THE IMPACT OF TRADITIONAL AND MODERN FAIRY TALES ON SOCIETY

AND ITS INDIVIDUALS

By

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Abstract:

The genre of fairy tales lacks a concrete confinement, allowing its stories to span across age, asserting a variety of themes and captivating a wide range of audience members. The familiarity of such traditional stories, however, sets a precedent for the genre—an ability to assert a lesson and an element of escaped reality. Fairy tales exist even in modern times and reappear in existing and novel ways. Both traditional and modern fairy tales possess an extremely important role in societal expectations, disturbances in human desire, and the ideals/behaviors of individuals, regardless of age. With the use of both traditional and modern day texts, it becomes evident that fairy tales have an overwhelming impact on readers. Their themes, settings, characters, and plots promote relevant expectations and ideals society expects individuals to maintain throughout their life. More importantly, it reveals the innate attraction that readers have toward these works and what that says about humanity. Details from selected works demonstrate these prominent fairy-tale characteristics across mediums (text, film, and life-size attractions) and provide evidence affirming the assertion that fairy tales have an impactful power on the actions and thoughts of individuals and the important themes of society.

Introduction:

The resounding phrases "once upon a time" and "happily ever after" have had an immeasurable impact on society for centuries. These words and the characters they relate to have been repeated across cultures, languages, and age. It is nearly impossible to meet a person who has not heard of the common tropes or the ever-present characters of fairy tales: the evil witch, the cruel stepmother, the path of breadcrumbs, the wolf on the way to Grandmother's, and much more. These stories have drawn both child and adult from the progression of every day reality into the world of story-telling and the possibilities that exist within a genre that has no limits, no restrictions, and no target audience: fairy tales.

The elements of fairy tales, a genre that has been around since narrative began (as seen by the assortment of tales ranging across oral tradition) (Propp 380), range from stories about princesses and dashing heroes saving the day and achieving happiness, to grim moral assertions, warning its readers to behave by terrorizing its own characters. Ariel, the red-haired Little Mermaid created by Disney, ends her story in marriage to a prince having defeated the evil embodied in the sea witch Ursula. Her story depicts the classical and modern trend of the heroine/hero achieving a happily ever after amidst prior distress. In contrast, the little mermaid of Hans Christian Andersen's older tale – on which the Disney is based – endures constant pain in order for her character to learn the true meaning of humanity. Her story ends with sincere sacrifice.

In addition, the genre of 'fairy tales' has an unmatchable ability to span across culture and time. Andersen's tale, "The Little Mermaid", was published in Denmark in the year 1837. Years later in 1989 America, Walt Disney's team adopted the tale into an animated film aimed at

children, reworking certain elements and manipulating the storyline slightly to assert different morals that, in Disney's view, better reflected the society and market concerns of the time.

These familiar stories filled with relevant life-lessons and reality-defying situations have appeared in oral tradition, picture books, print, academic journals, television, movies, art, film, and even amusement parks. Their presence is inescapable. Again taking a look at "The Little Mermaid", it transformed from a Danish tale, to an animated film, to a musical, and even to an amusement park ride. Moreover, the availability of fairy tales, both modern and traditional, has an enormous impact on societal conventions and expectations as well as on the actions of its individuals. As active members of society, people encounter fairy tales or fairy-tale tropes in nearly every day life. Whether intentional or not by the tellers, fairy tales have an illusive power over their audience…promoting themes and setting standards for individuals across time and age.

Defining a Fairytale:

Finding a concrete definition or boundary to fully encompass the genre of fairy tales is extremely challenging. The stories themselves have outcomes and themes so vast that their elements often do not match one another: comparing Charles Perrault's "Donkeyskin" to the Brothers Grimm's "Cinderella" demonstrates both the vast differences in detail and the common themes shared between fairy-tale tropes. The two stories share common elements that help highlight the fairytale genre; however, they have very different tones and morals as well.

