

The Therapeutic use of Fairy Tales in the Parent-Child Relationship

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This project explores some Romanian fairy tales and specifically the more commonly known, in the English-speaking world at least, fairy tale “Snow White.” The project, overall, investigates the use of fairy tales as a therapeutic tool in the parent-child interaction. It discusses ways that parents and children often misunderstand one another and how these folk tales can mediate and help progress this parent-child relationship in a healthy manner. The mother-daughter and father-daughter relationship will be looked at in closer detail in this project. If the parent-child interaction can be analyzed in a productive manner, then it can be used

and understood to benefit in child development. The reader can use the situations in these tales to encourage that communication and find that mutual understanding is possible.

This project also emphasizes the importance of these kinds of folk tales in the lives of people of any age. It shows experiments in which fairy tales were used to better understand the conflicts and problems young adults undergo. People of any age can use fairy tales to bring underlying thoughts and fears to the surface and then further analyze and respond to them emotionally in the appropriate manner.

INTRODUCTION

Fairy tales speak to those who may be dealing with issues of abandonment, sibling rivalry, low self-esteem or poor self-image, or even a general struggle with overall life purpose. These tales can be used to start emotional discussion for both the broken and healthy, so that both subject positions can help the other in times of need. Fairy tales can then be used as a therapeutic intervention in the lives of those dealing with hardships, to help address existential issues in one’s life, especially pertaining to the child-parent connection.

In 1992, Stevens-Guille and Boersma proposed that fairy tales could be used as a therapeutic method for adult clients to reexamine worldly problems (Nina 89). According to Bettelheim, in “The Therapeutic Use of Fairy Tales with Adults in Group Therapy,” in group settings, fairy tales can be used to reduce defensiveness, connect people, and promote the discussion of existential concerns. They can help adults identify underlying and continuing concerns.

In another case study, here done on college students, it was observed that the participants who held group discussion after reading a fairy tale were better able to reflect on and analyze their current existential/emotional issues. For example, the students were then able to express their anxiety about entering the workforce after college [1]. Reading and discussing the fairy tales allowed them to approach their problems in a way that they would better understand what they were going through, so they could then solve emotional difficulties a bit easier. Therefore, the application of fairy tales in a reader’s life can improve the reader’s use of introspection into their own problems when reading about the issues and conflicts in the tales.

BACKGROUND OF THE GENRE: THE EVOLUTION OF FAIRY TALES

The word “fairy tale” was used first circa 1697 when Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy, a French writer, coined this term (“conte de fees”) in the literary salons of France. The literary salons were made up of French women writers belonging to the upper class who desired to change the system they lived in to create more privileges for women. These stories weaved in standards of behavior and remodeled the relationship between upper class women and men. Wanting to get away from their worldly troubles, they started to create fairy tales that could be used as escape [2].

Fairy tales have evolved and have been modified depending on the audience

of that time. Near the end of the 17th century, Charles Perrault and the female salon writers spiced up tales to charm the court of the king [3]. Later in the 19th century, the Brothers Grimm bowdlerized sexuality, incest, and pregnancies but stepped up the violence of punishments for evildoers to make the tales more suitable for children. For example, as punishment for their cruelty, Cinderella’s sisters have their eyes pecked out by doves when they escort her to the wedding, and at the end of the story, Snow White’s stepmother has to dance in red hot iron shoes as a consequence for her prideful and murderous vanity.

Using this last example to frame the goal of this project, the actions of Snow White’s stepmother can be useful specifically for analyzing the roles of parenthood. Parenthood necessitates creating opportunities for children to experience successes as well as failures, followed by mending those mistakes. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the difficulties and struggles of parenthood and learn to handle them, so that the children can grow up in a safe environment.

In most fairy tales, either the mother or father is active and present but usually not both parents. In *Spinning Straw into Gold*, Gould says that there is a binary characterization between parents, in which if the mother is harsh, then the father figure must be absent, or he may have settled for a subservient role (19). Fairy tales feature a theme where the characters can’t cope with both parents or else one is domineering and the other has no choice but to take the subservient role. For example, this theme is seen in every popular version of the “Snow White” story-type. The evil stepmother rules the household and is at the forefront of the story while not much, if anything, is mentioned about the father. The stepmother takes the prominent, and here, domineering role.

