve problems. Thus narratives are widely used in the psychoanalysis as well.

Storytelling can also be used for therapeutic purposes. In South Africa, after apartheid, Truth and Reconciliation Committees were formed with the purpose that “... a commission is a necessary exercise to enable South Africans to come to terms with their past on a morally accepted basis and to advance the cause of reconciliation” (Mr Dullah Omar, former Minister of Justice, Truth and Reconciliation website - http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/, 9/5/2005). These commissions
were formed so that victims of apartheid could have an opportunity to tell their stories with the aim of a healing and reconciliation taking place. Another example of narratives being used for therapeutic purposes is cited as follows; “traditional Hindu healers often compose individualized fairy tales for their patients to help them deal with their problems. The patients study the fairy tales and learn by identifying with the characters, something about their problems and how to solve them” (Berger, 1997, p. 179). Here narratives help soothe people and aids them grapple with problems.

Storytelling is essential for the development of imagination and creative thought. Furthermore it helps in improving the educational system, by developing the emotional, humanitarian sides of it. The moral aspect of the narratives is an important part in education. Fables, proverbs, folklore and other literary genres are written with the purpose of giving moral education for children as well as for adults. Narratives evoke feelings in us; whether it is anger or happiness, hate or compassion, we always react to a narrative. One of the major aims of narratives, be it is a text or a screen play, is to evoke emotions in reader or audience, to provoke them. Narratives can be a great source of inspiration. Sometimes some of us have a tendency of comparing our lives with the lives of heroes, identifying our problems with theirs, and thus trying to solve them according to the given solutions. When reading a biography of great men, we get inspired by their lives. We have our own favourite books, or films, favourite authors and film producers, we have favourite characters.

Criticism of the political and social structures of a certain period was one of the main purposes of the narrative for over time. Pink Floyd’s “The wall” (dir. Alan Parker, 1982) is a colourful example of it. It deeply provokes the audience and makes us think among other things about the way we live, treat our children, lovers. It says to us “Hey, wake up! Look around!” The film clearly shows that Hitler or Stalin or any other dictators are among us, that we, as well as the surroundings, raise them: we
contribute to the creation of such monsters; they are not alien beings from other universe, but representatives of the same humankind as us. It metaphorically illustrates the way an individual can lose her or his personality, when Mr. Floyd shaves his eyebrows which makes him look like an alien, to lose his expression. “The wall” criticises the educational system (in Great Britain during the time period the film was made), the perversity of the society, the dirty political games, meaningless wars conducted by ambitious individuals. The film has a purpose of reminding us about the terrors of the war, of the racism, nationalism. It tells us not to forget history.

Another function of narratives is illustrated by the tragic life of Quasimodo in the V. Hugo’s “The hunchback of Notre Dame”. In his story, Hugo expresses his judgement on society and its cruelty. Quasimodo, as well as the Ugly Duckling and the Tall Blonde, suffer social rejection because of his appearance and being different. These stories therefore have been used as a mode of social criticism. They can be used in exposing the vices and attitudes in society such as greed, corruption, shallowness, intolerance etc. They help us as the audience to evaluate ourselves as well as the society. Humans use narratives as a means of organizing their experiences. Narratives serve as a means for ordering, explaining and otherwise taking a position on experience (Ochs & Capps, 2001).

Narratives are not only an essential part of our lives, but they also play an important role. They are crucial in cognitive development, can be used for therapeutically purposes and entertainment; as means of social criticism, as source of inspiration and help us to organize our experiences. The above was the inspiration for us to write our project with the aim of exploring the subject of narrative further. Our purpose is to investigate the structure and basic components of narratives, narrative theory and apply them to two types of stories.
Having given a background of the problem, we now come up with the following problem definition:

**Problem Definition**

“The Ugly Duckling” story has been described as timeless throughout generations. It has been told and re-told since it was written. This gives rise to the following question:

“The Ugly Duckling” is a story written in the 19th century by a Dane in a specific setting. What effect does re-writing the story in contemporary times in a different cultural setting have on the themes and structure of the story?

This question will be answered with the aid of the following sub-questions:

What are the common features/elements of narrative texts? Do differences in cultural settings and time periods have any effect on the main themes? If yes, how is this so?

Do “The Ugly Duckling” and “The Tall Blonde” fulfil the functions of narratives according to narrative theories? Can we identify with the themes in the two stories?

This report will answer the above questions with the aid of the story “The Ugly Duckling” by H. C. Andersen and a re-written version of the story called “The Tall Blonde”.

**Delimitations and Method**

We will cover the dimension of “Text and Communication”. Any other dimension that may come up will be incorporated with the knowledge that the “Text and Communication” is our primary dimension.

Narratives are a universal feature among humans. They are present in every age, in every place and in every society. It begins with the very history of mankind and there
is no community without narratives. We have therefore chosen to focus on narratives, “narratology” and narrative analysis. We will apply the techniques on H. C. Andersen’s story “The Ugly Duckling” and “The Tall Blonde”.

We will only concentrate on one genre (kind in narrative classification), e.g. the short story, and only one of H.C. Andersen’s stories. Within the short stories genre, we will specifically write about fables, fairytales and folk tales. Narratology is a wide discipline, with different approaches each with its theories and models. We are limiting ourselves to theories and models by narrative theorists V. Propp, A. J. Greimas and Aristotle\(^1\).

Although we will use Aristotle’s functions of storytelling, we will however not use Aristotle’s “Poetics” as a source, but we will use his model as explained by Richard Kearny in his book “On Stories; Thinking in Action” (2002) as well as Arthur Asa Berger’s interpretation of Aristotle’s theory as explained in the book “Narratives in Popular Culture, Media and Everyday Life” (1997). Aristotle’s model will be used in analyzing our re-written version. This is elaborated later in the report. We will not undertake a grammatical analysis of the stories, i.e. syntaxes, etc. We will not deal with aspects of narrative, such as discourse structure. The report will be based solely on the story itself, i.e. the plot and the characters.

**Chapter outline**
Our report is divided into five chapters.

The first chapter is the introduction to the project. Here we give a background to the problem as well as the delimitations and methodology. We also explain our

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\(^1\) These models and theories are explained in chapters three and four.
motivation and give an account of the purposes of narratives.
In the second chapter, we offer a brief introduction to Narratology. We thereafter present different approaches of narrative theory. We also give an explanation of different terminology in Narratology, i.e. genre, fables, folktales and fairy tales.

In the third chapter, we present a short biography of H.C. Andersen. We also present the Structural approach to narrative analysis. We thereafter analyze H.C. Andersen’s “The Ugly Duckling” using the Structural approach. An English version of H.C. Andersen’s story will not be part of the main body of the project, but is included as an appendix.

The fourth chapter contains a short introduction about the writer of “The Tall Blonde” and the story itself. Besides that an account is given of storytelling in the writer’s culture, i.e. Kikuyu. Afterwards we analyze the story using Aristotle’s Functions of Narratives model.

It was the intention of the group to use Propp’s morphology of a fairy tale model to analyze at “The Ugly Duckling” as well as our own version of the fairy tale. However, in rewriting the story, major changes occurred. These changes are explained in chapter 4. These changes meant that using Propp’s model would have proved fruitless. We could have used Greimas’ Model; however, we did not wish to monotonously repeat application of the model. It therefore was appropriate to analyze the story using a different model.

We unanimously agreed to use two different kinds of models in analyzing the stories. Propp’s and Greimas’ models would be used in doing a structural analysis of “The Ugly Duckling”. The group looked up different models and found Aristotle’s model the most appropriate, because it would it be useful both in analyzing how the story fulfills the functions of a story and in bringing out the themes in the story. In our
analysis of the story, we concentrate mainly on the plot and the characters. We supplement Aristotle’s model with the information on writing stories outlined by Sharon Sorenson in her book “How to write Short Stories”. This proved useful in analyzing authorial devices such as characterization and description as well as the plot. The discussion and conclusion constitute the final chapter. The discussion includes comparisons of the themes, characters and plots of the two stories. In examining the themes, we touch on stories that the media tell on body image. The information on media and body image is based on two theories as presented in the book “The Media and Body image: if looks could kill” (Wykes & Gunter, 2005). This book addresses the subject by looking at empirical work on both media representations and audience responses. It focuses on research done mainly in western cultures, especially in the UK and USA. It gave us a theoretical basis for examining the effects of the media on their audiences. We also include a critical analysis of “The Tall Blonde” by the two group members who did not write the story. The writer also presents her intentions in writing the stories and these are discussed with regards to the group’s perceptions.
Chapter 2
A brief introduction to Narrative theory and Narratology

In order to analyse the two stories we needed some basic information on narratives. In these we have decided to focus on narrative theories and approaches in analysing the narratives. This leads us to the person behind the narratives. Therefore we explain in brief about types of narrators. Thereafter we present genres and the three sub-genres we have concentrated on, namely fables, fairytales and folktales.

There is a tendency to use synonymously the terms narrative theory and narratology. In order to avoid misunderstanding, it may be useful to draw a distinction between them. The theory of narrative deals with more philosophical issues about the nature of narratives. It does so by using the social, linguistic and philosophical dimensions. Narratology (from French – “narratologie”) on the other hand, is a branch of narrative theory that studies ways of analysing the structure of text with the purpose of achieving its interpretation and categorization. Narrative theory’s aim is to cover all the forms of narrative, including texts written on history, philosophy and science (Schellinger, 1998).

This chapter will not be a presentation of an investigation of narratology in detail; rather it is a brief introduction of the subject and some of its terminology. This we believe will be a great aid in understanding and analyzing the two stories: “The Ugly Duckling” and our adaptation “The Tall Blonde”.

In narrative theory there are six main approaches to the narrative which are mimetic theory of art, syntactic, semantic, phenomenological, rhetoric and theory of narrative instability. We have chosen to elaborate on three of them, namely mimetic, syntactic and semantic theories. We give a brief presentation of these, and in the approaches to
narrative section we give an account on why we chose these specific theories.

*The mimetic theory of art* is a classic theory propounded by the Greek philosopher Aristotle in his work “Poetics” written about 330 BC. We have included this classical approach because it is said that Aristotle is probably the most influential theorist of narrativity. He has influenced the thinking of writers and critics for thousands of years and continues to do so even today (Berger, 1997). Aristotle’s theory is based on the premise that literary works are imitations of reality. In Aristotle’s theory, the most important features that should be analyzed in relation to the nature of narrative are: plot, the characters, and the medium used in presenting the two. A more detailed explanation of this theory is further given in chapter 4.