Perrault's princess runs away in fear of her own father forcing her hand in marriage after the death of her mother. The former queen makes her husband promise that "(he) will pledge (his) love and marry only if (he) meets a woman more beautiful, more accomplished, and more

wise" than she (Tatar 109). The princess seeks an escape from the sadness her father's command

causes her. She runs to her godmother for aid in cautiously denying the demands of her king.

Ultimately, she hides her own beauty and escapes wearing the skin of a donkey. After working

tirelessly for another royal family as a scullery maid and patiently doing her daily chores, she

finds love with a prince, who desires 'a very slender finger', and the story asserts its own moral:

"It is better to expose yourself to harsh adversity than to neglect your duty. Virtue may

sometimes seem ill-fated, but it is always crowned with success" (Tatar 116). Though ending on

a relatively happy note, "Donkeyskin" asserts that duty exceeds happiness in importance. Rather

than escaping her duty, the princess embraces her work and ultimately finds a husband by

submitting to the orders of those around her.

In contrast, the Brothers Grimm "Cinderella" finds a way to escape her duty for a night

and engage in celebration, finding love with a Prince. Although her unloving father, step-mother,

and step-sisters strip Cinderella of her beauty and dictate her duties within the household,

Cinderella finds a way to escape their commands for the night and become the Prince's only

dancing partner and ultimately winning his love, deceiving her dreadful family by surmounting

their expectations of her beauty:

> Her sister and her stepmother had no idea who she was. She looked so beautiful in
>
> the dress of gold that they thought she must be the daughter of a foreign king.
>
> They never imagined it could be Cinderella, for they were sure that she was at
>
> home sitting in the dirt and picking lentils out of the ashes (Tatar 119).

Cinderella's deception of her family compares to the deception of the Princess in

"Donkeyskin": the Princess wears the magical skin of the donkey to escape her father's proposal

and Cinderella dresses elegantly in the magical gifts given from the tree above her mother's

grave. One is masked in beauty and the other in horridness, but both young girls find a way to escape. However, the escape of the Princess is committed at the will and command of her fairy godmother and leads her to yet another form of duty. The escape of Cinderella is committed to fulfill her own desire. The theme in "Cinderella" drastically differs from "Donkeyskin" and is best captured in the words of Cinderella's dying mother: "Dear child, if you are good and say your prayers, our dear Lord will always be with you, and I shall look down on you from heaven and always be with you" (Tatar 117). Ultimately, the moral of "Cinderella" is to be good and kind rather than dutiful. Although Cinderella's sisters are dutiful to their mother and stepfather, their beauty and duty are not enough to save them: "The doves pecked the other eye from each one. And so they were punished for their wickedness and malice with blindness for the rest of their lives" (Tatar 122).

The differences between the two stories are evident in their drastically different moral assertions. However, the ability of both stories to assert a moral on its readers, aiming to influence their behavior, highlights an important element that helps classify fairy tales as a genre. Whether encouraging listeners to be dutiful even in the face of adversity or promoting the significance of having a genuinely kind nature, both stories proclaim a moral…an aspect evident within fairy tales. More important still is the reader's perception and acceptance of these morals as important to their individual lifestyles. As stated, fairy tales find a way to be integrated into personal lives across time and culture. This continual integration distinguishes fairy tales as important within the personal lives of readers. Although the question may never fully be answered, one explanation for the draw and intrigue of fairy tales is their disturbing plots and intrigue with the messed-up nature of humans, regardless of where and when.