However, it can be inferred that the huntsman plays the genre-appropriate fatherly figure because he is shown to be subservient to the evil stepmother, who is now queen and gives all the commands. The huntsman tells Snow White, “Lie low until the storm blows over. You and I know your mother when she gets into these states, don’t we?” [3]. Even though the huntsman plays somewhat of a fatherly role, he is not a good father. A good father would be there supporting his daughter. In this case, he doesn’t offer to go through the forest and take care of her, yet Snow White doesn’t criticize his decision in not helping her. Gould states that this is odd, not because he’s not there for her, but because the daughter, in many of these fairy tales, never reproaches her father for this “disappearing act”; in fact, she never seems to

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expect anything else (19). The daughter dreams that her father will come one day and make everything in her life all right. This leaves a gap in the relationship between a father and a daughter, and often it is never redressed because neither party understands their respective role. Thus, fairy tales like this one can be studied to try and mend relationships like the ones portrayed so as to transcend the limitations the narrative depicts for the parent-child bond.

Interestingly, although the stepmother is positioned as the evil antagonist, she is nonetheless the beneficial agent of growth in Snow White's story, the agent provocateur, forcing Snow White to grow up and enter the next phase of her life. The Snow White tale is shaped in a way to show that even with a difficult upbringing, it is still possible for a favorable outcome to occur if the young female protagonist is resilient and persistent in her journey towards her own self-fulfillment and actualization. It comes down to her understanding all the things that are thrown in her direction and learning from them. Although Snow White does not directly take a leadership role, she can still serve as a role model that others can look to when they also go through trouble, since she does become her own person at the end of the story, even if given this is a fairy tale, so luck and magic play a role in her becoming victorious at the end.

But just as luck and magic are the cornerstone of fairy tales, leadership also plays a role in these tales. In the article "Leadership Role Models in Fairy Tales," Bostenaru mentions, "Leadership means always, to deal with his/her own personality. First comes the 'self-mastery,' then the 'rule'" [4]. This is an essential moral that many of the characters in these fairy tales eventually learn. This is specifically seen in the Romanian fairy tale "Porcul cel fermecat," which will be discussed later.

THE MISSING MOTHER FIGURE IN "SNOW WHITE"

In Joan Gould's *Spinning Straw into Gold: What Fairy Tales Reveal About the Transformations in a Woman's Life*, she discusses the importance of a mother in a child's life, specifically a daughter's life. Gould states that a daughter's first mirror is her mother's eyes because they determine what reflection the daughter will see for the rest of her life. If the mother admires the daughter, the girl will learn to use an actual mirror as a tool for positive self-reflection [3]. The mother's admiration for her daughter will allow the daughter to then admire herself. This will lead to allowing the girl to take a look at her life and analyze her needs, goals, and aspirations. If not, the daughter will struggle with finding clarity during times of indecision and confusion. For example, in "Snow White," Snow White struggles to find her way through adolescence. It is up to Snow White to figure out who she wants to become and how she will get there by taking moments to reflect. However, a mother figure is an especially crucial role model during her time of development and self-finding, as the mother has gone through growth herself. A strong, healthy mother figure can allow Snow White to have a smoother transition into adolescence and serve as a steppingstone in that direction.

Snow White's biological mother's death isn't kept in full view, unlike how later Snow White's pseudo-death will be shown after her biting into the poisoned apple. In the article "Fairy-tales and Teaching Family Therapy," from the *Journal of Family Therapy*, Robinson describes that the clear casket the dwarves put Snow White in symbolizes her emotional development. Since Snow White's mother wasn't put in a clear casket in view, as well as there being no mention of her death, Snow White is left with "poor identification by which to get through adolescence and thus frequently regresses to a latency existence (periods of unconsciousness)" [5]. The most significant example of her period of unconsciousness is after she bites into the apple and is placed into the casket, lying dormant until she is awakened again. It is essential to be mindful that this information can be used to help in a child-parent interaction. This tale can be used as a tool in understanding that if a mother is present in a daughter's life, the daughter can more easily get through adolescence and possibly avoid regression and instead move forward in her growth.