*Syntactic narrative theory* was founded by the theorists who were associated with Russian formalism. They introduced the distinction between the fabula (story) and sjuzhet (plot). The story is according to them is chronologically stated events, while the plot is a presentation of these events with moral or artistic purposes. The syntactic narrative approach assumes that there is a certain law or structural rule that conducts the structure of a narrative. The Bulgarian philosopher Tzvetan Todorov has applied grammatical categories of the sentence to the narrative; thus *noun* as character, *verb* as action and *adjective* as characteristics of the characters (Schellinger, 1998). One of the weaknesses of syntactic narrative theory is that it tends to be reductive; the extreme example is the application of grammatical categories on the narrative, made by Todorov.

*Semantic narrative theory* was a response to the abovementioned syntactic narrative theory, in a sense that it has tried to avoid the reductivism. Semantic theorists believe that syntactic theory is linguistically limited. The fictional semantic theorists pay a great deal of attention to fundamental oppositions that form individual words.
Moreover, the theorists address the issue of how the narrative is made meaningful. They consider an important issue of the world within the text where we position the events and characters in order to make them meaningful. Semanticists, as well as syntactic theorists, believe that the surface of the narrative is dependent upon a structure, a rule. However, they assume that those structures are based upon the interpretation of the reader.

As noted earlier, narratology deals with the structural analysis of narratives. In order to provide the narrative analysis, narratologists look at the component parts of the narrative and then try to analyse their functions and relations. First let us find out, what the narrative is. As French literary theorist Ronald Barthes puts it:

The narratives of the world are numberless… Narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting…, stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, conversation… Moreover, under this almost infinite diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind, and there nowhere is or has been a people without narrative… Narrative is international, trans-historical, and trans-cultural: it is simply there, like life itself. (Barthes in O’Neil, 1994, p. 11)

Some, namely the classic theorists as French literary theorist Gérard Genette for example, consider the narrative as a written verbal text with the mediator between the author and the narrated, whereas others such as Barthes, Chatman, etc (in Jahn, 2003) look at the narrative in a broad sense and thus claim that narratives are anything that tells a story, e.g. films, drama and other media as well as written texts.

However, briefly speaking, the basis of the narrative is the telling. Narrative has a story with a certain action or actions, which involves characters, as agents or beneficiaries. Agents are those characters that cause events, and beneficiaries are
those who are influenced by them. Narrative is told by the storyteller, or more precisely by the narrator, to the addressee or the narratee. These are the main elements of narrative.

According to the Swiss linguist Saussure (in Jahn, 2003), any sign has signifier and signified. The signifier in the narrative is the discourse, which is the mode of presentation. The signified is the story. From here come two basic orientations of the narrative analysis, which are: discourse narratology and story narratology. Discourse narratology works on the styles that determine the form and presentation of the narrative text. Story narratology is concentrating on the actions, which arranges the events into the plot, motives.

In recent years, narratology was developed further on psychoanalytic studies of narrative, where the plot is seen as the reader’s desire for narrative closure to continue whilst he or she is reading; the possible world theory, which concentrates on the virtual world, created by the narrative; linguistic narrative, which deals with the linguistic aspects, such as tense, discourse market. Since we use structural analysis as well as a classical analysis based on Aristotle’s theory to analyze the two stories, we in the following two subheadings give a brief presentation of both types of analysis. In summary, we have presented different theories and theorists in narrative theory. However, we use the structural and classical approaches in analysing the two stories. These approaches are based on syntactic and semantic theories as well as the mimetic theory of Art. Therefore following is the presentation of the two approaches.

**Approaches to narrative analysis**

We have chosen to use structural analysis because it introduces us to the basic components of a narrative, i.e. characters, narrator, narratee, development of a plot, etc. It helps us to differentiate the narrative text from any other kind of text,
example scientific texts.

The **structural analysis** is based on syntactic and semantic theories. Analysing the narrative is carried out structurally, investigating the framework of the narrative. The analysis can be a text analysis, plot analysis, character analysis etc. This method seeks to find the functions of characters and their importance to the plot as well as presenting a prototype of a story. Important theorists in this approach that we will use are V. Propp and A. J. Greimas. These two theorists identify recurring elements in a story. Greimas’s model is a revision of Propp’s model. We have chosen to use his model in analyzing the structure of “The Ugly Duckling”. We go deeper into the two models in chapter 3.

The **classical approach** is based on Aristotle’s mimetic theory of Art. The theory identifies the basic story components and how they relate to each other. The theory also contains a functions narratives model used in chapter 4.

**The narrator**

There is no narrative without a narrator. The narrator is one of the basic components of a narrative as he or she is the source of it. Therefore it is necessary to identify different kinds of narrators. The narrator is the one that tells the story. The narrator can be either in the story, participating in the events or can take a stand of an invisible, omniscient narrator. Genette (in Jahn, 2003) introduced the terms homodiegetic and heterodiegetic for the above. The **homeodiegetic narrator** (in the first-person narrations) is one who is present in the narrative as a character, while the **heterodiegetic narrator** (in the third-person narrations) is not present in the story. Another type of narrator is the **autodiegetic narrator**, the narrator that is inside of the story and being the main character at the same time (Cuddon, 1999). The visibility of the narrator can be assessed by looking at some specific textual
material. These are: descriptions of settings; identification of characters; temporal summaries; definition of characters; reports of what characters did not think or say; commentary-interpretation, judgement, and generalization. The above types of material in descending order reflect the visibility of the narrator. The last types would indicate that the narrator is very aware of what happened in the story, i.e. is intrusive, omniscient.

**Narrative genres**
The term genre originates from French and means “a style, form” (Watson 2003). These forms are used in classifying texts so that the readers know what to expect. Genres enable the reader to know what type of text they are reading, looking at or watching. Figure 1 illustrates the level of abstraction that explains the relationship between texts, genres and theories. At the bottom level are all texts found in the world. On the next level are genres – the classification system for texts. On the last level is narrative theory that covers everything below it.

![Ladder of abstraction](image)

**Narrative theory**
( theories about the nature of narratives of all kinds)

↑

Narrative Genres
(On television, for example, science fiction, westerns, situation comedies, detective stories, soap operas, news shows, commercials)

↑

Narrative Texts
(all narrative texts that exist)

Figure 1. The ladder of abstraction (Berger, 1997, p. 37)

In the given ladder of abstraction “The Tall Blonde” and “The Ugly Duckling”
belong on the second level, i.e. Narrative Genre. The theories that we have used are found on the top level of the ladder.

According to Barthes (in Jahn, 2003) there are narrative and non-narrative genres. This is a contemporary classification based on classical Greek theory that classified texts according to who was speaking. In brief, the non-narrative genre involves poetry and lyrics where the narrator speaks in the first person, while the narrative genre can be written and performed and the narrator speaks in his own voice, but allows the characters to speak in theirs. The written genres consist of novels, legends, myths, fables, tales, folktales, etc. The performed type, as one can guess is films, theatre, opera and others. However, there is a clear distinction between fictional and non-fictional narratives. Fictional narratives, one can say, are a result of imagination, with imaginary characters, events, place, etc. On the other hand non-fictional narratives are accounts of real people in the real life or historical events. Although in some cases the reliability of the narrator can be questioned. As Berger notes, “all genres follow a certain convention; that is, they are formulaic and have certain structures” (1997, p. 37). These conventions govern content and style.

The genres are further divided into sub-genres, for example short story can be sub-divided into fables, fairytales, folktales, parables, ballads, etc. Our report deals with the genre short story and the sub-genres: fables, fairy tales and folk tale. Narrowing down to sub-genres helps us to be more specific in the area of our interest.

The following is a brief presentation of the sub-genres.

**Folktales** are traditional fictional narratives that serve the purpose of entertainment. They are traditionally transmitted orally. According to the classification of the folktales made by Aarne and Thompson (in Brown & Rosenberg, 1998), folktales are divided into simple and complex tales. Simple tales are the animal tales and humorous anecdotes. Complex tales are those that include fairy tales, romantic tales...
without magic motifs and some humorous tales which engage two or more episodes. The folktale is very old and some ancient written folktales were found in Egypt. In other parts of the world stories containing the elements of the old oral tales were found, for example in Asia, in ancient Greece – such as Homer’s “Odyssey”.

The most important figures in the development of the folktales are the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen. The Brothers Grimm were the first to put the orally transferred tales on paper. Thereby folktales could now be transmitted through copied or printed collections. H. C. Andersen’s fairy tales are so popular among people all over the world, that many mistakenly consider them as folktales.

*A Fable* is a short narrative in prose or verse. The main feature of the fable is that the characters are animals or inanimate objects that represent human beings. Another important feature of the fable is its satiric tone. A Fable metaphorically shows human conduct and thus has highly moral and didactic purposes. Fables often use proverbs in the text (fables often end with a proverb that points at the moral of the story). Fables are the oldest type of story and have been existent in any culture in oral and written forms, but in Western written tradition it was introduced in 6th century by Aesop (Brown & Rosenberg, 1998). However, his fables contained more human characters than animal. Throughout the centuries, fables were written in order to criticise the social and political structure, human behaviour, to serve for the protection of the disadvantaged groups of the society, etc. Nowadays fables are written mostly as children’s literature.

*Fairy tales* are fictional narratives that stem from folk literature. It is a part of oral tradition and, as mentioned earlier, first the brothers Grimm put them in written form (Cuddon, 1999). One of the features of fairy tales is the fact that they reflect upon the good and bad through describing the fortunes and misfortunes of the characters. The
engagement of supernatural forces (for example, magic hats, magic wands, spells and other events) in the action is one of the main constitutive parts of the fairy tales. The origins of fairy tales are unclear, though some assume that they stem from Asia (The thousand and one nights or Arabian nights) (Cuddon, 1999).

These sub-genres help us in our analysis of the similarities and differences between “The Ugly Duckling” and “The Tall Blonde”.

This chapter has given information about Narrative theories and approaches. We have also discussed one of the basic components of the narrative, i.e. narrator - We thereafter focussed our attention on three sub-genres and the differences between them. With this background information we now present an analysis of “The Ugly Duckling”.
Chapter 3
Analysis of “The Ugly Duckling”

In this chapter we present the author of “The Ugly Duckling”, a brief introduction to the story, followed by its analysis using the structural approach and themes in it.

