THE HEROES' JOURNEY: AN ARCHETYPAL ANALYSIS OF *HANSEL AND GRETEL*

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ABSTRACT

There are numerous fairy tales in the European tradition, and especially in the Grimms' collection, that employ numerous archetypal themes, characters and motifs. This is true of the popular story, Hansel and Gretel. The examination of archetypes can be a laborious task given their rich psychological and cultural significance and their widespread use among seemingly distinct civilizations and genres. Accordingly, this study analyses the use of archetypes in the Grimms' collection - through the example of Hansel and Gretel - to explore their full significance as these archetypes could potentially be a reason behind the enduring popularity of this story and the collection in general. The methodology of this study is based on the archetypal stages of the hero's journey or quest as elaborated by Joseph Campbell in his seminal work, The Hero with a Thousand Faces. This study has concluded that Hansel and Gretel skilfully employ numerous archetypal elements such as the evil women, order versus chaos, thresholds and helpers, and the trickster and the witch within the archetypal framework of a hero's journey to allow its protagonists to achieve psychological and moral maturity, and material rewards. Through its few pages, Hansel and Gretel offers readers rich moral lessons about courage, regression, shrewdness, loyalty, evil, compassion and destiny through the use of the archetypal journey and its various elements.

Keywords: *Archetypes, fairytales, Hansel and Gretel, hero's journey*

ABSTRAK

Ada banyak dongeng dalam tradisi Eropa, dan terutama dalam koleksi Grimm, yang menggunakan banyak tema pola dasar, karakter, dan motif. Ini berlaku untuk kisah populer, Hansel dan Gretel. Pemeriksaan arketipe bisa menjadi tugas yang melelahkan mengingat signifikansi psikologis dan budayanya yang kaya dan penggunaannya yang meluas di antara peradaban dan genre yang tampaknya berbeda. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini menganalisis penggunaan arketipe dalam koleksi Grimm - melalui contoh Hansel dan Gretel - untuk mengeksplorasi signifikansi mereka sepenuhnya karena arketipe ini berpotensi menjadi alasan di balik popularitas abadi cerita ini dan koleksi secara umum. Metodologi penelitian ini didasarkan pada tahapan pola dasar dari perjalanan atau pencarian pahlawan sebagaimana diuraikan oleh Joseph Campbell dalam karya seminalnya, The Hero with a Thousand Faces. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa Hansel dan Gretel dengan terampil menggunakan banyak elemen pola dasar seperti wanita jahat, keteraturan versus kekacauan, ambang pintu dan pembantu, dan penipu dan penyihir dalam kerangka pola dasar perjalanan seorang pahlawan untuk memungkinkan protagonisnya mencapai psikologis dan moral. kedewasaan, dan imbalan materi. Melalui beberapa halamannya, Hansel dan Gretel menawarkan kepada pembaca pelajaran moral yang kaya tentang keberanian, kemunduran, kelihaian, kesetiaan, kejahatan, kasih sayang, dan takdir melalui penggunaan pola dasar perjalanan dan berbagai elemennya.

Kata kunci: Arketipe, dongeng, Hansel dan Gretel, perjalanan pahlawan

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INTRODUCTION

This study employs an analytical approach to explore the various archetypal aspects that encompass a selected story from the Grimms' Fairy Tales; namely, *Hansel and Gretel*. It presents an overview of archetypal criticism as the foundational framework for the analysis of the tales, before examining key archetypes based on the heroes' journey model. The archetypal element is the link that unifies many of the Grimms' tales, and propels them to enduring literary and popular success across generations of readers. The exploration of archetypes facilitates a better understanding of the themes and moral messages of fairy tales, especially *Hansel and Gretel*, given its structure, motifs, and themes.

The stature of the Grimms' work as the most prominent collection of fairy tales has been well established. This book has sold millions of copies worldwide and has been translated into scores of languages. Their collection proves that it is possible to overcome geographical, linguistic, and cultural barriers to establish fairy tales on the world stage. No other collection of fairy tales has met the success of the Grimms' since the genre began in the 18th century. A full appreciation of this popular collection is not possible without the critical examination of the archetypal elements that arguably define and characterize these fairy tales. It is the archetypal dimension of these tales that grant them their universality and success across numerous cultures.

