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**Phenomenology of Fairytales - SVAD - Spring 2020**

**Term Paper**

The Brothers Grimm fairy tales focus on a variety of complex themes but often more than not we find that some of the themes tend to overlap in their stories. This is quite evident especially in the stories of 'Snow White' and 'The Twelve Brothers'. The theme, the characters, the settings, the emotions, the foreshadowing and the anticipation are all tackled in the same way, but still gives a unique experience to the readers.

The two stories connect in a very interesting way. The protagonist in both the stories is a young female who is portrayed as beautiful, virtuous and kind. She is born in wealth and nobility but has to leave that life behind.

The character arch of both the girls is very similar, they are born royal, and the circumstances of their birth are not conventional. Snow white's mother longed for a child but soon after her wish was granted she died, similarly, in the 'twelve brothers', the birth of the princess led to the self-exile of her brothers.

They are both also surprisingly naïve to trust strangers that they have just met in the forest. They both quickly move in a cottage in the forest with men they have just met, and are more than happy to cook and clean for them. Both females are shown to be grateful and dutiful and don't mind house hold chores despite the fact that they are of noble birth. In the Twelve Brothers, the princess is more than happy to help her brothers out and in Snow White; she agrees to do house chores for the dwarfs without any hesitation.

The setting that has been created by the writer in both the stories is also somehow very similar. Both females were born in a palace and as the story progresses the titular character is taken to a forest where she finds a house and decides to live there and then afterwards the setting changes to the Prince's palace where she gets married to him.

The forest plays a pivotal role in both the stories not only in terms of story progression but also in terms of character growth. Both characters are able to run households when they move to the forest, something you don't expect out of a young naïve princess. They both seem to become more mature after moving to the forest.

Another similarity is that the forest is represented as a place for refuge for not only Snow white but also for the twelve brothers when they ran from the king.

The forest is also represented as the place where both the females make the ultimate mistake that leads them to their figurative end, Snow white accepting the gifts from the old peddler woman and the girl picking out flowers for her brothers in the forest. Both their mistakes lead them to a curse. Interestingly enough, both their curses are somewhat similar too, they both are silenced and left catatonic, snow white with her death and the girl with the inability to talk for seven years.

Other important similarity in both the stories is the estranged family dynamics. In both the stories, there is a parent figure that wants to kill his/her child/children. In case of snow white it was the evil step mother and in case of the twelve brothers, it as the king that wanted his sons dead. Both victims also ran to the forest to seek refuge and were helped by another person to escape their fate from the king or queen.

Moreover, the step mothers are shown to be evil in both the stories. In Snow White, the evil step mother wants to kill her since she can't stand anyone else being more beautiful than her and in the Twelve Brothers; the prince is manipulated by his step mother to give orders to kill his wife.

It is also interesting to see how biological fathers of both the girls play no important role whatsoever as the story progresses.

Another aspect similar in both the stories is the male characters help save the female protagonists, who also lack agency in their own life as part of the narrative. Snow White is literally confined to a death-like comatose state whereas in the Twelve Brothers, the female protagonist is muted as part of the narrative. Both the characters are therefore unable to take control of their own life and appear to be damsels in distress, who require saving from other characters, who are men. What is more interesting is that, the men in both stories fall in love with the protagonists during their comatose state.

Women empowerment or lack thereof seems to be common theme in most of the Grimm brother's books. The women in the stories are expected to be complacent and docile, enduring years of torture in silence at the hands of another woman or curse and never once take any initiative to take control of their life. They are shown to be trusting and more likely to make a mistake, in a way referencing Eve from the Garden and it is always the men that save them from their own mistakes. Even though they do not play an important role throughout the story the male character is introduced in the climax to help break the curse instead of the main characters, referring to the man's incessant need to be the savior.

The stories lack any real growth for the protagonists. They are not given any chance to become anything more than a beautiful girl that needs to be rescued.

Both the stories are concluded by the death of the evil character, and share a similar message that no matter what hardships we face and what difficulties we go through, the good always wins and if you're an evil person you're bound to have a bad and often a deadly end. Follow the right path with no intentions of harming anyone, and you will gain awards. Both the female protagonists live happily ever after while the antagonists who sought out to ruin the lives of others end in a miserable and lonely death.