Hans Christian Andersen, 1805-1875
H. C. Andersen is one of the most famous authors of folktales. Born in Odense, Denmark, he was a major writer whose work covered most genres. However, his fame today rests on his fairy tales which have been translated to over 100 languages, and are among the most retold stories for children. He pursued a literary career, first as an actor and a playwright and later as a poet and a novelist. In 1835, he published “Fairy Tales Told for Children” which opened his door to fame. Between 1835 and 1872, he published 156 stories of which he claimed that only 9 were retellings. He appealed to two audience levels; the children to whom the language and the settings were suited and educated adults to whom both the literary and stylistic conventions and the underlying messages were aimed. Unlike traditional tales, his stories are more self-consciously sentimental. Some of his most popular stories are “The Little Mermaid”, “The Red Shoes” and “The Ugly Duckling” which we have selected for our analysis and re-writing (Brown & Rosenberg, 1998; Benoit-Dusausoy, 2000).

Understanding “The Ugly Duckling” – Introduction
In understanding any text, there are three important areas to which one must subject the text. The first is text analysis which answers questions like what is the text about, what is the theme and which agents or means the author has used in the narration.
The elements used in analysis of a text are title, theme, communication channel, genre, environment, personification, conflict, composition, point of view and language. The second is the interpretation where the author’s message and intentions are identified through the analysis. The third is putting the story into perspective – in short, seeing the text in relation to something out of the text (Johannes & Møller, 2003): for example, in relation to the author’s life or the problems that are typical for that period the text is written. In our analysis of the story, we will identify; its genre, composition using the elements of a story, characters through analysing its structure, point of view, environment, and theme. We conclude by putting the text into perspective. In approaching the story this way, we hope to find out what the nature of narratives is, the essentials or structures of narratives and the approaches in analysing and understanding narratives.

**Genre**

According to the various literary genres that describe what types of narratives exist (Culler, 2000; Herman, Jahn & Ryan, 2005; Abbott, 2002), “The Ugly Duckling” falls under the short story genre with the sub-genre of a folktale/fairy tale. The Routledge Encyclopaedia of Narrative theory defines a fairy tale as a hybrid narrative genre consisting of folkloric and literary elements (Herman et al., 2005, p. 157). Three features of such a folktale are; a correction of a misdeed or lack, a demonstration of the characters exemplary destiny according to a moral system clearly defined into good and evil, and a fairy tale microcosm serving a self sufficient system of reference. Fairy tales present themselves from the outset as fictional narratives and have human qualities (Herman et al., 2005; Brown & Rosenberg, 1998).
These are features that are easily identifiable in “The Ugly Duckling”. The story is a third person narration of a duckling which could fit neither with the other ducklings and duck families in the duck yard, nor with the ducks in the wild. He was hatched last from several eggs which produced beautiful ducklings but he came out looking different. His looks led him to be tormented and he was the treated as an outcast by other ducks, including the maid who fed them. This led him to run away and embark on a journey searching for acceptance. He finally finds happiness when he discovers that he is not an ugly duckling but a swan. The story will be further elaborated along the various points in analysing it.

**Elements of a story**
Propp, (in Todorov, 1990) a Russian story analyst who studied 115 Russian fairy tales identified five obligatory elements that must be found in a story for it to succeed. If an element is missing, the story supposedly fails as a narrative. The first element is the opening situation of *equilibrium*. This is portrayed in “The Ugly Duckling” where the author sets the scene with the duckling sitting on the eggs while the other ducks enjoy the good weather. It is in the summer season, which can be associated with calmness, peace and happiness. The second element is the *degradation of the equilibrium*. This occurs when the last egg is hatched and a duckling with peculiar looks emerges making him the centre of attraction due to his looks. However, it is not positive attention but negative, as portrayed in the transformation of the story. The state of *disequilibrium* as observed by the main character is the third element and we see this through the ugly duckling’s experiences of mistreatment by the other minor

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2 There exists three types narrations being second person narration where the protagonist is referred to by the pronoun you; third person narration where the narrator does not take part as an acting character, hence one in which all references are restricted to third person forms like he, she, it; and omniscient narration where the narrator assumes to know everything connected to the story narrated like the feelings experienced (Herman et al., 2005; Abbott, 2002).
characters. This leads to the fourth element, *search for discovery of acceptance* and in the story, the ugly duckling moves from one situation to another, hoping to fit in. He finally meets three beautiful swans who receive him warmly and by seeing a reflection of himself in the water, he realises that he is one of them, beautiful graceful and royal as he had perceived them. The last element is the *reestablishment of the initial equilibrium*. The story concludes with the swans enjoying the summer sunshine that felt so warm and kindly and the ugly-duckling-turned-swan experiences more happiness than he had ever dreamed of.

These elements of a story were also identified by a German critic Gustav Freytag (in Martin, 1996). He referred them as the plot whereby he described a normal plot as an inverted V. The diagram below shows the various stages.

![Diagram of Freytag](image)

*Figure 2. The diagram of Freytag (Martin, 1996, p. 81)*

AB represents the exposition, B the introduction of the conflict, BC the rising action, complication or development of the conflict, C the climax or turn of the action, and CD the resolution of the conflict.

**Structure of “The Ugly Duckling”**
While reading a text, several questions arise. Examples are: what is the text about, how does it progress, what is the conflict, what persons are in the text and how do
they overcome the conflict. These are answered through the structural analysis of a
text. To analyse the structure of “The Ugly Duckling” story, we will use the Atcant
model of Greimas (in Herman et al., 2005; Shellinger, 1998). A.J. Greimas was a
narrative theorist who revised and simplified Propp’s functions in a story by
proposing an actantial model which maps three basic relationships between opposed
actants and receiver, helper and opponent. We will shortly explain them.

Propp’s Classification of characters
Propp, in his search for any elements that were recurrent or constant in all of the
stories concluded that although characters in the stories might be different, what was
constant were the actions of the characters in relation to the development of the story.
In Propp’s study, the number and sequence of the functions were fixed. He came up
with a list of 31 key functions which were involved in the sequence of the story from
its start to its conclusion. These sequences can be grouped under the following sub-
headings: initial situation and potential realization of preparation; the complication;
and the struggle, return and recognition.

In the case of “The Ugly duckling”, the story begins with a description of the
surroundings by giving account of the season of year, picturing a mother duck sitting
on her eggs and one big egg which is not hatching for a long time, while from the
other eggs came out cute ducklings. The author describes the surroundings, time of
year, and the small prejudices of others against the enormously big egg with its
suspicious contents. This part of the story matches the first group of Propp’s
functions by giving an account of the situation. The complication begins when out of
the big egg comes a grey, big and ugly duckling and everyone starts putting pressure
on the duck-mother. Although the duck-mother protected and defended her ugly
duckling, she gave up in the end, which led the duckling to leave home. As a
consequence of the second set of functions, the third group of functions are realized;
when the duckling is marginalized, chased and beaten by others and finally leaves home. He goes through the struggle of surviving, meeting different types of birds, animals, humans, who suppress him because of his odd appearance. Even the beginning of the winter season complicates the life of the duckling and thus reinforces his sufferings. However, the situation comes back to the beginning, when spring comes and then summer. Then the duckling meets some swans on the lake and realizes, by seeing his reflection in the water, that he is a swan and not an ugly duckling. He’s not the only one to realize this: others accept him as a beautiful and young swan. Thus he achieves recognition not only from his own kind, but also from humans. In this way, Andersen’s story accomplishes all the three groups of functions drawn by Propp.

Propp also identified seven basic character types which are villain, donor/provider (provides the object sought), hero (seeker/victim) the seeker seeks a specific object, dispatcher, helper, princess and false hero. These characters could also be interrelated, i.e. one character could fill two character types. A villain may also serve as the false hero. There may be more than one helper. Propp gives us to understand that in most fairy tales, there is always an object that is sought and all the characters are involved in the journey to realization of the object (Toolan, 2001). A.G Greimas further developed Propp’s functions and character types model and came up with the Actant Model

The Actant Model
The model was created to analyse folktales (in Herman et al., 2005). The model, shown below, gives a static representation of the tales main conflict and transformations.
This model has three areas. The first is the upper axis, which is called the axis of communication because the object is transferred from addresser to addressee. To illustrate this with “The Ugly Duckling”:

**Addresser** – In most cases it is not a person but an abstraction - for example society or human self-centredness. This can be the author, writer or narrator.

**Object** - This is the state which the subject is aspiring to reach or desires. In the story, the ugly duckling desires social acceptance from his family and the ‘actors’ in his environment. Other than acceptance, he also wishes for happiness and a just society that will accept him as he is.

**Addressee** – He is also termed as receiver and often the same person as the subject. The ugly duckling will achieve his goal of seeking happiness once he receives acceptance.

The second, which is the axis between subject and object is called axis of desire, or fear.

The third, being the lower axis is called the axis of conflict. We have identified the players of “The Ugly Duckling” in this axis as:

**Helper** – The term refers to actants who are numerous. They determine the adventures the subject who must overcome great opposition before reaching his goal. In the story, we find that the mother duck was a bit helpful and even hopeful about him. She describes him as good tempered, a better swimmer and with potential for his
looks improving in the future. This comes as a response to the old duck who wished he could be made all over again. Later in the story, a peasant saved him when he was frozen fast in the ice, probably saving him from a slow death. The three swans in the water who accepted him and finally, the children who expressed joy at seeing the swans by clapping their hands and dancing, gave the swans bread and cake can be seen as helpers for their role in bringing happiness and showing the new swan that he was in fact special.

_Subject_ – This is of course the ugly duckling that is also the main character of the story.

_Opponent_ – All the ducks in the duck yard that mistreated him, the cat and the hen living with the old woman who dismissed him as non sensible because he could neither purr or lay eggs are examples of the opponents in the story. Another feature working against the ugly duckling that can be described as an opponent is his appearance. This is because it is his looks that in the first place set him apart from the rest and therefore led him to be treated as an outcast. This model has helped us identify the various characters in the story and their role in plot development.

**Themes and perspectives**
The theme of a story is defined as the construction of significance backwards in time. This is the author’s message and intention. The story of “The Ugly Duckling” can be interpreted in different ways. However, the group has come up with several ways which relate to his life, the being different factor, the phases of life, social acceptance, self acceptance and loneliness.