Undoubtedly, many studies have been conducted on the Grimms' fairy tales. These studies often explore the historical context, themes, and characters of these fairy tales. The role and significance of archetypes have not received enough attention, especially through the concept of the hero's journey. This study specifically examines the fairy tale, *Hansel and Gretel*, using the framework of the archetypal hero's journey proposed by Joseph Campbell. It utilises numerous other studies that employed historical, archetypal, religious, and psychological approaches to fairy tales in order to offer a more wholesome critical appreciation of the full thematic dimensions of the heroic quest in *Hansel and Gretel*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Archetypes of Heroes' Journey in Fairy Tales

The archetype of the hero's journey is one of the elements that are found in countless fairy tales. In *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales* (2008), Haase stated that the journey that the protagonist often undertakes is a peregrination beyond the familiar world as the journey often leads into a dark forest, an underground world, or into a water world. The unfamiliar elements of the journey represent the unconsciousness of humankind. An example of the archetype of unfamiliarity that Haase mentioned in the book is the shadow. The shadow is a vessel that contains and represses the unconscious. These socially unacceptable 'psychic contents' resurface in the tale. Often, the resurfacing of this 'psychic content' is grim and aligned with the society's sense of evil such as murderous and incestuous desires. Thus, throughout his journey, the hero must defeat these evil manifestations and fulfil his destiny to succeed (Teverson, 2019, p.1).

Gatricya Rahman in *The Archetypes of Hero and Hero's Journey in Five Grimm's Fairy Tales* (2014) suggests that journeys in fairy tales can be categorised into several types. These types include the journey to become royalty, the journey to seek courage and resurrection, the journey of learning and rescue, the journey from innocence to experience, and the journey to glory from humility. For instance, in the tale of the *Golden Goose*, the protagonist was introduced as naive and lacking in wit. After he took on a journey and left his home, he managed to solve the problem; to make the humourless princess laugh. He also went through

several difficult tests. As a reward to his success, the king marries him to the princess. Similarly, Jordan B. Peterson in his *Maps of Meaning* (2002) believes the journey or quest to be an essential psychological manifestation that is found in numerous mythologies and folktales. The journey of the hero is an archetypal fulfilment representing an act of transformation from ignorance to knowledge and equally at the same time from chaos to order.

Fairy tales can be seen as a reflection of the ancient mythologies and serve to echo their structure and messages. Archetypes accordingly become the linking motives between fairy tales and mythologies. Maria Tatar in her book *The Hard Facts of Grimms' Fairy Tales* (2019) explores the common journey in Grimms' fairy tales. She examines the transformation of the female protagonists from rags to riches through a process of humiliation to rapidly climb the ladder of social status. A famous example is *Cinderella*, the female protagonist who eventually marries the son of a king. Similar to Tatar, Bettelheim (2010) in his book *The Use of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, discusses the journey of heroes using a psychological approach. He believes that fairy tales help children make sense of their journey to maturity and find answers to some existential questions and issues such as oedipal complex and anxiety. The extreme violence and ugly emotions of many fairy tales serve to deflect what may well be going on in the child's mind. Another study that explores the journey of heroes in fairy tales is *The Owl, The Raven, and the Dove: The Religious Meaning of the Grimms' Magic Fairy Tales* by G. Ronald Murphy (2000). The book explores fairy tales from a religious perspective to reveal the influence of Christianity on the Grimms and their creative creation. This influence is traced through various historical versions of the fairy tales that predate the Grimms and is found in thematic concerns, plot structures, and motifs and symbols. For instance, the journey of Hansel and Gretel is guided by God to teach the children self-reliance *and* that salvation requires divine grace.

RESEARCH METHOD

Definition and Overview of Archetypal Criticism

The study of archetypes was popularized by Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) through his work on analytical psychology, which mainly focuses on "the collective character of the unconscious and on archetypes as its privileged contents" (Audi, 1999, p. 454). Jung proposed that "certain symbols in dreams and myths were residues of ancestral memory preserved in the collective unconsciousness" Baldick (2001, p. 19). VandenBos (2015, pp. 72-73) defines archetypes as a "set of symbols representing aspects of the psyche that derive from the accumulated experience of humankind. These inherited symbols are held in the collective unconscious and serve as a frame of reference with which individuals view the world and as one of the bases on which the structure of an individual's personality is built." These archetypes are passed down from generation to generation through the "inherited structure of the brain." They surface as "primordial images" and forms that repeatedly appear in works across historical civilizations, such as myths and religious stories (Audi, 1999, p. 455).