Another important element shared between the two stories is the presence of something unnatural/magical. This raises the story from an everyday lesson to capture the true essence of what readers deem 'fairy tales'. The element of the unreal proves an important role within the stories. Moreover, the unquestioned acceptance of these unreal elements by the characters and the audience is vital. The story progresses only if the characters and the audience are able to accept these magical aspects of the setting/plot. For example, in the story of "Donkeyskin", the Princess is given an assortment of magical amenities by her godmother and her father: a dress the color of the seasons, a donkey that creates gold coins, a wand that hides the Princess's belongings. "Cinderella" also presents an assortment of magical acts. The tree above the mother's grave provides Cinderella with what she desires (gold and silver attire) and the doves are able to help her complete her tasks. The characters and the audience accept these abnormal details as a way to give sense and importance to the stories. The escape from reality provides another important element present in the fairy-tale genre.

The details in these two specific stories differ; however, their common progression and aspects of plot help provide even further insight into the idea of fairy-tale 'types'. The assertion of a moral along with the presence of unreal elements largely helps classify the overall genre of fairy tales. Within the genre, common 'types' of stories exist as well…most especially within traditional stories. Referring again to the two stories, both "Donkeyskin" by Charles Perrault and "Cinderella" by the Brothers Grimm follow the common 'Cinderella' fairy-tale type. In this collection of tales, the plot progresses in a shared way with comparable elements. In the 'Cinderella' tale-type, there is consistently a young character at a disadvantage facing adversity in some way from family members (often a cruel step mother and an uncompassionate father) who should be supportive. The character (often a young woman) is unable to meet their full

potential until an element of the unreal helps aid them in finding their true happiness. The character is then discovered using the help of a unique feature only they maintain (i.e. the size of the glass slipper or the slenderness of a finger) and often the heroine is rewarded and the villains are punished. The stories themselves hold their unique and important distinctions, but their characters are connected through these shared progressions:

> Cinderella has been reinvented by so many different cultures that it is hardly surprising to find that she is sometimes cruel and vindictive, at other times compassionate and kind. Even within a single culture, she can appear genteel and self-effacing in one story; clever and enterprising in another, coy and manipulative in a third (Tatar 102).

This assertion by Maria Tatar brings attention to the powerful ability of fairy tales. They are able to maintain their distinct differences and wide range of narratives while still holding a common thread with one another. The "Cinderella" tale type is just one of many fairytale types that is popular today. Other tale types exist including Hansel and Gretel, Bluebird, and Beauty and the Beast to name a few (Tatar). These tale-types are ever present across cultures and time, repeating morals and themes and supplementing the idea that the genre of fairy tale refuses to restrict itself to a finite structure.

Modern fairy tales are capable of taking two distinct forms: they can recreate versions of a fairy-tale type, giving a retelling of a traditional story; or modern fairy tales can take the shape of novel (or "new") stories that maintain the two primary characteristics of the genre (a moral and a sense of the unreal). For example, Disney chooses often to create their stories using tale types. Many modern versions of traditional tales exist today. *Ever After,* a 1998 film, is an example of a modern fairy tale that follows the Cinderella tale type. A relatively unique fairy tale

that branches away from any tale type is the *Chronicles of Narnia* series written by C.S. Lewis between 1949 and 1954. These stories have unique plots that mold nicely with the fairytale genre, yet lack incongruence with any popular tale type. Other examples include works such as *Harry Potter* and *A Wrinkle In Time*.

The genre of fairy tales is ever changing and the characteristics differ from one story to the next. Although these unique distinctions make it challenging to confine fairy tales to any particular demographic, they attribute to the power that fairy tales maintain. The similarities between the stories are what truly classify them as one within this vast and continually evolving genre:

> The evolution of the fairy tale as a literary genre is marked by dialectical appropriation that set the cultural conditions for its institutionalization and its expansion as a mass-mediated form through radio, film, and television. Fairy tales were first told by gifted tellers and were based on rituals intended to endow with meaning the daily lives of members of a tribe (Tatar 333-334).

As this quote asserts, the genre of fairy tale has evolved in unbelievable ways to better reflect the mediums used in the times of their telling. Beginning as an oral tradition and transforming into a variety of films and theatre performances, the genre lends itself to capture the attention of so many individuals and societies, encouraging them to recognize the moral claims within.