In the story, H. C. Andersen communicates the meaning of the story through allegory. Though this is a feature used in fables where animals act like humans with their weak and strong points, he uses it to describe his poor upbringing and later his fame. He grew up in the 19th century when having a motto was an indication of an educated
man. His motto was “Per aspera ad astra” meaning “through rough ways to the stars”; through suffering to renown. This clearly shows that his life was one full of struggles in his efforts to achieve recognition. By the time of his death, H.C. Andersen was a world famous story teller, which tells us that he finally became someone from nobody, a swan from a duckling.

“Yes, there’s a new swan!” And they clapped their hands and danced about and ran to fetch father and mother. Bits of bread and cake were thrown into the water and everyone said. “The new one is the prettiest – so young and handsome!” And the old swans bowed before him. (Andersen, 1976, p. 115)

Even though he finally got recognition, acceptance and happiness he never displayed pride but instead felt shy. Like the swan, he felt that a good heart is never proud (Andersen, 1976).

The other message we derived from the story is that the author explicitly implies that being different can make you stronger. Difference is normally viewed as a negative characteristic, especially among human beings. In the case of “The Ugly Duckling”, he was different from the others in his environment and that subjected him to gruesome treatment. Though he is characterized in some situations as timid – he gets pecked on, nipped, kicked, talked badly about without protesting – he embarks on an unknown journey to look for acceptance. He overcomes difficult situations like being trapped on ice, meeting unfriendly people and animals but he still goes on until he finally finds himself among swans and realises that even though he is different he is actually not just a swan but someone who is admirable in other people’s eyes. In today’s world, being different is still perceived as a characteristic that cannot stand on its own. As such, people often strive to conform, rather than finding out if the difference can be a positive aspect in ones life, or can complement the others that are
not different, like in giving different perspectives of a matter in question. Being different is celebrated in the story towards the end, where the duckling after realising that he is a swan feels,

“It doesn’t matter about being born in a duckyard, as long as you are hatched from a swan’s egg”. (Andersen, 1976, p.114)

The other message is that a person has to undergo various phases in life that can determine one’s identity. For example, a person might face an insecure period in life before becoming secure. If we look at a teenager’s life, adolescence is viewed as a difficult period full of insecurities while trying to fit in and in determining who one is. This does not last and in most cases we see them transform to young self assured adults. This is comparable to the ugly duckling that undergoes so many hardships in his youth but his later life is full of happiness in his found self, as a swan. Some of the group members see the issues of self-acceptance and insecurity in the story. Having low self esteem and feeling dissatisfaction with his appearance is one of the main themes of the story.

Another interpretation of the story might be associated with family values, lack of unity within a family (sisters and brothers of ugly duckling were making fun of him, chasing him, etc.), with loneliness, the story shows the pain of being abandoned, and marginalized. It’s a sad story, where we see the ugly duckling being rejected not only by the surroundings but most importantly by his own mother. As a mother she gets influenced by the others and discriminates the ugly duckling and abandons him, although she keeps the other ducklings. Here we can see that the story has an emphasis on a person being lonely, deserted by the closest persons (in the current case by his parents and relatives), with no support.
As mentioned earlier, the H. C. Andersen’s story can be interpreted in many ways, depending on the personal experience and other factors of the one who is interpreting it. However, the theme of the story is oddly meaningful nowadays although it was written in the nineteenth century. Many people can identify with the “The Ugly Duckling” in one way or another, or they see themselves in him.

**Sub-conclusion**

From the introduction where we had narrative theory and narratology, we have established that our project mainly focuses on syntactic and semantic narrative theories. This is because by analysing “The Ugly Duckling” we give an account of narrative features. The theories, though we have delimited ourselves not to engage in syntaxes, have been used as a tool to analyse and interpret the story. We have used the structuralists to establish the basic universal structure, which has provided an insight into the different components of a narrative and their functions.

As mentioned earlier in the motivation, we have re-written “The Ugly Duckling” with the intention of finding out how the same theme can be influenced by a different background and period. “The Ugly Duckling” was written in the 19th century by a European and the new version “The Tall Blonde” in the 21st century by an author with a totally different background, as explained in the next section. Are the original genre, text and interpretation influenced by the above factors? The next chapter introduces “The Tall Blonde”, the background information on storytelling from the author’s culture, and an analysis of the story.
Chapter 4

Analysis of “The Tall Blonde”

In the following chapter, we will do an analysis of “The Tall Blonde” using Aristotle’s model. We will also supplement the model with features of a story as explained in the book “How to Write Short Stories”. This is necessary because, although Aristotle’s model as set in Kearney’s book “On Stories” describes the functions, it does not go into detail about the features of a story that are included in the functions. The two features we will concentrate on are the plot and the characters. We choose to concentrate on the plot and characters because these are two of the more important aspects of narrative theory as it relates to text, according to Aristotle. Dialogue is the third one, and as there is no dialogue in the story, thus is not included in the analysis. The plot is discussed under Mythos and characters under Ethos. This means that we will lay more weight on the two functions.

The dramatic story of a beautiful giraffe that turns herself into an “ugly duckling” was written by one of the group members, Wangeshi Makridis. She was born and raised in Kenya, is a resident of Denmark and a regular student at RUC. She is from the Kikuyu tribe and her cultural influences can be seen in the rewritten story. She is a self-professed poet. Her motivation in writing the story is presented in the discussion.

Storytelling among the Kikuyu

The writer of “The Tall Blonde” has used a lot of influence from her Kikuyu tribal background. A short introduction of storytelling among the Kikuyu is therefore appropriate.
Social Background

According to Kikuyu custom, folktales were and are based on day to day events, to closely resemble life. Folktales have educational as well as social value. A lot of the folktales are animal based. Although at times use of animals was used as comic relief, they were in most cases used to exemplify human traits and characteristics. The use of animals was meant to emphasize the fact that it was human weaknesses and faults that were being ridiculed, not the individuals themselves.

Time and place

Storytelling usually took place in the evenings, when all would be home after carrying out their day to day duties. At times the stories were told in one hut, other times storytelling took place in the open air round a big fire. Younger children remained with their mother for storytelling.

Rules and Conventions

No storytelling took place during the day. This was to ensure that all important daily chores were not abandoned for leisure activities. No interruptions were permitted during the actual storytelling, except for the song parts in the tales, where the audience was required to sing out a chorus. Storytelling took place systematically, and every one present during the session was required to tell a tale. The rules involved “caution and feeling” (Mwangi, 1983, p. 8). These rules served to teach the importance of discipline and organization.

The tale always began with the phrase *Ugai Itha* (Mwangi, 1983, p. 8), which were words that signalled to the audience that the story teller was about to begin. At the end of the tale, the narrator uttered the words; *Rukirika* – it is finished. The audience were at this point free to make their comments. This interaction period meant that the audience were obliged to pay close attention to the tale to get its moral.

Types of Tales

The two main types of tales were: animal tales and day-to-day affairs tales. All tales were characterized by one, two or three morals (Mwangi, 1983). According to R.
Mwangi, it was very rare to find tales with only one moral. In order to get the moral across, the narrator used dramatic techniques, i.e. exaggeration, dialogue whereby the narrator mimicked the characters in the tale, song and proverbs, etc.

**The Tall Blonde**

*The night was clear, the stars were bright.*
*You could hear the sounds of the night loud and clear.*
*Around a big warm fire huddled a group of young people engaged in light talk while they roasted maize, cassava and bananas.*
*The story teller had gathered the young men and women together for their usual nightly ritual of storytelling.*
*The story teller began:* "**Ugai Itha**"
*All was quiet as the story teller started his tale.*

A long time ago in a far, far away land, out on the savannah, lived a beautiful giraffe. Her name was Mrembo. She had soft silky yellow fur covered with reddish brown spots, almond shaped eyes, silky long eyelashes, a nose like flower petals and a long, tufted tail, healthy sinewy flank, a wholesome female. She was very, very tall; she stood 16 feet tall and very graceful; with an elegant walk. She was her mother’s pride. She was proof that her father was a good food gatherer. The whole savannah lauded her beauty. Whenever she went to drink at the water hole, she could feel the eye of every eligible male looking for a mate. They all referred to her as the Tall Blonde. Whenever she looked at herself in the water she saw this beautiful tall female. All the males felt that her well fed body was ideal to be the mother of their potential calves.

One day, Mrembo received a visitor, Mumagari the pigeon. Many called her Mumagari because her motto was “mumagari onaga unene.” (The one, who travels, sees great things). She came with news from another land. She said that in that land they had new ways of finding food and protecting themselves, and they even groomed their fur differently. All in savannah were fascinated by her
stories. Every one desired to visit this far away paradise where everything sounded so different, so much better than life in the open savannah land. Every member of this tribe begun to think of sending one of their own to discover for themselves this promised land. Mrembo’s parents discussed the idea of sending her there. Her mother was against the idea. She felt that they were doing fine and they did not need to be taught new ways of getting food and grooming. She felt they had the best ways. Father argued that that change was good. He quoted a well known proverb - "utatiga ndakora". (He who does not leave will not find). He even pointed out the Twiga family that looked well fed ever since their son had returned from the far away paradise. Their herd had grown, their den was bigger and they were looking especially sleek during the savannah meetings. Why, they even had the privilege to sit with the king of the jungle, and their son was given the honour of announcing the king’s arrival! The discussion continued for days. Mrembo was not so sure that she wanted to leave all her friends at the watering hole, her family and a certain special giraffe that she felt was special.

Finally, Mrembo’s father got his way: his daughter was travelling to the far away land. Her mother spent the days before her departure reminding her of the many lessons on life they had shared together, as well as the many good things about herself and her wonderful home. She advised her to be ready to learn but never forget who she was and where she came from. Never to regret who she was. Her mother used proverbs and sayings to help her remember her wise words. Mrembo was well equipped to leave.

She groomed herself, said her goodbyes to her family and friends and left with their friend the pigeon to the promised-land.