Historically, archetypal criticism began to catch the attention of literary scholars in the early 20th century. Northrop Frye (1912-1991), through his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), inspired more studies on archetypal criticism or myth criticism in the literary world. His views on archetypal criticism are more structural than Jungian. Similarly, according to Cuddon (1999, p. 53), archetypal criticism studies the "archetypal and mythical narrative patterns, character types, themes and motifs in literature and their recurrence." Chirila (2010, p. 1) mentioned that archetypal criticism is an in-depth study on the repeated symbols and mythical patterns in a particular literary work. The psychological roots of these patterns and symbols became the

focus of archetypal criticism due to the increasing influence of Jung in multidisciplinary academic circles.

An example of this Jungian influence is the study *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (2004) by Joseph Campbell. He adopted Jung's basic conception of archetypes to explore the structure of mythologies, religious texts, folktales and fairy tales. The major structure that Campbell examines is the archetypal journey of the hero. In short, the hero undertakes a perilous and transformative journey from an ordinary world into a supernatural realm and back, defeating tremendous and extraordinary foes in the process to bring back prosperity to the original world. Various motifs of this journey are examined in his study such as thresholds, mentors, allies, and rewards. According to Campbell, heroes must leave their comfort zone to explore the labyrinth of the unknown in order to achieve triumph or growth. Heroes in this sense represent the readers who identify with the fictional characters. Campbell states that the hero in any story goes through the same fundamental journey despite differences of culture or religion. Campbell uses the term "monomyth" to describe this recurring pattern in myths and folktales. This journey has seventeen phases that are categorized into three stages, beginning with departure stage, where the hero leaves the known and orderly place to begin their quest. Next is the stage of initiation, where the majority of the challenges are faced and overcome in an unfamiliar environment. Lastly, the return stage where the hero returns home to share the boons he obtained during the journey.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The Archetypal Journey in *Hansel and Gretel*

Joseph Campbell in his seminal work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (2004) adapted the psychological analysis of Karl Gustav Jung on the universal inborn models of the collective unconscious to suggest an archetypal structure of a journey that protagonists undertake in countless mythologies and folktales to achieve growth, awareness, and redemption. Campbell, and previously Frye (1957), posited that a hero in such stories would embark on a journey of three distinct stages to achieve his goal. These stages are similar regardless of the culture of their origin as such archetypal elements are, by definition, transcultural, universal, and primary.[1] The first stage in this archetypal journey is called the departure stage (*agon* or conflict), followed by the initiation stage where the life-or-death quest truly peaks (*pathos* or death struggle), and the return stage that witnesses the triumphant rebirth of the hero (*anagnorisis* or discovery) (Frye, 1957, p. 187).

The stages in the hero's journey have numerous sub-stages or phases. The model of Campbell has seventeen phases that begin with the *call to adventure* and end with the *freedom to live*. Not all phases are applicable to every quest in every mythology or folktales. Some of the phases are sometimes overlapping, missing, or merged together due to various thematic and stylistic considerations.

The journey in *Hansel and Gretel* is structured into three major stages, similar to Campbell's theory. The first stage begins with the protagonists safely at home, where they receive their call to adventure as their stepmother ruthlessly schemes to banish them into the forest. The second stage begins when they find a gingerbread house, where they overcome the archetypal evil witch and take her treasure. The final stage marks the victorious return of the

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[1]There are numerous critics who studied archetypal journeys and heroic quests and suggested similar or overlapping stages, such as David Adams Leeming (1981), Phil Cousineau (1990) and Christopher Vogler (2007).

siblings back to their home, after crossing a vast lake. In the following analysis, some stages are grouped together for the sake of conciseness as not all phases are of equal importance or equal prominence in the tale.

