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Reading Response #1

### Fairy Tales for Adults

The fairy tale Snow-white and Rose-red, by the Grimm brothers, is an excellent example of a conservative, adult-centered text. In this text, the agency is with the adults and the children are seen as nostalgic images of childhood. Snow-white and Rose-red prove that children are good and follow the direction of adult figures even when the adult may not be present.

The conservative nature of this text is overwhelming. The author is not challenging children to do anything; but rather teaching them that if they are obedient then they will be happy. For example, Snow-white and Rose-red are described in various ways throughout the story: “. . . the sweetest and best children in the world, always diligent and always cheerful . . . they always walked about hand in hand whenever they went out together . . . they drew round the fire, while the mother put on her spectacles and read aloud from a big book and the two girls listened and sat and span . . . the tender-hearted children . . .” The children are described as wonderful and obedient children who help anyone in need. They are seen as a quaint family that never argues, listens to their mother read stories around a fire, and did traditional “girl” things like spinning. The ending shows that because of their good hearts they were rewarded: “Snow-white married him, and Rose-red his brother, and they divided the great treasure the dwarf had collected in his cave between them. The old mother lived for many years peacefully with her children . . .” This “fairy tale” ending shows that if you are a good child then good things will happen to you. The text does not wish for children to challenge the things that their mother tells them to do. The text reinforces a sense of good behavior and family closeness.

In this family, the mother is the one with the authority and all of the agency. The girls are attentive to the instructions of their mother and follow them with haste. There are several things that the girls did to help their mother around the house and around the woods: “Snow-white sat at

home with her mother and helped her in the household...[they] kept their mother's cottage so beautifully clean and neat that it was a pleasure to go into it...the mother sent the children into the wood to collect fagots...the mother sent the two girls to the town to buy needles, thread, laces, and ribbons." This shows their obedience because the children did what their mother told them without hesitation or argument. In an adult-centered text, children understand that adults know better than children so they must follow what adults say. Another example when the children listen to the knowledge from their mother is when the mother tells them, "'Rose-red, open the door quickly; it must be some traveler seeking shelter.' Rose-red hastened to unbar the door... 'Snow-white and Rose-red, come out; the bear will do you no harm; he is a good, honest creature.'" The text ends with the mother being correct when the bear's "skin suddenly fell off, and a beautiful man stood beside them, all dressed in gold." By listening to the mother and her knowledge, the story had a happy ending. This shows the readers that children should listen to their mothers or other adult figures because, of course, they know more than a child. This adult-centered trait is highly visible throughout the text.

Yet another image of the children, in this adult-centered text, is when they follow the directions of their mother even when she is not there. The mother has engrained the children with the importance of being kind to everyone. They show kindness to the dwarf throughout the story even though he was not nice to them. Some of the rude comments that the dwarf makes about the girls are: "'You stupid, inquisitive goose!'... 'Crazy blockheads!'... 'Curse these rude wretches, cutting off a piece of my splendid beard!'... 'you toadstools'... 'Couldn't you have treated me more carefully? You have torn my thin little coat all to shreds, useless, awkward hussies that you are!'" The girls have saved his life three times and yet the dwarf can only be ungrateful and mean to them. This does not deter the girls from their kind-heartedness and helping anyone in need. "The girls were accustomed to his ingratitude, and went on their way and did their business in

town.” This shows that, without their mother’s advice, the girls continued to rescue the dwarf and treat him with kindness. This is an excellent example of an adult-centered trait.

Snow-white and Rose-red are perfect symbols of the nostalgic childhood images who end up being rewarded for their good nature and kind hearts. The authors are showing that if a child is obedient and good then they will surely receive a reward in the end. There are many attributes of an adult-centered text that this story has which contributes to the conservative nature of the text. This text is extremely conservative and adult-centered in various ways.