The journey was long and tiring: they passed many villages, passed the open grasslands, crossed rivers, saw all kind of animals, but kept walking until they finally arrived. Mrembo could not believe her eyes. Looking around her, she saw things she had never seen before. Many of the animals were living on top of trees! And they all looked different, why all of them had woolly dark fur. And the female ones wore ribbons around their necks. Mrembo stared and stared, they were even talking differently. The females were all slim and sleek; she begun to wonder, didn’t they eat at all? Why, a well fed body was a symbol of well being back in the savannah where she came from. She would often have discussions Mumagari about all these strange thing and strange ways of the
promised-land.

After a while, Mumagari left to go back home and Mrembo was left behind. She was already attending Mrs Owl’s school to learn the ways of her new home, to learn all the good things that she would take back home and improve her family’s life. In the school however, nobody was interested in her. All the pupils were smooth sleek animals, with beautiful woolly fur. On the way to the school, nobody paid much attention to her, except the young baby animals, which often pointed at her and asked their parents about her. When she went to the watering hole, all the animals had partners, but she was ever so alone. She felt like a fish out of water. Every one ate meat; she was used to acacia leaves and even thorns. When she went to the meat market to see what meat was on offer, it was always the same, lean meat. When she asked the butcher about it, he answered that in this land, no one was interested in the fatty pieces. Nobody ever asked for the fatty pieces.

But she carried on. She faithfully went to Mrs Owl’s class, even when no one ever asked her about her beloved home. Sometimes they talked about her home; they found it amusing that they still lived in the open savannah. How could people still live in the open when the new way was to build up in the trees? But she remembered her mother’s wise words before she left – “Guthekererwo ni andu ti kuririrwo ni hiti”. (To be laughed at by men is not to be wept over by hyenas.)

In her class were many beautiful females who she referred to as hedgehogs and peacocks. This is because they were prickly and proud. These all seemed to gather together at the break and talk about the last time they were at the watering holes and all the attention they got from all the sleek males, what to use in their grooming and all that kind of talk. Always having something to whisper about. But Mrembo carried on. She knew why she was here. In the class there was no other like her. So she looked around and saw a mouse, which always seemed to be timid, and never said a thing. She always seemed to look around her in awe at the world. Mrembo made friends of some sought with the mouse, which although differently from her had a very interesting story about her homeland where she lived.

After a while, Mrembo begun to feel dejected. She began to understand how the hyena back home felt when all made fun of him. She began to feel invisible. Why with her being so different, she was supposed to stand out. But this instead made her invisible. She wanted to join the group of the
hedgehogs and peacocks; after all, she felt she was as beautiful as they were. Why, hadn’t she been the beauty of the savannah where she came from? Hadn’t she been described as a long stemmed speckled gigantic flower? Had not everyone talked of her beauty and grace? But it never was to be. She was INVISIBLE. These words begun to run in her head:

*It is the irony of ironies*
*The paradox of my life*
*This that should make me visible*
*‘Tis what that makes me invisible*
*It is like I am totally veiled*
*Though I walk around totally unveiled*
*I am just a moving entity*
*The one without a face*
*I see them looking at me*
*But they are actually looking through me*
*Perhaps if they really did see me*
*Then they would have to face the truth*
*That I really am here with them*
*That would surely change their jungle*
*Rock their cocooned little world*
*So I continue invisible*

She wanted to be visible. She wanted to shout to all to look at her, and really see her. She often visited the watering hole to see what she could do different to become one of them. At the watering hole, many had different ideas of how she could become visible. She heard some talking about learning to talk like the natives, others talked about dressing and grooming like them. To others it was about learning to eat meat instead of green leaves. She was confused. She didn’t know what was important. She did not just want to be just like them she wanted to be *one* of them. She wanted to join their club.

One day at the watering hole, she met Mr Hound. He begun to talk to her and she was surprised. She had always drank by herself all the time she had been here, except for the time a hyena or two
would try to befriend her. She asked Mr Hound on advice on what to do. She wanted to be one of them! Look like them. Mr Hound thought for a while, and then told her that he knew of one who could help her! One who knew all the tricks and all the means to make her beautiful, Mr Fox. He then pointed out some animals at the hole and explained to her how each had been helped by Mr Fox to have a body beautiful. Mr Hound also proceeded to tell her about the medicine man that had special methods of turning even the ugliest animal into a beauty. Mrembo was talking notes. She begun to feel that her long neck and legs, along with her short body, sloping back and pale and spotted coat were pretty awkward.

Mr Hound then proceeded to make an appointment every other evening to meet with Mrembo, so he could keep her informed on what the latest secret regarding beauty and being accepted in this new world were. Mrembo faithfully kept the appointment.

On the first appointment, she learnt that having spots was not an advantage. All the beauties that were greatly admired at the water hole and the meat market did not have any spots. Mr Hound told her a secret, that it was possible to remove the spots and have a glossy smooth spotless body. He told her that it could be done in two ways: one was take a special concoction of leaves and roots made by the medicine man and sold by Mr Fox. This concoction had to be taken faithfully for some months before any results could be noticed. Another way was to visit one who could actually remove the spots with a sharp knife. This was a faster method and results could be seen very quickly, though it was more painful. Mrembo considered her options. She remembered a saying that was often repeated back at home “Mwendi uthaka ndacayaga”. (No pain no gain.) She contemplated her choices for a couple of days. She decided to choose the concoction, for although she wanted quick results, she was apprehensive about the pain. She started on her journey in becoming spot free and beautiful. After several months, she looked at herself at admired her spotless glossy fur.

Another secret she learnt from Mr Hound was that being heavy-set was not admirable. All the eligible males at the watering hole were only interested in the svelte willowy females, not the chubby and ungainly. And no buxom females were admired at the meat market. Mr Hound then showed her examples of these beauties with the perfect body: the coyote, the fox, the jaguar and the panther, all so lissom and breathtakingly beautiful, thought Mrembo. She listened attentively when Mr Hound gave her several options she had in her search for a svelte body. One of the options
seemed too rigorous, another too restrictive. She wanted an easy way out, which also happened to be the most painful. She again recalled those all important words - NO PAIN, NO GAIN. Should she really take the painful path?

She decided to try out another option, a special concoction of leaves and roots made by the medicine man. Many at the watering hole were raving about how effective it was. After a couple of months, she saw no results. She started considering Mr Hound’s other options. But this required money which she was short of. Her friend Mr Hound introduced her to a shark that lived by the ocean. He was known to be very generous in arranging payments for anything one wanted to have but did not have ready money. She then proceeded to try all the choices given her by Mr Hound, tried them all one by one with no results. Only one option was left, the painful one. Again the words flashed through her mind - NO PAIN, NO GAIN. She had decided, there was no reason to hesitate. It was better to suffer the pain and be happy afterwards. Her option meant her visiting the butcher and a stay at home afterwards for a couple of weeks. All she thought about was how lean and beautiful she would look. And she did.

On another appointment at the watering hole, Mrembo begun to realize that the other animals were often staring at her. “It must be my new beautiful self”, she thought. Again words from home came to her mind – “Guthuragwo mundu uriendwo” (A man is sometimes scorned who will be loved.) Mr Hound’s advice was really working.

She then decided that her neck was too long. It needed to be cut a few inches or two. Then it was her eyes, they were almond shaped, the wrong shape. What was desirable was large round eyes. Each time she visited the butcher, paid him a handsome sum, came away feeling even more beautiful than before.

The thing left was to start grooming herself like the other beauties; wearing feathers and ribbons. She had to keep finding out from Mr Hound what was the current style of feathers and ribbons were, because this month it was this, that month it was that. She found out that Mr Hound was a very reliable source of this precious information. And she faithfully consulted him so she could keep in step. She did nothing by halves. She also realized that keeping her new lean body required a lot of work and self discipline, and a lot of self denial. Her mother’s wise words - "uthaka nduriagwo"
(beauty is not eaten) often came to mind. But these had no longer had any effect on her. One thing was for sure, she wanted to be the leanest female at the watering hole. One day led to another...

Soon, her stay at her new wonderful land had come to an end. It had taken her awhile to payback Mr Shark, but her diminished appetite along with her new diet regimen - for she had lived on saliva like a flea - had helped. Mrs Owl presented her with her gown for her hard work. It was now time to go back home and teach her people a thing or two. She imagined how they all would surround her and marvel at her new self: her flawless and unblemished skin, her graceful and slinky new body, her shorter and more pleasing neck and her plumes and ribbons. She could not wait to get home!

When she arrived at the outskirts the savannah, she could see her heard all coming to receive her. She could hear sound of a homecoming welcome, the drumbeats and the ululations. At a few metres away they all stopped and stared. She thought to herself, “It was all worth it”. Then she heard a loud scream. “Ui, ui, ui!” It was her beloved mother, she was not screaming for joy. She then looked at the others; all were open mouthed, not in admiration as she had thought, but in great shock. And their cheeks were not trembling.

“My daughter, oh my daughter, what have they done to you”, screamed her mother. “You left here wholesome and robust, yet you return to us gaunt and haggard, just a shadow of your former self. Are you trying to make yourself invisible? Your lovely spots, your long graceful neck, what have you done? Ui, Ui, ui... And those feathers and ribbons, where are the lovely garments we sent you away with? Of what use are feathers and ribbons on the savannah?” Mrembo looked around her, all her relatives were spotted, and all were pleasingly stout. She was the odd one out. The ugly duckling!

“Mwegerekanio wateeire kiura matina.” (envy lost the frog his rear)
Rukirika
(it is finished)

Analysis of “The Tall Blonde”
The main character is Mrembo who can be described as the protagonist. She, as a protagonist of the story, is fighting against her own looks which can be seen as the
antagonist of the story. Therefore it can be said that the protagonist and antagonist are included in one character. Other characters will be revealed throughout the analysis of the story, and more deeply under characters and moral of the story. “The Tall Blonde” story is a third person narrative with omniscient narrator, who sees and reads all the thoughts and internal sufferings of the main character, Mrembo. Thus using Genette’s term (in Jahn, 2003), we can say that the narrator of the tale is the heterodiegetic narrator. It can be said from the fact that the Mrembo story is being told by a narrator to other narrates – from the beginning of the story – that the story is framed narrative, meaning a story within the story.

As explained earlier, major changes occurred in our rewriting of the story. These changes meant that we could not use Propp’s fairy tale model to analyze “The Tall Blonde”. The genre had changed from fairy tale to fable. The change occurred because the writer of “The Tall Blonde” used cultural influences in writing the story. In kikuyu stories, fairy tales do not exist; instead animal fables are used in entertaining and educating children. Propp’s character functions cannot in this case be used in analyzing “The Tall Blonde” simply because most of these functions do not exist in a fable. We have therefore used Aristotle’s functions of narrative to analyze the story.