Roles of Fairy Tales—Formation of Ideals:

Since the genre of fairy tales has continuously evolved across cultures and time, it is important to detail the role these stories have on individuals. Though the definition of the genre itself is seemingly vague, the effect it has had upon societies is far from ambiguous. Rather,

these stories, both traditional and modern, have found an important and everlasting role within society. Fairy tales especially have found a way to infiltrate the every day lives of people, especially in modern times. Their effect ranges from the remembering of a youthful bedtime story, to a phenomenon that dictates an entire generation.

Quite prominently, fairy tales have enormous effects on the lives of individuals; they have the ability to affect the virtues, expectations, pastimes, and aspirations of society members. Traditional fairy tales have found a way to maintain their familiarity even today. The Brothers Grimm's "Cinderella" found yet another outlet to renew its presence in society with the 2015 release of *Cinderella,* a live action film. Their moral assertions have found new, invigorated meaning with transformation in interpretation and with recreation through new story tale types. These timeless fairy tales have the ability to bring to light morals that are relevant to modern times.

The evolving moral assertions within fairy tales demonstrate the changing ideals that society holds in importance for its individuals. Once again taking a look at the story "Donkeyskin", an audience is able to interpret the moral declaration that women should always be dutiful and virtuous above all and maintain the importance of beauty. These moral lessons were relevant in the time of Perrault, however, the moral of "Donkeyskin" may be less relevant to young women in today's society…as different morals are pressed upon women of this decade.

Ultimately, these fairy tales exert powerful influence over their audience, and it is important to highlight the possible assertions/virtues being made and the impacts they could have on society and the decisions people make. With a deeper glance into certain fairy tales, both traditional and modern, one is able to gather the ideals being presented and the place they have in the every day lives of individuals.

The assertions of these morals mirror the intrigue readers have for the unsettling ways in which the 'lessons' are taught. Often times, the stories involve death, rape, sex, and torture, and these acts compel the audience with a fascination for the unknown and tainted.

A Look At Traditional Tales: Beauty and The Beast and Little Red

In even the most traditional tales, moral assertions appear in a variety of ways that pertain to the culture and expectations of the time. By taking a look at a few prominent and memorable tales, one can deduce the characters' roles in making statements on behalf of the reader…rules that should be followed, advice that should be heard, and lessons that must be remembered. As stated, many of these tales assert morals relating to the expectations of the time. Taking a look at these traditional tales in relation to the evolving moral standards, the idea that fairy tales work on behalf of setting societal expectations becomes clear. Two familiar tales stand out in their moral assertions: Beauty and The Beast and Little Red Riding Hood. These unique tales have a lengthy evolution relating specifically to the culture and time in which they appear and reappear.

To begin, *Beauty and The Beast*, written by Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont in 1757 is the most popularized version of the Beauty and the Beast tale type. The tale of a man finding his true love in an obscure way has been seen throughout ages in a variety of different stories: for instance, the first notable story fitting the Beauty and the Beast tale type is documented as "Cupid and Psyche", written in the second century A.D. in *Transformations of Lucian, Otherwise Known as the Golden Ass* by Apuleius (Tatar 25). In this version of the tale, Cupid (a rumored beast and ominous husband) and Psyche meet in a truly menacing manner:

> When these delights had ended and evening was drawing near, Psyche sought her
>
> couch. Soon night came on, and then she heard a gentle noise. In such a solitude

> Psyche feared for her virginity, and feared the more because she knew not what she feared. Then came to her couch the unknown bridegroom and made Psych his wife; but before dawn he disappeared. Immediately the voices came and attended upon the young bride who had lost her maidenhood. In this way things went on for a long while; by habit this new life became sweet, and the sound of the mysterious voices became the solace of her loneliness (Nutt 17-18).