The only female role model Snow White has is her stepmother, who is cold, full of rivalry, narcissistic—negative characteristics all which inhibit her from stepping into the role of motherhood. Given this, Snow White has very little emotional and parental support, especially as her father figure plays such a weak role in supporting her. Her stepmother being evil and cruel puts a

strain on her mother-daughter relationship. Since Snow White cannot get the love and care needed from her stepmother, she runs away. This needs to occur for Snow White to mature. She is isolated in the woods where no one can hear her and is stripped of any identity. Snow White is at a point in her life where she must now find sanctuary, a place she can reach maturation. This is the "latency" of which Robinson speaks.

Throughout the narrative, she does encounter situations that bring her closer to maturity. Robinson states that Snow White confronts her ego by taking on her own decision, ignoring the dwarves' request about opening the door to strangers. This act shows how naive and innocent she is. Her innocence eventually transitions into knowledge once she faces the deceptive actions of her evil stepmother. When Snow White is enticed with the lace and comb by her stepmother, she transitions into her femininity. When she bites into the apple—the last trick by the stepmother—she falls into a slumber. Her long death-sleep is symbolic of her transitioning into puberty and her sexual desires [5]. Once the transition is complete, she is awakened by the prince, who serves as her next step into womanhood. These situations could have been avoided had she had her parents to help her with her development. Snow White is thrust into her long-needed sleep in order to grow into her adolescent self. After her emotional growth period, she is awakened to full maturity by a prince, signifying that she is ready for her next step in life.

In the end, as in all fairy tales, the unjust character receives what s/he deserves. In this case, the stepmother, who is envious and hasn't matured to a level where she is ready to care for another person, becomes incriminated for her actions. As mentioned earlier, she is given red hot iron shoes to dance in until she falls down dead.

In fact, parents getting punished for their actions are a common theme in many tales. For example, in "The Fairy Bird," a Swazi tale, the parents are turned into hideous monsters after unjustly mistreating the children. The mother takes extreme action and throws her children over a cliff solely because they enter the house while the parents are away, after being told not to do so. The children survive with a little luck and magic and grow up on their own and never see their parents again. This tale serves as an example of how the children in these tales aren't granted the care they deserve and instead are wrongfully accused [6]. Moreover, they aren't given the chance to communicate through their problems with their parents, which is a critical aspect of a healthy relationship. The separation of parent and children can be avoided if both sides are equipped with the communication skills needed to work through issues. In "Snow White," as in many fairy tales, little to no communication or interaction happens between the family members. Ideally, had healthy communication taken place, Snow White could have had an easier transition into adolescence.

PARENT-CHILD INTERACTION METHODS: THE CHILD'S UNHEARD VOICE IN "SAREA IN BUCATE"

Romanian fairy tales commonly entail three children, either all boys or all girls, of which the youngest faces the most challenges but then also grows stronger because of it. In the Romanian fairy tale, "Sarea in Bucate" ("Salt in Food") by Petre Ispirescu, the theme of the youngest daughter undergoing the greatest development is evident. In "Sarea in Bucate," the mother has died and only the father, who is king, and his three daughters are left. This again shows how only one parent is present, and the other's role is limited or absent. This tale revolves around the one important question the king asks his daughters: how much do you love me? The first two daughters answer with "I love you like honey" and "I love you like sugar"; however, the youngest responds with "I love you as much as the salt in the food." The youngest's response infuriates the king and he takes offense to it, believing that only the first two daughters said kind, sweet words to him. Feeling slighted, he decides to abandon his relationship with his youngest and kicks her out of the kingdom.

Time passes and the youngest transplants herself to another kingdom where she has asked for work with no pay until she has proven herself worthy, displaying great character and a resilient personality. Perhaps expectedly though, she marries the prince of that kingdom, and they have a wedding in which her father is invited. Poetically, she decides to cook her father's meal with only sugar and honey, but no salt. Upon taking his first bite, the king throws a fit at how extremely sweet the food is. His daughter intervenes and explains to him how important salt is in the food, and once more repeats that

she loves him like the salt in the food. At this moment, the king realizes what she originally meant and what a grave mistake he had made to relinquish his relationship with his daughter over such a trivial misunderstanding: "Her father recognized his mistake and tenderly embraced the daughter whom he thought he had lost" [6].