**Functions of narrative according to Aristotle**

Aristotle’s model is the earliest attempt by Western philosophy to formulate a model for narrative (Kearney, 2002). According to Aristotle’s theory, literary works are imitations of reality.

The three all important topics in imitation are: the medium of imitation, the objects imitated, and the mode of imitation. The medium is the means by which the imitation is presented. In this case the text in the fable. The objects of imitation are “men in action” (Berger, 1997, p. 20).
The manner of imitation is the third topic. In Aristotle’s theory, the imitation is achieved through narration. Aristotle offers three possibilities for narration: “the poet may imitate by narration in which case he can either take another personality, as Homer does, or speak in his own person, unchanged-or he may present all his characters as living and moving before us” (Berger, 1997, p. 20). What this means is that a writer can write in third person, or in first person or even have the characters tell the story by interacting with each other.

According to Aristotle’s model, narratives serve five functions, namely: plot-mythos, re-creation-mimesis, release-catharsis, wisdom-phronesis and ethics-ethos.

**Plot-Mythos**

Mythos is a Greek word with three meanings:
1) A telling; (2) a fable or fantasy; (3) a crafted structure.

According to Aristotle, human existence is a life of action, therefore storytelling or narratives serve to recreate our lives into stories. Stories are part of our lives, indeed every human life is a story in itself. The life stories become explicit only when they are transposed into narrative. To arrange the events in a story is the first function of narratives.

Aristotle defines plot as “the arrangement of incidents in a narrative” (Berger, 1997, p. 21). According to Aristotle, there are simple and complex plots. He described simple plots as those whereby changes of fortune happen without reversals or recognition by the main characters. Conversely, in complex plots, the main characters come into recognition of their changed fortune whether good or bad.

The story “The Tall Blonde”, though it uses animal characters, is actually a story about life. The story fulfils the mythos function of narrative as it is a fable about the human condition. It is a story about a giraffe who leaves her home to live among strangers and struggles with the society’s rejection. The giraffe also struggles with
issues of self image and conformity. The issues the giraffe faces are actually real struggles that humans face. For example, young people who leave home to study abroad may find themselves in a foreign culture and environment and struggle to fit in. Many teenagers are faced with issues of body image as well as peer pressure to conform. And many immigrants find themselves living on the fringes of society and struggle with rejection. These struggles have been transformed into life stories in the form of a tragic fable.

This is a complex plot because there is a reversal of fortune and recognition of the fact at the very end. What though are the main components of a plot?

In every story, there is a conflict and the results of the conflict are the plot. The conflict can be either internal, i.e. the main character wrestles with a conflict, or external, a conflict with an outside force. The development of the plot occurs as the central character confronts the problem, finds a solution and accepts the changes as a result (Sorenson, 2002). Sorenson has put together a chart that defines the parts of a plot, namely the exposition, opening incidents, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution.
We will use the chart to analyze the plot in “The Tall Blonde”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parts of the plot</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exposition</strong></td>
<td>Introduces the characters and setting. Establishes the point of view. Gives background information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opening</strong></td>
<td>Leads the main character to a conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incident</strong></td>
<td>Begins the plot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rising</strong></td>
<td>Builds the conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action</strong></td>
<td>Adds new more complicated incidents. Leads to Climax.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Climax</strong></td>
<td>Raises conflict to greatest intensity. Changes the course of events or the way the reader understands the story. Maybe either an event or an insight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Falling</strong></td>
<td>Reduces conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action</strong></td>
<td>Prepares reader for resolution (not always used).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resolution</strong></td>
<td>Ends the conflict. Leaves the reader satisfied.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Plot in “The Tall Blonde”**
In the early part of the story “The Tall Blonde”, we are introduced to Mrembo; her family and the setting is the Savannah. We are given Mrembo’s description and family background. We deduce that the Omniscient third person point of view is used in telling the story. We are also introduced to Mumagari the pigeon who brings news of a faraway land where everyone seems to have a happy life. For this reason,
Mrembo travels to this land and it is in this land that she realizes that she is different. In her journey, Mrembo encounters animals who groom themselves differently. The conflict is not yet introduced until Mrembo attends Mrs Owl’s school, whereby she suffers rejection from her class mates.

…nobody was interested in her….no one ever asked her about her beloved home. Sometimes they talked about her home; they found it amusing that they still lived in the open savannah.

The rejection is compounded when she goes to the watering hole and receives no attention. She must devise a means to ensure that she is accepted. The conflict here is both internal and external. Mrembo struggles internally with self image, a conflict inflicted upon her by outside forces. This we know because all originally it seems that Mrembo was quite satisfied with her body image until she was put in a situation whereby she compares herself with others who are different, and is made to feel invisible because of her difference. The conflict is built up by her constant meetings with Mr Hound who has various suggestions that would help Mrembo fit in. She then has to decide; should she go ahead and carry out Mr Hound’s suggestions, however painful his concoctions. She is faced with a choice of how to alter herself. Should she face the knife and do it the fast, albeit painful, way or should she take the slow path?

One of the options seemed too rigorous, another too restrictive. She wanted the easy way out, which also happened to be the most painful.

Her repeated meetings with Mr Hound continue to intensify the conflict leading to the climax. Finally she does succumb to the knife among other procedures. Her complete alteration and transformation, although not directly mentioned, are implied. Mrembo
returns home, thus reducing the conflict. Partial resolution is seen when the reader comes to the realization that Mrembo actually transforms herself into an unrecognizable animal, thus in effect becoming the Ugly Duckling. Contrary to Sorensen, the reader is left very saddened and dissatisfied, which explains the partial resolution. Although the conflict ends with Mrembo achieving her desire to become “one of them”, her return to the savannah ushers in a new conflict because she returns with looks that are not set out in the beauty standards of animals in the savannah. After all the sacrifices, she is perceived as the odd one.

She then looked at the others; all were open mouthed, not in admiration as she had thought, but in great shock. And their cheeks were not trembling…Mrembo looked around her, all her relatives were spotted, and all were pleasingly stout. She was the odd one out. The Ugly Duckling!

The second function is closely related to the plot namely:

Re-creation-Mimesis

Kearney observes that, “an imaginative re-description such that hidden patterns and hitherto unexplored meanings unfold” (2002, p. 12). Mimesis, according to Aristotle, is not a passive version of reality, but it re-enacts the real world of action by magnifying its essential traits thereby enriching the essence of our lives. We are able to properly understand life through the creative re-telling or re-creation through storytelling. “Life is lived while stories are told” (Ricoeur in Kearney, 2002, p. 132). Narrative texts enable the story of life to be retold. Human existence fully becomes narrative only when it is recounted verbally. Kearney notes that, according to Aristotle, “poetic narration is the imitation of an action” (2002, p. 132).

It is through the re-creation of life through stories that we understand life. If it wasn’t
for the re-creation of the immigrant experiences through these stories, we probably
would not be able to understand this experience. The same applies to most life stories.
Their re-creation makes it possible for the audience to perceive perspectives that
otherwise would not be accessible. In this fable for example, the reader is able to
perceive the issues and concept of invisibility that is experienced by some in society.
These are the often those who have characteristics that actually should make them
visible, but conversely render them invisible, not because they cannot be seen, but
they are dismissed.

It is the irony of ironies
The paradox of my life
This that makes me visible
Tis what that makes me invisible
It is like I am totally veiled…

This story of the fable genre is told from an omniscient point of view. The use of the
animal characters serves to separate the lived world from the story world. The writer
has used poetic licence in exaggerating characteristics in the animals to separate the
story world from the lived world.

Release-Catharsis

“The purgation by pity and fear” (Kearney, 2002, p. 137); According to Aristotle,
dramatised stories had the ability to offer us the freedom to observe all kinds of
unpleasant and unliveable events, which by being narrated have some of the harm
removed. This means that when we as spectators or readers are sufficiently distanced
from tragic sufferings, we experience a certain awe or fear; therefore we are able to
grasp the meaning of the narrative. We therefore experience a cathartic release or we
are purified and therapeutically cleansed, so experiencing relief. It is not just enough
to experience an awe that detaches us; we must also experience pity or empathy. This
means that we are able to broaden the range of those with whom we empathise –
from our family and friends to all kinds of foreigners. When we read a story or watch a drama, we can experience what it means to be a certain character whatever their race, gender, etc. For example, if we watch “Schindler’s list” (dir. Steven Spielberg, 1993) we can experience, albeit vicariously, what it was to be a Jew during the holocaust. When we watch “Hotel Rwanda” (dir. Terry George, 2004), we are able to relive the lives of the Tutsis who were butchered in the genocide. We as readers or spectators are able to put ourselves in the place of the characters and experience their suffering. Therefore, fiction, e.g. narratives, enables what is impossible in real life to be possible. “If we possess narrative sympathy-enabling us to see the world from the other persons point of view-we cannot kill. If we do not, we cannot love” (Kearney, 2002, p. 140).

When we read the story, we cannot help but feel sympathy for the giraffe that suffers from social rejection and is forced to take drastic measures to be accepted. After reading the story, we cannot be indifferent towards the character. The story evokes strong feelings, as it should. It is clear that the aim of the writer is to evoke pity as well as empathy for Mrembo. It is likely the writer hopes that, if we are indifferent to the plight of those who live on the fringes of society, perhaps by reading the story, our indifference is transformed to empathy, and therefore action. Or that how we view these people changes as we get personally acquainted with Mrembo.

**Wisdom-Phronesis**

“A form of practical wisdom that is capable of respecting the singularity of situations as well as the nascent university of values aimed at human actions” (Kearney, 2002, p. 143). In other words, when history and story overlap, we get a phronetic understanding, knowledge of actual events that happened. We are able to learn about the world from stories. According to Aristotle, “for narrative to work, what is impossible must be made credible” (Kearney, 2002, p. 143).

However, the overlapping of history and story is not relevant in this instance because
the stories we analyze are not based on historical events. From “The Tall Blonde” story, the phronetic function is served by the knowledge we gain of other peoples experiences. Though the story is not based on actual experiences, it is inspired by real life television make over shows as well images that are presented in the media of the ‘ideal’ body type. We are able to learn from the story, what can happen when the notion of the ideal body is constantly reinforced in media messages that are repeatedly played out on television programmes, fashion magazines, advertisements, and so on. We also gain knowledge of the use of metaphors in African storytelling as found in the story.