The Departure

According to Campbell, all heroes' journeys begin in the hero's familiar, comfortable, or known environment, as shown in the beginning of countless mythologies and folktales. This stage consists of five phases; (a) the call to adventure, (b) refusal of the call, (c) supernatural aids (d) the crossing of the first threshold and (e) the belly of the whale. This stage is where the hero enters the unknown world in which the adventure will take place. The unknown world would be portrayed as a remote, mysterious, or frightening place (Campbell, 2004, p.58).

The call to adventure

Often, fairy tales begin in a safe place that is well-known to the protagonist. Usually, it is the home or house of the protagonist. Then, they move to or are thrown into an unfamiliar place. Some heroes voluntarily take on the journey like Beowulf, who was eager to go on a quest across the sea to a new land. However, there are heroes who are forced to take the journey, for instance, Horus. Horus was born as a prince to Isis and Osiris, but has to go on a fiendish quest to defeat his jealous uncle, Seth and reclaim the throne.

The tale begins at the edge of the forest where Hansel and Gretel live with their poor father and their stepmother. As they had little food to feed them, the wife suggested that they should abandon the children in the deep forest because they cannot find enough food for four people. This condition of poverty and famine is believed to be the callings for the children to take on an adventurous quest. The calling is further accentuated when the abandonment of the children is set into motion by the stepmother. It can be noted here that the plot catalyst - hunger and poverty- is based on a historical famine that struck Europe in medieval times (Doig A. 2022, p. 142 & O Grada, 2009, p. 61). The heroes need to embark on their journey, as no one lives in a perfect world. They must grow and change the world or perish. The other plot catalyst - stepmother- is a relative stranger to the family. In a sense, strangers and economic hardships are main reasons or factors that bring chaos and disorder to a known, orderly world. This in turn spurs the quest of the hero to overcome these factors of chaos and restore order.

The refusal to the call

At this phase, the protagonist refuses to heed the call. This might occur due to a sense of fear, insecurity, and unfamiliarity with the new realm. According to Bettelheim (2010), this phase is known as regression (p. 233). This refusal of the calling also might lead the heroes to attempt to go back to the familiar places where they feel safe and comfortable. For instance, in the adventures of *One Thousand and One Nights*, Prince Kamar al-Zaman refuses to change the way he lives and declines his father's advice to marry. The infantile ego of such a protagonist needs to be overcome through a heroic quest (Campbell, 2004, pp. 59-62).

In *Hansel and Gretel*, the children were worried about being abandoned by their guardians. In addition, they were to be abandoned into a frightening deep forest. This led Hansel to come up with an intelligent initiative to return home. In the tale, Hansel and Gretel successfully return home by following the white pebbles that he had marked throughout the path. This behaviour by Hansel is a sign of the refusal to the calling of adventure. The children regress to the previous condition they were in at home with the stepmother trying to get rid of them. They deny the existence of the problem and simply return home. One cannot deal with the challenges of life by regressing and denying them (Bettelheim, 2010, e-book, Part Two,

Hansel and Gretel). The fears, pragmatism and cold calculations of the stepmother led Hansel and Gretel to the dark forest. New solutions based on courage, love and compassion are needed to overcome the challenges and re-establish order at home. Hence, they need to accept the call. They need to change, learn, and grow.

Crossing the first threshold and supernatural aid

This final separation from the familiar world is the first step to the transformation of the protagonists. In this phase, the heroes encounter helpers and guides. These helpers come in various forms, such as wise old men, godmother, some sort of good-hearted animal or supernatural creature. The helpers might appear as strangers to the heroes, however, they are easily recognised as benign. For instance, in the tale of *Snow White*, the presence of the seven dwarfs does not present any threat or harm to the protagonist. Instead, the dwarfs help Snow White to free herself from the tricks of the wicked witch several times.

In the tale of *Hansel and* Gretel, due to the refusal of the protagonists to answer the calling, some supernatural aid interferes. It is to force Hansel and Gretel to take on the quest. On the second attempt of the abandonment of the children, the marks that were left by Hansel using the breadcrumbs were nowhere to be found, as birds had eaten them. With this, Hansel and Gretel are not able to go home, or regress, as easily as they did before. The children must adapt to surviving in the realm of the unknown where all the dangerous challenges lurk in waiting. The nature of birds as supernatural aid is further explored in the upcoming phases.