As seen in this fairy tale, a crucial factor is communication. Being able to listen and truly understand the other person is hard, even for a parent. The recklessness and abandonment by the daughter's father could have been avoided had he known how to receive and interpret her words. Only when a sign of perceptiveness to listen is given will both sides be able to understand the meaning behind their words. Dr. Winnicott, a pediatrician and psychoanalyst, states that "in the therapeutic consultation the topic becomes specific and acutely interesting since the client soon begins to feel that understanding may perhaps be available and that communication at a deep level may become possible" [7,8]. Dr. Winnicott is describing a deeper form of communication where both people can openly speak their truth and be understood and respected for who they are.

The fairy tales discussed so far, as well as those to follow, show weak or harmful child-parent interactions that impact the way the child—the protagonist—grows. Through this disunity between the parent and child, the young protagonist goes on a journey that is full of lessons, maturing him or her.

It is important to consider the familial synergy occurring in fairy tales as a way of applying those concepts to communication in real life. If the child-parent interaction can be understood in a positive manner, then it can be used and understood to benefit in child development. In Brafman's *Untying the Knot: Working with Children and Parents*, Brafman discusses a few ways to establish an understanding between children and parents, based on the works of Dr. Winnicott, mentioned above, as well as his own experiences. He identifies misunderstandings and familial conflicts and tries to resolve them through understanding his patients and using drawings to gauge what the child is thinking about. Drawings help the children bring their subconscious thoughts to the surface and allow them to then be discussed further. These methods can be used in the same way in regard to fairy tales. Reading fairy tales can unleash subconscious thoughts and feelings that when explored can benefit the reader.

As mentioned, many fairy tales depict troubled parent-child connections, which lead to distance in the relationship as well as some sort of journey undertaken by the child. Oftentimes, disputes arise from misunderstandings from both sides, which can be easily fixed by discussion and listening to the other side. Dr. Brafman conducts his sessions by having both parties present and gauging where each side is coming from. In this same way, fairy tales can aim to illustrate the same understanding. In "Sarea in Bucate," there is a damaging lack of communication between the father and the daughter. This unfortunately leads to a separation in their relationship, and reconciliation finally occurs only at the very end of the tale.

Dr. Winnicott explains it is essential that the appropriate amount of time and care is put into understanding the child. Sometimes a child's underlying issues can stem from myriad factors. In "Sarea in Bucate," this is very true. The daughter makes a statement to her father, the king, and he takes it the complete opposite way that she intended it. There is no effort on the father's part to try and understand her words and so angered, he bans her from his kingdom. If the father applied Dr. Winnicott's methods, who worked to understand his patients and "knew how to convey to the child his readiness and desire to make deep emotional contact," then maybe his relationship with his daughter could have been saved earlier [8]. This commitment to understanding is what made Dr. Winnicott successful in his relationship with his patients. His ideals can be applied to the father in "Sarea in Bucate" when trying to understand his daughter's feelings and words.

The daughter, now banished from her very own family, runs away. She doesn't have a haven to run to because her only caretaker, her father, has pushed her away. Many children, like the daughter in the tale, usually go to their parents first for help, and the parents' response will affect how a child will develop. In "Sarea in Bucate," the daughter is discouraged from even trying to come to her father and explain herself because he has completely disregarded her. Now being banned from the kingdom and her family, she takes on a solitary character trait. She becomes quiet and her voice in this whole situation becomes obsolete. Winnicott "interprets antisocial behavior as an attempt to reinstate or obtain against the care and love felt to have been lost at some point in the individual's development" [8]. In this case, the

daughter's antisocial behavior can be interpreted as manifesting her father's lack of love for her when she needed it the most. Thus, she has no choice but to run off, distancing herself from her family situation.

"THE STORY OF TZUGULEA"

In "The Story of Tzugulea" by Sturdza, the youngest of three sons, Tzugulea, defies the odds when he goes on a journey and proves himself worthy of the throne. As in the other Romanian stories, this one too has three siblings. The youngest is the most bullied in this story, and true to form, he goes through a transformation that changes his life. Tzugulea is mistreated by his brothers who make fun of him for being crippled and for wanting different things than his siblings, such as when the older brothers ask for strong noble horses, Tzugulea asks for a piece of jade [9]. He also stands apart because when the two older brothers go hunting; Tzugulea does not even miss one shot, which further throws the older brothers into a fury.