Ethics –Ethos
The ethical role of storytelling that evokes moral responsibility is last function in the Aristotelian model. Stories make it possible to ethically share a common world. In every story there is a teller-(narrator) who tells a story to a listener or in this case a reader (narratee), about a character or characters a real or imaginary world. The narratee receives the story and relates it to a life – world of action and suffering. Storytelling is therefore “intrinsically interactive” (Kearney, 2002, p. 152). The story is therefore interplay between the writer, the characters and the reader. The reader is faced with the question: what is to be done? The narratee is challenged to act and also evaluate the event and characters involved in the story.

“Narratives are never neutral. Each narrative carries its own weightings regarding the moral worth of the characters, and dramatises the moral relationship between certain actions and their consequences” (Kearney, 2002, p. 155). Each narrated action demands of the reader some response of approval or disapproval relative to some scale of goodness or justice. The writer seeks to persuade the reader to evaluate the characters and their actions, thereby seeking to change the life of the reader. A story is therefore an open-ended invitation to the reader to respond ethically. In “The Tall
"Blonde”, the writer addresses the reader and gets the message across by various means, i.e. the characters, descriptions and metaphors. By use of the animals, the writer is asking the reader to pass judgement on the shallowness of Mrembo’s classmates, as well as those at the watering whole who seem to be obsessed with appearance and the outer image. The story evokes responsibility in the reader, that of looking beyond what is seen, i.e. the outer image. The story speaks to the reader to see what is not seen, the character. The writer’s intension appears to be that the reader examines his/her own response to people they meet. The reader is meant to ask him/herself: do I render others invisible? What can I personally do?

From the above functions of narratives, we have been able to briefly point out some characters that have influenced the decisions Mrembo took and the events in the story. Besides that we have established that the story is of moral nature. Therefore, in the following section we expound more on the characters and the moral of the story.

**The Characters and the moral of the story**
Characterization is one of the devices that authors use to speak to their readers. In this case, we have a fable, a tale with a moral. The writer’s intention is to evoke ethical responsibility in the reader. The writer has used descriptions of characters, their behaviour and attitudes to gain a reaction from the reader. The writer has used metaphorical characters to point out the weaknesses in the society Mrembo is living in. Characters such as Mr Hound, Mr Fox, Mrs Owl, the medicine man and The Peacocks are metaphors for the Media, The Consumer Industry, Institutions of Education, the medical industry and Shallow people in society respectively. Mr Hound stands for the media because they do hound their audiences with information and images that have been said to have a huge impact on their audiences. The Fox metaphor relies on the common animal metaphor of the sly
Fox. In this case, the consumer industry is cunning in the way it often portrays through advertisements, an array of choices to media audiences in order to induce their consumers to buy, buy, buy, use, and use. Of course, the consumer industry works hand in hand with the media. It is through media such as beauty magazines, TV shows, etc, that the consumer industry portrays the latest look, etc.

At the same time, the reader also sees how fickle Mrembo is. She is representative of the powerless and often naive members of society who feel that they do not fit in and therefore look for means to do so. The reader thus sees Mrembo trying to conform to the beauty norms of the society around her, witnesses the extremes she goes through and the consequences, whereby she changes what is natural imagining that this will gain her acceptance. Other metaphors used are the watering hole to represent place of socialization can clubs, cafes etc.

Earlier on, we saw that Kikuyu fables could have more than one moral. We have identified at least two morals in “The Tall Blonde”. One being when we reject others on whatever basis how they look or for other reasons; this can lead them to take drastic measures in order to be accepted. These measures could even be life threatening as, exemplified by Mrembo. The story thus awakens the feelings of responsibility in the reader. According to the reaction of some readers, we have seen that in assuming the story is autobiographical, they have had the “bad feeling” about the whole content of invisibility. They felt themselves not as neutral readers, but as part of the story, as representatives of the “other” society where Mrembo travelled to study. It evokes also the awareness of the society’s cruelty towards different people, who do not fit the established norms of beauty.

Another moral of the story is summarized in the closing statement: envy lost the frog its rear. This is a kikuyu saying derived from a fable of a frog who, on seeing the big rear of the ox, thought it would grow as big by swelling. But it burst and so lost its rear end and its life (Barra, 1991, p. 77).
From this conclusion, the writer is warning of those who not satisfied with themselves and who try to alter themselves to look like those they envy could eventually even lose what they have.
In conclusion, the writer seems to be asking the reader to consider what role we play as victims or as perpetuators of the beauty ideal that can in the final end endanger life. The writer is also challenging us to question ourselves and our ideals and values. Have our values been shaped by the media and the society around us. Do we conform to society just so that we do not stand out as different? What is our view of difference?
In this chapter, we have included comparisons of the themes, characters and plots of the two stories. In examining the themes we have touched on stories that the media promotes on body image. We also include a critical analysis of “The Tall Blonde” by the two group members who did not write the story. The writer has presented her intentions in writing the stories and we have discussed them with regards to the group’s perceptions.

**Themes, characters and plots**
Both stories use animals as their main characters. The environment or setting of “The Ugly Duckling” is first the duck yard, then the lake. In “The Tall Blonde” the setting is originally the savannah; thereafter the main character travels to the jungle. “The Ugly Duckling”’s plot follows the prototype of a fairy tale that ends with “happily ever after”. There had to be a happy ending. “The Tall Blonde”, on the other hand, does not have a happy ending. The group agreed that the story had a partial resolution; that is, Mrembo’s problems appeared to have been resolved when she altered herself to look like the other animals around her. However, when she returns home, she is again in the same position of being different. The conflict begins again, according to some group members. The writer however argues that as she is home, despite her being different, her family and those around her will still accept her.

There were similarities in the themes of the two stories when we compared them. Transformation is a theme that runs through both stories. Both animals undergo major changes in appearance: however, the Ugly Duckling’s come naturally, whilst the Tall Blonde’s are achieved with the help of the surgeon’s
knife. While the transformation of the Ugly Duckling led to his being accepted by those around him, the opposite happened to Mrembo. The writer of the story actually revealed in our discussions that despite all of Mrembo’s efforts, she in fact was not accepted. And even when she returns home, she stands out as different from her kind. The assumption had been that she was finally accepted, so this revelation puts another twist in the story. Mrembo became the Ugly Duckling, but contrary to the real Ugly Duckling, she rebuilt herself in the shape of the beauty ideals of the jungle and then returned to the Savannah. The Ugly Duckling left home grew with age into a beauty seen with the eyes of humans and swans. If she returned to the duck yard, would the ducks see her as beautiful or as odd? Mrembo too grew into the beauty ideals of her surroundings, so she is no better or worse than the Ugly Duckling. A question that arose with regard to the Ugly Duckling was; why was the duckling rejected when he was a ‘baby’ not hurting anyone, was it just because he was ugly?

In our analysis of “The Ugly Duckling”, difference was seen as one of the themes, and this, it is said, “can make one stronger”. However, while some of the group members view difference as a strong point, others argue that it can be negative. Mrembo was not made stronger by her difference. It is not a secret that even today people are stigmatized in the society by being different, because of their skin colour, their sexual orientation, their disabilities, etc no matter how many laws and legislations are directed towards human rights and equality. A silent stigma is put on them, because some people have no wish whatsoever to accept them. Although they (“different” people) perceive themselves as “normal”, they are still marginalised, pointed at by some in the society. The difference, however, lies not only in the visual side or other physical manifestations of a person. The difference might be in the person’s ideas and views that might differ from the views of others. People with progressive thoughts for certain eras, rebellious minds and radical ideas were often excluded from the so-called mainstream society. An independent woman, for
example, with children out of wedlock in earlier days of the 20th century could have been regarded as evil, wrong and easy. The cruelest examples of the exclusion from the society based on a person’s ideologies and opinions can be seen among others during the Stalinist period in Russia and in other places, during the Hitler’s rule, where progressive people were executed and then years, decades after, their ideas were accepted.

The writer of “The Tall Blonde” tells that one of the motivating factors in writing the story was all the programmes she noticed on the TV with body alteration as the theme: programmes such as; The Swan, the Beauty Clinic, Extreme Make Over and the like. These programmes, in her opinion, give their audiences messages that suggest that in order to be beautiful, one must be moulded into a specific homogenized image that does not pay attention to cultural and ethnic differences. Glossy magazines, i.e. fashion and beauty magazines, also perpetuate the same stereotyped images; sometimes these images seem to imply that hair must be straightened and skin lightened in order for one to be beautiful. We can then understand why Mrembo feels that she has to get rid of her spots and shorten her neck, etc in order to fit the acceptable mould.

She begun to feel that her long neck and legs, along with her short body, sloping back and pale and spotted coat were pretty awkward.

We as a group have not conducted research into the effect of the images presented by the mass media to their audiences. We cannot as such substantiate our claim. However, the theories and the research undertaken on this subject by others were helpful in our understanding of the issue.

One question we asked ourselves was – how was it possible to explain the media’s ability to influence people to make such drastic alterations to themselves like the Tall
Blonde did? We were able to understand this with the help of two media effects theories: the Cultivation Theory and the Social Comparison theories. With the aid of these two theories, we take a critical look at “The Ugly Duckling” and “The Tall Blonde” with the aim of understanding the social pressures they endure.

In “The Tall Blonde”, one of the themes that stood out was how the mass media perpetuates an ideal body image and the effects it can have on their audiences. This idea was presented by the metaphor of Mr Hound:

Mr Hound thought for a while, and then told her that he knew of one who could help her! One who knew all the tricks and all the means to make her beautiful, Mr Fox. He then pointed out some animals at the hole and explained to her how each had been helped by Mr Fox to have a body beautiful. Mr Hound also proceeded to tell her about the medicine man that had special methods of turning even the ugliest animal into a beauty. Mrembo was talking notes...

Mr Hound then proceeded to make an appointment every other evening to meet with Mrembo, so he could keep her informed on what the latest secret regarding beauty and being accepted in this new world were. Mrembo faithfully kept the appointment.

