***Discourse and Ideology***

In order to **unpack the ideologies** of fairytales, we must first examine the binary oppositions which structuring the elements of the text. The structuralist theorist, Chandler, suggests that binary oppositions are *“pairs of mutually-exclusive signifiers representing categories which are logically opposed but together define a complete universe of discourse”*. One group thus cannot exist without the other. For example, in order for there to be beautiful, there must also be ugly. Thus, in order to privilege beauty, ugliness must be undermined (Chandler, 1980). Now debunked historical text-centred approaches suggested binary oppositions support the preferred reading, as the qualities ascribed to the ‘good’ characters reveal society’s values (Hourihan, 1997). In the base text, beauty, marriage and passive obedience are privileged over ugliness, being unmarried and aggressive. The following table lists the major binary oppositions found within “Cinderella”.

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| ***Privileged*** | ***Marginalised*** |
| **Beautiful** | **Ugly** |
| **Married** | **Single** |
| Innocent/Good | Evil |
| **Little** | **Big** |
| Noble | Common |
| **Passive** | **Aggressive** |
| Humble | Proud |
| Cheerful | Quarrelsome |
| Male Dominance | Female Dominance |
| Modest | Vain |
| Meek/Delicate | Forceful/Tough |

These dualisms illustrate the privileged and marginalized (Derrida, 1978) attributes, representing the hierarchy of values prevalent in the patriarchal society. From the perspective of contemporary theorists, binary oppositions help **uncover concealed ideologies** within the text, namely the *“inferiorized other”* (Hourihan, 1997). This supports post-structuralist perspectives, portraying that even the most seemingly innocent text is opinionated and prejudiced. By identifying these *“polarities”* (Appleton, 2000), we can begin to unravel the internalised ideologies within the text.

Discourses mobilised within texts are constructed within *“discursive contexts”* (QSA, 2003), and do not offer “*neutral descriptions*” (Moon, 2001) of society or the world. They shed light on the inherent ideologies encoded within the text, which are *“insidiously powerful”* (Hourihan, 1997), passing on pervasive ideological messages. Through the utilisation of discourses, texts privilege some world views over others. **By identifying the discourses internalised within a text, and observing those which are dominant, the text’s ideologies become further apparent.** The following table shows the discourses prevalent in the fairytale Cinderella and the way in which they were mobilised.

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| **Discourse** | **Depicted through text** |
| Romantic Discourse | * The prince’s search for a wife * The prince falls in live with Cinderella almost instantly and couldn’t eat as he was too engrossed just “looking at her”. * Cinderella’s desire to be saved from her step-family and married. |
| Gender Discourse (Beauty) | * Cinderella described using adjectives like “unparalleled goodness”, “sweetness of temper”, “pretty”, “patient”, “beautiful”, “slender”, “handsome”, “lovely”, “graceful”, “magnificent”, “fine”, “lady” etc.. * All unlovable characters such as stepmother and stepsisters, described as “odious”, “ugly”, “proud”, “haughty”, “rude”, “uncivil”, “mean”, “vain”, “bossy” etc… * The stepsister’s only apologies for their ill-treatment after they discovered she was the beautiful princess. * The prince falls in love with her because of her beauty and charm. * The king and queen admire her and want her to marry their son simply because of her “beauty”. * The prince Cinderella marries is very “handsome”. * Stepmother forcer her become a slave in an attempt to hide her beauty. |
| Class/Status Discourse | * All the young women want to marry the prince simply because he is a “prince” and “rich”. * Cinderella’s “rags” used to emphasis her lack of eligibility to go to the ball, to marry the prince, etc... * When Cinderella goes to the ball, emphasis is on the clothes she wears, the material, headpiece, etc… * The stepmother “governing” the house is not privileged. |

Resistant reading of the text occurs when a contemporary world-context centred approach is adopted. *“By penetrating the disguises of the text… [deconstructionist critics] may engage in radical re-readings of familiar classics”* (Appleton, 2000), **teasing out the inherent discourses submersed within the text**. **Once identified, the ideologies can be challenged and subverted**, in order to express a contrasting point of view. The following table depicts the ideologies underpinning the focal text, “Cinderella”, and the ways in which these ideological messages were foregrounded.

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| **Ideology** | **Depicted through text** |
| Beautiful women are desirable and should be married | * The prince wants Cinderella as his wife purely due to her beauty and charm (they had only just met). * The king and queen want her to marry their son because she is beautiful. |
| Women need to be “saved” and protected | * Cinderella must be taken away from her servant’s life at home by marrying the prince. * The mice make Cinderella a beautiful dress so that she can go to the ball. * The fairy godmother transforms her rags into a beautiful ball gown and provides a beautiful carriage for her to go to the ball. |
| Females must be passive, obedient and subordinate to males. | * Cinderella always follows her step-family’s orders without complaint, always displaying them with kindness. * She obeyed the fairy “immediately”. * Cinderella never makes decisions for herself. The stepmother says she can go to the ball IF she gets all her work done. The fairy godmother tells her she WILL go to the ball but be home by twelve. The prince says she will marry him and she does. |
| Women should carry out domestic duties. | * Cinderella lives as a servant in her own home, forced by her step-family. * She cooks, cleans, sews, washes, nurtures, feeds, irons, mends, scrubs, etc… she carries out all the domestic duties in the household on her own |
| Higher status means desirable husband | * Every woman would love to marry the prince and attend the grand ball as he is rich, wealthy and of royal status. |
| Women must be loved and provided for by men | * Cinderella’s father dies, leaving her to be forced into slavery without a man to protect her anymore. * Cinderella eventually marries the prince, who will be able to provide for all her needs. |

Thus, the altering of the values will *“re-position readers to explore oppositional views”* (Johnson, 2001) from those found in the base text. Rosenblatt insists on the *“inter-textual re-creation”* (Rosenblatt, 1978) that occurs with every reading and re-writing of the text. Contemporary reader-focused literary theorists highlight the *“reciprocal power of the reader”* (Rosenblatt, 1978). Resistant world-context-centred approaches thus advocate *“pushing against the depth and complexity until the full implications and the contradictions inevitably inherent in them, become apparent”* (Lye, 2001).

**Unpacking Discourse and Ideology in your base text**

Deconstructing text by analysing binary oppositions:

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| ***Privileged*** | ***Marginalised*** |
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| **Discourse** | **Depicted through text** |
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| **Ideology** | **Depicted through text** |
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**Which particular discourses/ideology did you want to challenge?**