Tzugulea gets to a point where he is so sad because of all the verbal mistreatment from his brothers, as well as the villagers, that he prays to die. It is in that moment that a fairy comes to him and gives him a magical belt, which can turn him into anything he wants if only he does three somersaults first, and the fairy tells him he will be king one day. With that belt, Tzugulea undergoes a journey to first fix his disabled body by getting back the lost cartilage in his leg, which had caused his disability in the first place. Along his journey, he is constantly challenged, and his character is put into question. On the first part of his journey, when he comes upon ogres who try to trick him, he escapes and kills them off, saving the kingdom. He is put in the king's court for his valiant deed, but not for long when the other courtiers get jealous and create rumors about his character, saying he is trying to take over the kingdom. He is at once thrown out and is put on the mission to prove himself worthy yet again by asking for the hand of another kingdom's princess.

On his journey, he meets a starving man, a thirsty man, a man who jumps over mountains, and a few other men in extraordinary circumstances. He brings every man he meets along on his journey to the next kingdom. Little does he know that all these men will come to his aid at the end of the journey and help him complete his mission. Since there is no mention of Tzugulea's father, these various men should be thought of as father figures in his life, who lend a helping hand when Tzugulea needs it the most.

Tzugulea gets closer to understanding his own character and who he truly is on the inside, regardless of the handicaps that life has handed him. After bringing all of the men he has met along the way to the kingdom for his final task, the king gives him a series of "impossible tasks," such as eating nine ovens full of bread. The hungry man comes in handy because he eats all of them and Tzugulea passes to the next task. This is the case with all the other men and their special situations. Tzugulea successfully completes all the tasks with the help of the men, and so he gets to marry the princess. In turn, he ascends to the throne to become king.

Even though there is no actual father character by name in this tale, there are father figures that help Tzugulea along his journey. This tale shows how Tzugulea, a child, has a rough start in life. He then is able to, with help from his father figures, reach maturity and grow into his adult self. This is why it is essential for a parent figure to aid a child so that child too can grow up in a healthy manner.

HEALTHY FATHERING IN "PORCUL CEL FERMECAT"

Another famous Romanian fairy tale by Petre Ispirescu titled "Porcul cel fermecat," translated to "The Enchanted Prince," is again about a king with three daughters. In this tale, the moral of achieving self-mastery proceeding being able to rule, as discussed earlier, is the prominent lesson illustrated. In this tale, the king has to leave the castle and go into battle because an enemy has raised a large, threatening army. He tells his daughters a few important messages before he leaves, most importantly not to go into one of the rooms of the castle because if they do, something unfortunate will happen. The daughters respond, "You need not worry, father dear, we always have obeyed your commands" [10]. The king reminds the girls again of his warning before he leaves, reinforcing his commands. To keep themselves busy as the girls start to bore, they decide to "work and to read part of the day, and to spend the other part strolling about in the garden" [10]. The way in which the daughters respond to their situation is analogous to the way in which Romanian parents instill authority and diligence in their children: the daughters know it's vital to place work first and play later.

However, all it takes is for one of them to eventually propose to go into the forbidden chamber to finally go against their father's wishes, which is exactly what the eldest does. The strongest opposition to this idea comes from the youngest, who, as mentioned before, traditionally undergoes the greatest character growth in many Romanian tales. She is astonished and shocked at the idea and strongly advises against going into the chamber. The youngest is then mocked by her middle sister who says, "Surely, sister dear, the sky will fall down upon us and destroy us all, will it not? Dragons will eat us up, or other such fearsome monsters! Horrid old giants will kidnap us! Anyway, what harm can there be in it? Father will never know!" [10].

When the sisters eventually enter the room, they find a book foretelling the future. It foretells that the two eldest sisters will marry princes but the youngest, a pig. The youngest instantly becomes dejected, believing that she deserves this punishment since she disobeyed her father. The other two just make fun and tell her she has nothing to worry about because it's not possible for her, a princess, to marry a pig. However, the youngest continues to regret and thus internalizes the consequences of her disobedient behavior.