Mrembo kept regular appointments with Mr Hound and was thus exposed to images that influenced her perception of herself. The ability that the media has in influencing people’s perceptions of their body image is explained with the aid of Cultivation Theory. According to theories of media influence:

Mass media are conceived as transmitters of cultural ideals. Media often emphasize specific characteristics of people and provide role models from which the public at large can learn. If the media depict a slim physique as attractive, this body image may attain the status of an ideal that everyone should attempt to achieve. The attachment of social rewards to such an image will render it even more appealing especially to young people...

(Wykes & Gunter, 2005, p. 148)
This theory maintains that media representations are stereotyped and repetitive. When audiences are regularly exposed to such images, in their consciousness, images of certain characteristics as being the norm are cultivated. This is exactly what happens to Mrembo from all the messages and images she gets from Mr Hound. Just like Mrembo, many young girls and even women shrink themselves to the point of self harm and even death (Wykes & Gunter, 2005) in order to reach the ideal body image the media portrays. However, a question arose from one group member: The Twiga family’s son managed to come back with good things from the Promised Land. Mrembo did not. Does it imply that girls are more prone to be caught focusing on their appearance than men? One could argue that it is more important for a female to appear appealing than for the male, who has to appear competent and strong. The Twigas son came back with improved techniques but Mrembo does not learn much, other than what Mr. Hound is teaching. Mrembo can be seen as a representative of those of the female gender who have a problem with their identity or appearance. This is because Mumagari, who is also a female, has travelled to the paradise, seen what was there but stayed true to herself.

The fact is that even boys and men are presented with media representations of the perfect male body, in most cases “youthful toned muscular male bodies” (Wykes & Gunter, 2005, p. 5). There are men who suffer from poor body image, have low self esteem and consequently develop self-harming or mental health problems, “but there is no doubt that currently it is overwhelmingly a problem of and for young women” (Wykes & Gunter, 2005, p. 6). The writer seems to have subconsciously realized this. We do not see Mrembo making efforts to befriend the other animals or to make contact with them. Maybe she was so used to receiving attention and recognition that she never learned how to actively seek interaction. This is what leads her to fall into Mr Hound’s hands. The situation portrays how girls are prone to being beauty-focused, which leads us to the theme that girls have to be careful and strong.
The situation today is rather dire: “Six-year-olds want to be thin” is the title of an article on BBC News Health section. The article quotes a study undertaken by researchers in Australia whereby girls as young as six years were dissatisfied with their bodies and wanted to be thinner, many of them succumbing to anorexia and bulimia. The reasons for the eating disorders were cited as low self esteem, which “is a major contributory factor of eating disorders: media images, peer pressure and family situations” (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4319105.stm accessed 17 May, 2005).

Another article reads: “40% of teens want plastic surgery”. This article is based on a survey done by a UK magazine whereby “Two thirds of the 2,000 girls quizzed, average age 14, said the pressure came from celebrities with perfect bodies and boys” (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4147961.stm accessed on 17 May, 2005). The article blamed impossible role models “of thin yet curvy, surgically-enhanced celebrities” presented in the media.

From these and many other examples we can see that cosmetic surgeries as well as eating disorders have reached epidemic proportions. It is no wonder that the Tall Blonde feels pressured to alter herself to fit the norm presented as ideal by the mass media. The writer of the story “The Tall Blonde” explained that this is one of the reasons she wrote the story – to highlight the narratives the media promotes and what effect they have on their audiences, particularly the naive and vulnerable members of society that may also be dealing with other issues aside from image. The writer of “The Tall Blonde” admits that this obsession for the perfect body set her wondering about what would happen when a character from a different cultural setting was exposed to this problem. Mrembo’s story implies that the problem of self-starvation and body alteration could soon become universal.

Another theory that can be related to the stories is Social Comparison theory. The theory hypothesizes that individuals establish their identity through making
comparisons between themselves and others who possesses specific valued attributes (Wykes & Gunter, 2005). It assumes that there are individual differences in the tendency to compare oneself with others, to engage in upward comparison or to choose inappropriate comparison targets, whereby some individuals are more vulnerable than others to social-cultural appearance pressures. As mentioned in chapter three, H.C. Andersen has been described as writing stories that are self consciously sentimental. “The Ugly Duckling” has been assumed to be an autobiographical story in that it allegorically describes his life. We find it true in the sense that he looked down on his poor upbringing which it made him adamant to move out of that situation. It is because he associated richness with fame that he looked up to and associated himself with people of higher classes who were well recognized in the society; for him they became what he aspired to be. In his earlier life, he is quoted to have compared himself to passer-by on a street below, while in a house of some highly placed member of the society where he had been invited for Christmas in 1825.

Five or six years ago I too was in the street below, I knew no one in the town and now I can, above all that and in the bosom of a loved and respected family, treat myself to goblets of Shakespear. (Benoit-Dussausoy & Fontaine, 2000, p. 442)

This clearly shows that he made upwardly mobile comparisons which greatly influenced his life to and who he died as, a famous author.

Social comparison theory can also be used to explain the drastic actions of Mrembo and the choice of H.C. Andersen to be famous. In “The Tall Blonde”, Mrembo chooses inappropriate comparisons targets that are animal appearances that do not exist in her home, the savannah. It shows how vulnerable some people can be when confronted with cultural appearance pressures, and this vulnerability can lead to poor choices as seen in her story. In “The Ugly Duckling”, ugliness has been featured
consistently and insistently. With the story being perceived as Andersen’s autobiography, could his looks have been a hindrance to him being recognised for who he was thus he used fame as a diversion from how, in reality, he looked? He has been quoted to have said that in future women will be looking at him and admiring him. We conclude that this can only be because the women in his life never found him appealing thus the story of “The Ugly Duckling” gives us an insight as to how he looked like, Ugly and rejected.

We all, after discussion, agreed that the media does play a big role in people’s perceptions of their body image, though they are not the only influences. Andrine and Burmaa maintained that they cannot admit to having paid much attention to how certain images are played out in the media. It was their opinion that one has to be very insecure about their body image to be able to point out these stereotyped images. Wangeshi argued that this may be because these images have become so mainstream that we do not actually notice. We are in agreement that consumerism and commercialization play a big role in the narratives that the media present to their audiences. This commercialization of the female image begun around 1900, when women’s images begun to be linked to products in posters. The messages of these posters were: “buy the product, get the girl...or get to be like the girl...” This was the beginning of the use of the female image in the entertainment arena which has led to the commercialized images we see around us today. And the message we get today is that loosing weight equals success.

We all concur with the conclusion that image matters very much in how people perceive us. It is shallow to judge people by their outward appearance, but the reality is that is often how we judge and are judged.

How social groups are treated in cultural representations is part and parcel of how they are treated in life...poverty, harassment, self-hate and discrimination are shored up and
instituted by representation. How we are seen determines in part how we are treated; how we treat others is based on how we see them; such seeing comes from representation (Wykes & Gunter, 2005, p. 220).

Or as a Kikuyu proverb says “the eye discerns the beauty but not the kindness (of a person)”.

**Conclusion**

We started out with the idea of investigating what changes would occur in the structure and themes of a story written in a specific cultural and time setting if it was re-written in contemporary times and in a different cultural context. We also wanted to investigate if the themes in “The Ugly Duckling” correspond to the issues in contemporary times with which we could identify. The timeless story of “The Ugly Duckling” was our subject. To answer our question, we first had to come up with basic information on narratives and narrative theory. From this information we learned that narratives have basic structures and components, i.e. the plot, the characters, the narrator, the message and the theme. We were able to identify different genres of narrative, which aided us in our comparison of “The Ugly Duckling” and “The Tall Blonde”. Information on genres and subgenres pointed out to us one of the changes that occurred when the story was re-written. “The Ugly Duckling” is a fairy tale; however re-writing the story changed it to a fable. The changes occurred because the writer used cultural influences in her adaptation of the original story. It was explained that fairy tales do not exist in her culture, hence the change. Therefore, it was clear to us that cultural influences have a big impact on story telling.

We also concluded that the general theme, i.e. social acceptance, did not change. However, because the two stories had different plots, the conclusions were opposite.
“The Ugly Duckling” had a happy ending – acceptance finally achieved, whilst the “The Tall Blonde” had a sad ending. “The Tall Blonde” also had extra themes that were not in the original story.

From our analysis, we concluded that the two stories had served the functions of narrative. As well as being entertaining, they taught us about people’s attitudes towards difference and what effect this can have on those who are different. The writer of “The Tall Blonde” admitted that she experienced a cathartic release in writing her story.

We learned about story telling in different cultures as well as the fact that stories are subject to different interpretations by their audiences. We identified with the themes in the two stories being that we are different from those we see around us.

Our discussions on the subject were pretty candid. We were able to self reflect on our own responses to media images as well as own personal body images.

Despite the passage of time, Andersen’s classic story’s themes are still alive and can be identified in issues that occupy us in contemporary times, regardless of cultural orientations.
Group working process

The group working process has been learning experience for the three of us though we started as four. In the beginning, we had the idea of writing stories that reflect our cultural differences but the timing was wrong because it coincided with the celebrations of H.C. Andersen’s anniversary. This led us to consider taking one of his stories, re-writing it and analysing them. Two stories were also written to be part of the project, i.e. “The Tall Blonde” and the story of a gay, as the re-written versions. The stories were then to be analysed using three approaches which were structural analysis for the original story, cultural analysis for “The Tall Blonde” and sociological approach for the gay story. However as the project progressed, the approaches changed and one story had to be dropped.

During various discussions, we constantly found ourselves referring to the media, especially the images being promoted daily. This proved a good direction especially when discussing the story of “The Tall Blonde”. We therefore opted to include media influences in the project.

In relation to general organisation of the meetings and writings, there were no complications as it was clear for example that the ones who will not write the story would analyse it, among other things.

Abstract

This project lays focus on narratives with special emphasis on narrative analysis using structural and classical approaches. In the introduction of the approaches, we have explained various theories of narratives and genres, from which we have chosen two to base our project on. These are syntactic and semantic theories on one hand and the mimetic theory on the other. We base our project report on the short story genre
with sub genres fairy tales and fables. For illustration, we use two stories, “The Ugly Duckling” by H.C. Andersen which we analyse structurally and “The Tall Blonde”, our own culturally influenced version of the fairy tale, using the classical approach. The discussion draws comparisons in the two stories, and our deductions are included in the conclusion.

Resume

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Appendix: “The Ugly Duckling” H. C. Andersen