**Sample of a Comparative Essay**

**How to Get Out of the Forest: German and Canadian Versions of Hansel and Gretel**

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Hansel and Gretel, transcribed from the original German oral tradition by Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm, receives a new treatment in the hands of the Canadian illustrator and storyteller, Ian Wallace. In each respective case, the stories reflect aspects of their cultures. While the Grimm Brothers wrote the original tale set in the darkest reaches of the Black Forest, Wallace adapted his story to reveal the harsh realities of life in the Maritimes. While Wallace's story may be a shortened version of the original, it does not lose any of that suspenseful atmosphere that makes it appeal to adults. Through a comparison of Grimm Brothers' and Wallace's Hansel and Gretel, an examination of the setting, language and intended audience, one can prove that these versions, while different also share some similarities.

The setting of both versions of Hansel and Gretel takes place in a forest where the children are left by their parents to fend for themselves. In Wallace's rendering the children live in a fisherman's town positioned somewhere in Atlantic Canada. The children live in a "house by the sea on the edge of a large forest"(Wallace, p.3). In Grimm's story, on the other hand, the narrative is set in "a woodcutter's home on the edge of a great forest" (Grimm, p.101). The forest appears in both versions but in Grimm's original telling it seems even creepier, full of references to the dark, sinister Black Forest, while in Wallace the same dark forest pervades the story but as a familiar Canadian setting, one that a young person has encountered perhaps in youth as a Girl Guide, Boy Scout or avid outdoor enthusiast. In Wallace there are images of pine and maple trees, corn fields, moose, picket fences and fishing boats. Grimm's Black forest on the other hand, emphasizes the images of peasant circumstances, open fires and satchels, the painful reality of poverty.

Considering that Grimm's text was written in the early 1800's, the language used still sounds very old fashioned especially when compared to that of Wallace's recent rendering. The original details in Wallace stay true to the original except when Wallace modernizes his to suggest a Canadian theme. Phrase like "'Stupid goose,' said the woman, 'the opening is big enough, do you see?'"(Grimm, p.105) or "'Spare me your lamentations,' said the old woman..."(Grimm, p. 101) would hardly ever be said or let alone written down to suggest dialogue today. Wallace, therefore, takes an original line, changing it to: "'You fool,' cried the woman. 'Watch me!'"(p.14). In Grimm's tale, "Gretel says, 'Dear go, pray help us! If we had been devoured by wild beasts in the wood at least we should have died together.'" (Grimm, p.101). Wallace makes no reference to any form of prayer, suggesting how prayer would not creep into the thoughts or words of modern youths when trying to find a solution to their predicament nowadays. Wallace not only contemporizes the language, but he cleverly shows modern humanity's lack of faith in God and prayer. The Grimm's tale, on the other hand, never loses sight of its moral function, of imparting a moral lesson to all involved.

Consequently, the audience intended for Wallace's version would imply an attraction for children first, but also create an appeal for adults as well, while Grimm's tale, as always, began as an appeal to adult interests and pleasures. Wallace changed the story subtly to suit a new generation of Canadians who perhaps already had heard the original. He delves into the cultural circumstances of life in an Atlantic seacoast fishing community. He does this through his illustrations of the clap-board homes, paneled recreation room, the light fixtures associated with docks and the rugged eastern landscape, which is dark, brown-toned and pocked with numerous cliffs. Grimm's story, set for simple German people, reveals a similar dark, foreboding forest, full of ominous shadows where light never penetrates, but also refers to hills and mountains located in the distance. Their story developed out of a concern to show an average German peasant family struggling with poverty, and what happens when children place too much faith in their parents to ensure their survival. By the end, the darkest setting in their story is no longer the Black Forest but the inner regions of the human heart.

In conclusion, a comparison of the Grimm Brothers' and Ian Wallace's Hansel and Gretel use of setting, language and intended audience proves that these narratives are two different versions but both share similarities. The setting of both stories takes place in forests but locales that reflect their different regional qualities. The Grimm's language harkens back to an old-fashioned era when children said their prayers which certainly contrasts with Wallace's version and a much more modern pair of siblings. Likewise, the audience intended in both accounts reflects different eras and nationalities. **Nonetheless, the key to understanding both versions begin with the realization that one is a modernized version of the other, that each one is geared towards a different audience.**