Upon the return of the king, he senses something, and he finds "it was even as he suspected" [10]. Yet, the king chooses not to scold his children because he knows it wouldn't help now that the deed has been done. However, the youngest daughter is still so disappointed by the future prediction of marrying a pig that she would rather die than be a pig's wife. The king doesn't think the prediction refers to a real pig but that there is witchcraft involved, telling his daughter that when she finds him, she should simply treat the pig kindly regardless of his looks because he won't make her suffer long.

One day the pig arrives at the kingdom and the youngest accepts her new fate, marries the pig right away, and moves into his house. She follows her father's words and loves the pig for who he is. She even kisses him on his snout. However, every night she observes that there is a man in her bed, not a pig. During his sleep, the pig would shed his skin. Every morning before the girl woke up, he would put his skin back on to become a pig once more.

One day the young girl sees an old lady walk by and feeling lonely, having interacted only with her husband all this time, invites her to chat. The old lady is enchanted and gives the girl a string to tie around her husband's left leg at night while he is in human form. This, the old lady says, will turn him into a man forever, breaking the spell he is under. Unfortunately, the string is too weak, and it breaks, waking up the pig. The pig, angered at her action, tells her that he had three days left until his spell was broken and he would have become a man. Due to her deceitful actions, he tells her she has a series of difficult tasks to complete in order to gain him back and then he flees, running far away.

The young girl is tasked with breaking down three pairs of iron slippers and shredding a steel rod. She journeys across seas and countries. Tired and battered, she comes upon the moon's house, and the moon lets her in. The moon feeds her a chicken and tells her to keep the bones. The girl asks the moon where she could find her husband, but the moon directs her to ask the sun. She sets out again on her journey to the sun's house and then the wind's house, replacing her iron slippers every time from them being so worn out. The sun and wind also give her a chicken each and tell her to keep the bones. The wind tells her that her husband is in a far-off forest on the mountain. As she gets closer, her third pair of iron shoes break and she takes them off, walking barefoot the rest of the way. Many days go by and she falls asleep for a day from exhaustion. Once she wakes up, she tries to keep going, realizing the rod she used to walk was worn out. She finally found the house that the pig was in but couldn't reach it. She figures out that she can use all the chicken bones to create a ladder; however, she is short one, so she cuts off the bone of her finger to create the full ladder so she can reach her husband. Her husband, disguised still as a pig, sees all she has gone through and finally turns into a handsome man.

The sacrifices and long journey she went through led her to finding her fated man. The couple rejoice and return to the kingdom. The king says to his youngest, "You did very well in minding the advice I gave you," since now the spell is broken and the pig turns into a prince [10]. They both get placed on the throne "and rule the kingdom as only those kinds can rule who have passed through trials and hardships and sorrow like theirs" [10].

The takeaway of this fairy tale is that if one makes mistakes, they can be forgiven but they also must be fixed, just as the youngest did. She was rewarded for her faith and bravery in God, her father, and herself. Most prominently though, this fairy tale also exemplifies a great daughter-father relationship, in

which the father does his duty to help her grow in the appropriate manner, even after she makes a mistake. He cares for, loves her, and most importantly, supports and guides her through her period of growth. Because of his help, she avoided more hardships and problems that other child-protagonists in fairy tales encounter. Therefore, this narrative demonstrates precisely why parental love and support is so important in healthy child development.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTING STYLES: A FINAL REFLECTION

The study entitled "Parenting Style and Children's Life Satisfaction and Depressive Symptoms: Preliminary Findings from Romania, France, and Russia" compiles a sample of 325 children ages 9-11, from Romania, Russia, and France. This study shows the different parenting styles of Romanian, Russian, and French cultures and how these varying styles affect life satisfaction or contribute to depressive symptoms in children. It was observed that Romanian households had higher levels of authoritative (as distinct from authoritarian) parenting styles compared to French households. Parenting styles are described here as showing varying levels of responsiveness and demandingness. Parental nurturing and positive reinforcement towards the emotional and psychological needs of the child is known as "responsiveness." However, there is also control of a child's actions through the use of disciplinary action, known as "demandingness" [11]. Considering the varying presence of these traits, there are three styles of parenting defined: "Authoritative parenting" is defined as parents being stricter and more consistent with their rules than authoritarian parenting; "authoritative" means that both a parent's responsiveness and demandingness are high. In contrast, "authoritarian parenting" is described as having high demandingness and low responsiveness; lastly, being a "permissive" parent entails having low demandingness and high responsiveness. Thus, Romanian parents, who are in general authoritative, tend to be sterner and more constant in their rule setting. They set fewer rules but are stricter in enforcing them. It is important to analyze these parenting styles as they could give insights as to how children are affected.