Belly of the whale

The belly of the whale is the next phase of the departure stage. At this phase, the protagonist of a tale will undergo an experience of being outside of the familiar environment on his/her own for the first time. This stage constitutes the full separation between the hero's known and unknown worlds. The term 'belly of the whale' is taken from the Biblical story of Jonah, who was swallowed by a whale. Inside the whale, he was lost and submerged in proverbial darkness within darkness. During this phase, the hero will go through his first substantial trial and will be helpless and hopeless in the belly of the whale.

Hansel and Gretel lost their marks to go home. This condition forced them to spend three long days and nights wandering in the forest. Then they saw a "lovely white bird," which led them to the gingerbread house.

"It was already the third morning since they had left their father's house…. At the midday, they saw a lovely white bird sitting on a branch…. When it had done singing, it flapped its wings and flew on ahead and they followed until the bird came to a little house and perched on the roof."

This particular part of the story contains a few archetypal religious symbols. One of them is the use of number three in the tale. The number connotes the Christian Holy Trinity (Ferber, 1999, pp. 141-142) to foreshadow more religious elements in the coming phases. In addition, the presence of the white bird has divine connotations. In many ancient myths and religions, birds are seen as an incarnation of God or the messengers of God, due to their ability to fly in the sky and across the sea (Ferber, 1999, pp. 26-27). For instance, in Greek mythology, the gods and goddesses owned birds as their familiars and messengers. Zeus owned an eagle, Athena an owl, and Aphrodite owned a dove. In Christianity, the dove is seen as a symbol of God. During the baptism of Jesus, it was described that the spirit of God descended in the form of a dove. The dove also symbolises the Holy Spirit, reflecting one Persons of the Holy Trinity in Christianity (Ferber, 1999, pp. 26-27). The white bird in the tale led Hansel and Gretel

towards the gingerbread house. To put it differently, divine power has guided the children to fulfil their quest of adventure and growth. In their helpless state, the children miraculously still have momentum to follow the bird. This shows their readiness to go forward on their quest after being swallowed into the belly of the whale.

The Initiation

In the initiation stage, the protagonist undergoes a series of challenging events that transforms the character of the protagonists. This phase that takes place in an unfamiliar space to the protagonist is considered by Campbell as the most popular phase of the myth-quest, as it has produced great literature of magical and miraculous adventures (Campbell, 2004, pp. 81-90). The trials and tribulations are manifested through spectacular challenges and conflicts. For instance, in the initiation stages of the story of Beowulf and the myth of Horus. Beowulf has to defeat two horrifying monsters, while Horus has to fight the menacing god of chaos and war to reclaim his usurped throne. These quests lead both Beowulf and Horus to become heroes after defeating the challenges present in the initiation stage (Bettelheim, 2010, e-book, Part Two, *Hansel and Gretel*).

In this stage, the hero's journey is fulfilled through six phases. Campbell used the following labels to distinguish these phases; (a) the road of trials, (b) the meeting with the goddess, (c) woman as the temptress, (d) atonement with the God the Father, (e) apotheosis and (f) the ultimate boon. However, not all mythologies and folktales fulfil these six phases in the journeys of their heroes. The salient phases that can be discerned in *Hansel and Gretel* are the road of trials, woman as temptress, and the ultimate boon. These stages and their various archetypal dimensions are further explored in the following subsections.

The road of trials & woman as temptress

The challenges faced by heroes on the road of trials are summed up in *Hansel and Gretel* in their meeting with the witch, who also represents the archetypal evil woman, temptress or trickster. There are not many trials in this phase for Hansel and Gretel save for overcoming this witch. The other trials in this fairy tale, such as the lonely nights in the forest or crossing the lake, are more aptly analysed under different phases of the young siblings' journey.