In Romanian culture, a child's self-expression is looked down upon, and instead obedience towards adults in power is more valued. This can lead to less life satisfaction in children because they are unable to express themselves as desired and must fit the mold that the parents have created for them. A bit of this is seen in "Porcul cel fermecat," where the girls are instructed to listen to the father's words, since he is the one in charge. As stated in the article above, Romanian parents only set a few rules. The main rule the daughters have is not to go into the forbidden chamber while their father is away. The father enforces this rule well since the youngest is so keen on following his command. The tale then introduces the two older daughters' disobedient scheme of going into the chamber. This act is set into the tale to show how children sometimes may disobey orders, but it is forgivable as long as the parents understand. The father indeed understands and even suspected this would happen. The interaction between the girls and father is a healthy one, showing the importance of understanding from the parent's side.

All the Romanian fairy tales mentioned exemplify how Romanian parenting culture places high importance on obedience, showing what happens when orders aren't followed. The narrative of "Porcul cel fermecat" depicts the negative result of the youngest daughter experiencing less life satisfaction when she gets depressed about violating and disregarding the father's request. However, the tale is a positive example of strong familial ties in communication and understanding.

CONCLUSION

Fairy tales will continue to be written by different cultures with different themes and morals that are significant to that particular society at any given time. Specifically, Romanian fairy tales have traditionally communicated strong lessons about obedience and parental respect. However, the ones discussed herein also show how important it is for the child to be able to freely communicate their position and feelings with their parent or family member. This study of fairy tales, parenting styles, and how the former may help increase the communication of the latter has allowed for a discussion that can aid in child development as well as parent-child interactions. Through the analysis of certain fairy tales with themes and morals dealing with familial hardship, a stronger, healthier foundation of understanding can be established between parent and child.

The following is an original fairy tale meant to synthesize the lessons learned

through the previous analysis of parent-child interaction in the studied fairy tales.

“THE DREAM OF MIRA”

Once upon a time there was a beautiful young girl who lived with her two sisters and her mother and father. They lived in a small cottage by the edge of the woods and were the only ones living there with no neighbors for miles. The forest was the boundary between the small cottage and the larger city nearby. Their parents told their daughters rumors about the woods being haunted by spirits and so trying to reach the other town would be impossible. The mother was very keen on telling the girls this from a very young age, so they grew up never questioning the reason for it.

The mother, although loving the girls very much, was very overprotective and would always make sure the girls did exactly as they were told. Often, she would say, “Girls, go clean up after the farm animals. Collect eggs from the chickens and milk from the cows. Do not get into trouble. Come back soon.”

The father was distant and dismissive, lacking empathy for his wife and daughters. He would immerse himself in busy work to kill time, and he rarely spent a moment with his wife and children. Often, he would say, “I’m going to go cut some wood in the forest and then spend time collecting apples the rest of the day.”

“Father, can we play a game later tonight?” the girls would ask.

“There is much too much work to be playing games, girls,” as would reply their father.

The daughters grew up their whole life not having a real relationship with their father and so lacked any bond with him. His apathetic nature affected his wife too, who was deprived of affection due to never receiving any.

Since the father was absent many times a week, the mother was left to enforce all the rules and discipline the daughters. “Your father wouldn’t like you two sitting around all day! Get up and do something.”

Although he was rarely present, he made sure to put the girls in their place when he deemed their behavior unfitting. “Stop running after the chickens like that. You will scare them, and they won’t make us breakfast anymore!”

The young girls rarely got into any real trouble because they were constantly put to work. From chores to tending to the farm animals, the girls learned very quickly that they needed to obey their parents in order to be good daughters.

As time passed, the oldest daughter, Mira, started to mature and find pleasures in her own hobbies. Her favorite activity was riding her horse, Indrumare, which was like no other horse. Indrumare was an enchanted horse that magically started speaking to her, and only her, once she reached adolescence. Indrumare would take her through the woods and teach her about the world and how much bigger it really was. Going into the woods was Mira’s escape and she knew her parents would forbid it, but something drew her to these short journeys.

A few weeks passed by and Mira decided to journey into the woods. Indrumare asked her if she truly felt ready. She was not completely sure but yearned to get away from the shackles on her soul. That night when Mira was all tucked in her bed, the warnings and rules uttered by her parents came into her head the way flies swarm to rotting food. She felt helpless against them, having no voice in the matter. The comments did not leave her until she finally drifted off to sleep.

The very next morning after doing the chores and tending to the house, Mira decided to set out on her journey to the next village. Indrumare guided her, like he always did, through the woods. Three days passed, at which point she came upon a beast. The beast stared right through her and asked, “My, what do we have here?”

Mira responded, “I am trying to get to the other side of this forest to see the town.”

Upon hearing her response, the beast took a step forward and looked at her more intently and replied, “You know you’re not allowed to go into the forest. It is impossible to reach the other side. Turn back now before it’s too late.”

Mira was confused because she remembered hearing those same words. However, determined to continue, she signaled her horse and they got

around the beast and continued their journey. While riding in the woods, she heard many voices and sounds trying to stop her from going further, but deep down she knew she must go on.

The beast appeared a second and a third time trying to dissuade her from continuing to find the truth about the next village over. The third time was the scariest of all. “Dare you go further, and your family shall never love you again, for you will have disobeyed them.”

Upon hearing this, Mira felt her heart drop. Indrumare instantly stomped his hooves in that moment and spoke to her soul. “Mira, you will always be loved. Do not fear the uncertainty, for trials bring you closer to your destiny.” Feeling a sense of peace and assurance in her heart, Mira pulled the reins and Indrumare galloped away.

All the way through the forest, Indrumare guided the way and protected her. Mira only had to ride her horse until they arrived at the new town. As they crossed the forest and approached the town, Indrumare turned to Mira and said, “This is where I leave you, my dear. You are ready to go into the town on your own.” Although Mira was hesitant, she knew Indrumare was right. She jumped off her horse and gave him a huge hug.

Mira entered the new town and found so many different people that she had never seen before. She saw different buildings and architecture that she could only have dreamed about.

Mira encountered the town gatekeeper first, who asked her what she was doing there. In order to prove herself worthy of entering, the gatekeeper gave her a riddle to answer. “What has to be broken before you can use it?” asked the gatekeeper.

Mira looked in her backpack and pulled out an egg. “An egg!” she exclaimed. She gave the gatekeeper the egg for breakfast and he let her in.

She knocked on a cottage and heard a voice telling her to enter. She walked in and everything was dark. She called out for someone to turn on the light. A voice responded, “Only if you can answer my riddle. The more of this there is, the less you see. What is it?”

Mira kept waking. She thought long and hard. As she walked further into the cottage, away from the lit entrance, she only saw darkness. She answered: “Darkness.”

“Very well,” said the voice. Mira suddenly saw a tunnel and walked out in the sunlight. The rays warmed her soul. The light penetrated her skin and she closed her eyes for a minute to soak it all in.

Day turned into night and the sky turned dark, with only the moon and stars sparkling bright. The wind brushed against her skin and she looked up at the night sky. The owl on the tree started hooting and she turned towards it. “What is it, owl?” asked Mira.

“You have one more question to answer and then you have completed your test. Are you ready?”

“Yes,” responded Mira.

“Every night they are born anew and every day they die again. What are they?”

Mira thought about it for a few seconds before she responded, “Dreams!” The owl, pleased to hear this, nodded his head.

“Very good, Mira. Hopes and dreams are what makes you so special. From the day you were born, they were inside you, but you could never fully live them out. Now go forth and build a new life in this town. There are many far off lands that you can journey to in the future, but for now you can start off here.”

Upon hearing this, Mira jumped up and down excitedly. She went to sleep that night with a clear mind and heart. No longer did the clamor of her parent’s words float in her mind. She drifted off to sleep and dreamed of the wonders of the world.

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