In the phase labelled by Campbell as the woman as temptress, protagonists encounter the seduction that might lead them astray from the actual purpose of the journey. The temptation is not necessarily represented by an actual female figure. Sometimes, the female figures are just messengers progressing the plot or storyline by presenting the hero with symbolic temptation. In numerous mythologies, women tempt the heroes through their physical beauty or through tricks they can play to snare the heroes. For instance, Greek mythologies present many examples of this trickster archetype, such as the sirens, who are half-woman half-bird creatures that lure sailors with their enchanting singing and voices to their deaths (Cotterell, 2006, p. 58 & Serman, 2008, p. 416). To those pitiful sailors who listen and fall for the beautiful singing and enchantments of the sirens, these creatures appear as beautiful women. In reality, the sirens are hideous monsters when seen without the magical effect of their voices. Additionally, the archetypal woman trickster is also memorably depicted in John Keats famous poem, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, where a knight's journey is interrupted by a beautiful maiden who seduces him to his ultimate downfall.

The trials in *Hansel and Gretel* begin with the temptation by the witch in the form of the gingerbread house. It is a tool used by the cannibalistic witch to lure children that are lost in the forest. The children fall for the temptation that is represented by the house as they need nourishment after travelling for nights without proper food. The significance of the house can

be analysed on at least three different yet connected levels. It can be seen first, as perceived initially by the children, as a gift from the divine or mother nature - another form of supernatural aid - to save their lives. It can also be seen as a form of temptation similar to the Forbidden Fruit (Genesis 3) that leads those who eat it to more temptations and trials. On a psychological level, the children are subconsciously experiencing regression as if their voracious devouring of the house and refusal to heed to the cautionary whispers symbolize their inability to grow out of the oral psychosexual development stage. In eating the house, the children are shown to be selfish and gluttonous and lack any growth during the second stage of their journey. (Bettelheim, 2010, e-book, Part Two, *Hansel and Gretel*)). Campbell mentions that failing to resist temptation is usually followed by a refusal to admitting one's own mistakes (2010, pp. 111-113), which is a sign of immaturity. Hansel and Gretel continue to eat the house, which they do not own nor know the owner of, and pretend that the wind is destroying the house.

The climax of the story in *Hansel and Gretel* is when the heroes encounter the evil witch, an encounter that determines their life or death - the success or failure of their journey. Within the journey's archetypal framework, the witch is one of the ultimate representations of evil. A witch is the one who can transform the established order/known/familiar into chaos/unknown/disorder. The journey of the heroes is undergone to create order out of chaos. The epitome of evil or chaos in many stories can be the witch. Jung (2004) considers the witch as one of the evil symbols of the terrible mother archetype (p. 15). According to Brunel (1996), she is the "core, the centre of all that cannot be understood' as well as the 'principle of disorder." As she represents fear, hatred and threat to the society, the witch is often an outcast who resides in the dark, deep forest far from the sociable community (p. 1168).

In *Hansel and Gretel*, the witch's attempt to kill the children is similar to the stepmother's attempts in abandoning the children in the earlier stage, the departure, of the story. In a sense, the witch can be the reincarnation of the evil stepmother. In the beginning, the stepmother was the one who walked the children deeper into a place in the forest which is described as 'they had never been in all their lives'. Furthermore, the second attempt of abandonment happened without the presence of the father, and the deep forest is often the place where witches hide away from society. Both witch and stepmother possess no name. This can allude to their shared identity at one level, and can also facilitate the readers' "projection and identification" with these characters (Bettelheim, 2010, Introduction: The Struggle for Meaning).

In the tale, the children trick the witch. They manage to overcome their archenemy who has plotted their downfall every step of the way. The witch had the intention to eat them, and she had the house, cage and oven prepared. The children manage to trick the trickster and defeat the evil foe in her own house of illusions and sorcery. It is Gretel who finally manages to push the witch into the fire. Gretel does not escape alone even when she is able to do so. She can go out, as the witch allows her to draw water outside the house, yet she chooses to stay with Hansel who is caged. She has already passed the stage of selfishness. Through the love and unselfishness that Gretel had for her brother, they found ways to free themselves, defeat the witch and overcome the deadly challenge of their journey.

The ultimate boon

The following phase in the journey of the hero is labelled by Campbell as the ultimate boon (2004, p. 159). In this phase, the hero receives rewards after overcoming the trials and tribulations in the unfamiliar world. This difficult-to-obtain reward is a main goal of the quest. The reward can be material like finding a treasure or the elixir of life, marrying a princess or changing to a higher social status; or non-physical like gaining wisdom. As fairy tales often

take place in the physical world their rewards are mostly material. In the words of Campbell, "typically, the hero of the fairy tale achieves domestic, micro-cosmic triumph…prevails over his personal oppressors" (2004, p. 35). The hero is usually able to share the boon with his family or his community.

In the tale, Hansel and Gretel overcome the deadly challenge of the witch. They find her treasure of pearls and precious stones, which they run off with to their home. The treasure is the reward for the children's achievement of defeating the witch. The reason or the catalyst that caused the heroes to embark on their journey was poverty, as shown in the first stage. By finding the treasure, it seems that the reason for being on a journey has been nullified. The reward for the heroes is not something immaterial but rather something that directly ties to the cause of their journey - poverty - as if they have fulfilled the purpose of this journey through this reward.

Both Hansel and Gretel were almost at the end of their lives; both children were trapped in the snare-house and were about to be eaten, yet survived, as they showed their courage, shrewdness and compassion towards each other. The pearls are an apt reward as they are difficult to obtain and hard to find due to their hard shells and location at sea. The difficulties in obtaining the pearls are analogous to the difficulties faced by Hansel and Gretel. Pearls also represent, in numerous tales, the central reward of mystical paths (Cirlot, 2001, p. 251) and wisdom gained through certain tasks (Ferber, 1999, pp. 151-152). Hansel and Gretel also gained wisdom in their journey, and this is exhibited through their reaction to finding the pearls. They were not blinded by the treasure and did not waste all their efforts to collect all the pearls. Rather, they took just enough pearls and focused on continuing the final part of their journey, returning home.

The Return

The final stage of a hero's journey is called the return. In this stage, the protagonists still undergo a series of challenges. However, unlike the initiation stage, challenges in this stage take place in both familiar and unfamiliar worlds. Some challenges take place at the periphery of the unfamiliar world, in a place 'bridging' both worlds. This is similar to where the challenges in the departure stage occurred. Notably, the challenges in this stage mark the successful growth of the protagonists who have faced and overcome a slew of challenges in the previous stage. Upon returning, the protagonists share the boon that they collected from the unfamiliar world with their family or people. Some of the famous examples of such protagonists include Prometheus and Jack (from *Jack and the Beanstalk*). According to Campbell, this stage is comprised of six phases; (a) refusal of the return, (b) the magic flight, (c) rescue from without, (d) the crossing of the return threshold, (e) master of the two worlds and (f) freedom to live. The notable phases that can be analysed in *Hansel and Gretel* are (a) rescue from without, (b) the crossing of the return threshold, and (c) freedom to live. In the fairy tale, the stage begins after Hansel and Gretel have defeated the witch and escaped her gingerbread house with the treasure. It ends with their eventual return to their father's arms at home, to complete the symbolic cycle of rebirth as heroes.

Rescue from without

After overcoming the trials and tribulations in the initiation, the heroes have to face some final challenges on the way home. This is not an easy task but is necessary for the rebirth to take place. According to Campbell, "the full round, the norm of the monomyth, requires that the hero shall now begin the labour of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece… back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the

community…" (Campbell, 2004, p. 179) However, it must be noted that not all heroes are willing to return home at once, as some initially insist on continuing life in the unfamiliar place with their boon, such as the Buddha. In any case, those on the return journey face insurmountable challenges that they cannot overcome on their own and thus require 'rescue from without' from a powerful being to reach home.

In *Hansel and Gretel*, the children have to cross a big body of water - a lake - in order to go home, after leaving the snare-house without hesitation. On their way into the forest, the children did not find such a body of water. It strangely appears on their way back home. The children manage to cross the lake by seeking the assistance of a white duck that transports them individually to the other side where they walk on to reach home. The lake as a representation of the unknown, within an already unfamiliar forest, serves as a new unforeseen predicament for the children to overcome. They seem unable to cross the lake on their own and Gretel seeks the help of the white duck. This can show that the young heroes, or any other hero for this matter, cannot achieve their full potential and goal without help from without. The story of Moses in the Bible is similar in this sense as Moses seeks help from God and is miraculously able to cross the water and defeat his enemy. In this context, the help from without is Divine Grace that reflects the Christian beliefs about salvation through God's mercy during the times of the Grimm brothers (Murphy, 2000, pp. 62-63). The duck is another bird that symbolizes the Spirit of God and His intervention in the world. This symbolism can also be found in the Bible, in the story of Noah. Genesis 8:10-11 mentions how the bird that was sent out from the ark brought back a fresh olive branch. This represents the grace of God in giving new hope of life to Noah and all other creatures on the ark. Usually, animals in fairy tales represent hidden desires and sensual motives[2] (Sorea, 2018, p. 93). However, such representation does not appear in the case of the birds in this story. The dove and the duck are representations of the guidance granted by God to the heroes on their path.

The lake is not merely a representation of the unknown or chaos. It has strong mythological and religious connotations as water is a source of life - birth -, abolition and baptism. Accordingly, crossing the water can signify the cleansing of their potential sins, such as eating the gingerbread house and killing the witch (Murphy, 2000, pp. 63-64). It can also herald their baptism and rebirth as newly-minted heroes who have completed the cyclical journey and are back on their way home after achieving their potential and receiving Divine Grace, making them Masters of the Two Worlds. The children knew to seek help when they needed it – a sign of maturity – and did it through a song to the duck as in praying to God for help. Later they showed compassion and full individuality by riding separately on the back of the duck (Murphy, 2000, pp. 63-64 & Bettelheim, 2010, e-book, Part Two, *Hansel and Gretel*)).

Crossing the return threshold & freedom to live

The final phases of Campbell's archetypal journey about mastering both worlds, crossing the return stage and living freely are concisely presented in *Hansel and Gretel*. Heroes in Campbell's paradigm achieve both material and spiritual progress, then reach home safely to share their boon, after crossing the final hurdles, and live a life of prosperity with their family

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[2]An example of such animals can be readily found in the tale of *Cat and Mouse in Partnership*, where the cat represents one's own deep desires and dark motives, and the inability to contain them.

or people. The return to their father's house shows the importance of the patriarchal home as a place of order and safety.

In the fairy tale, the heroes achieve material gains and spiritual maturity as indicated in the analysis above. Furthermore, they find their way home out of the forest into the arms of their remorseful father. A noticeable absence at this stage is that of the stepmother who has died all of a sudden before the return of the children. She was the catalyst for the journey of Hansel and Gretel and now that the heroes have returned victorious, she is no longer needed to further complicate their free life. Additionally, the children have defeated the archetypal representation of chaos, or the epitome of evil, in the form of the cannibalistic witch. Thus, any further challenges with a minor villain are superfluous. There is no need to bring the disorders of conflict back into the family home after the children have completed their journey. Thus, the heroes are able to live with their father and share their treasure of pearls and precious stones in total peace and pure happiness.

CONCLUSION

The study mainly focused on identifying the key archetypes and exploring their significance in *Hansel and Gretel* before analysing their thematic dimensions. Some of these archetypes include the journey, the evil witch, the trickster, water, stepmother, birds, forest, home and many more. Subsequently, the study examined the moral environment that is delivered through the use of archetypes. The moral themes in the tale mainly revolve around self-reliance, courage, shrewdness, compassion and cooperation, family values, fearing strangers, dangers of illusions, seeking divine grace and facing challenges audaciously. All of these themes are based on the concept of self-transformation that results from taking on the heroic quest. Accordingly, this study has reached numerous conclusions that can lead to a better appreciation of *Hansel and Gretel* and its various thematic messages.

In conclusion, the scope of this study is limited to analysing the final version of *Hansel and Gretel* in the Grimms' collection using the framework of the archetypal hero's journey pioneered by Joseph Campbell. Analysing fairy tales through the stages of the monomyth can elucidate their themes and role as guides or models for the human quest for growth and self-fulfilment. *Hansel and Gretel* skilfully employ numerous archetypal elements such as the quest, evil woman, order versus chaos, thresholds and helpers, and the trickster and the witch to allow its protagonists to achieve psychological and moral maturity, and material rewards. This tale offers readers rich moral lessons about courage, regression, cleverness, loyalty, evil, compassion and destiny through the use of the archetypal journey and its various elements.

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