This meeting between the two lovers perfectly exemplifies the harsh moral assertion of the ancient tale. As Tatar puts it, the tale was commonly told "by drunken and half-demented women to a young bride abducted by bandits on her wedding day—a tale meant to console the distraught captive" (Tatar 25).

Ultimately, Cupid and Psych separate at the coercion of her sisters because Psyche's feigned happiness fuels her elder sisters' jealousies. Psyche undergoes a variety of adventures before finally rejoining Cupid in appropriate marriage: "(Jupiter) then ordered Mercury to find Psyche and carry her up to the heaves. When this had been done, he took a cup of ambrosia and said: 'Drink, Psyche, and be immortal: never more shall Cupid leave your side, for your marriage shall last throughout eternity'" (Nutt 48). This original and ancient story presents the female and male characters in somewhat reverse roles from the commonly known plot. Here, the woman, Psych, is seen as beastly due to her mortality and the inappropriateness of her rank in marriage to Cupid. Cupid's seduction of Psyche is told in a tone of near romance. His aggression and seduction of the beautiful young woman acts as a moral lesson imparted upon young maiden commonly forced into unloving and aggressive relations without their approval or even their knowledge. The tale ends in happiness to encourage women of the time to accept their fate and anticipate happiness even in the darkest of engagements.

A similar moral assertion is made years later in the common story associated with the Beauty and the Beast trope written by de Beaumont. As the expectations of marriages and women evolved from the second century to 1757, so too did the societal standard imparted through the fairy tale's plot. Whereas "Cupid and Psych" encouraged young women to accept their harsh fate of brutal captivity, the later version of the story encourages young women to be open to the eccentricities and dark aspects of arranged marriages. Beauty is seen throughout the tale as obedient, well mannered, self-sacrificing, and good-natured…qualities esteemed in women at the time of its creation. In direct contrast to her jealous and spiteful sisters, Beauty accepts her fate and goes willingly to what she foresees as her doom:

> Why should I shed tears about Father when he is not going to die. Since the monster is willing to accept one of his daughters, I am prepared to risk all his fury. I feel fortunate to be able to sacrifice myself for him, since I will have the pleasure of saving my father and proving my feelings of tenderness for him (de Beaumont 37).

Throughout the tale, Beauty consistently does well by each individual she meets, even her sisters, who are cruel to her. Her ability to see the Beast as more than simply a monster demonstrates her capacity to see through the evil in the man she must reside with for all of eternity. She finds a way to fall in love with the Beast, despite her perceptions of him as initially cruel:

> "No, my dear Beast, you will not die," said Beauty. "You will live and become my husband. From this moment on, I give you my hand in marriage, and I swear that I belong only to you. Alas, I though that I felt only friendship for you, but the

grief I am feeling makes me realize that I can't live without you" (de Beaumont

41)

Beauty's capability to love and find wonder in the Beast shows her obedience. She is rewarded at

the end of the tale with a love that has grown true and a beast that has transformed into a prince.

In this commonly told tale, the moral assertion appears in Beauty's obedience and good nature.

Just as in arranged marriages, a common practice of the time in 18th century France, Beauty is

forced to reside with Beast by the hand of her father. She accepts her role as a gracious duty, just

as young brides would accept the will of their parents and the duties given to them by their

arranged husband. Beauty becomes loyal to the Beast, falling in love with him despite his

aggression and appearance. The same goodness and obedience was expected of women in

arranged marriages.

Although the typical plot of de Beaumont's *Beauty and the Beast* has extended to today's

society with minor changes, the interpretation of the tale's plot and moral assertion has altered

with the societal changes. As Tatar puts it, "*Beauty and the Beast* stands as a model for a plot

rich in opportunities for expressing a woman's anxieties about marriage, but, in recent years, it

has turned into a story focused on Beast rather than on Beauty" (Tatar 29). In modern

interpretations of this fairy tale, Beauty is praised for her ability to see through Beast's physical

appearance and Beast is praised for his choice to break through stereotypes. Rather than being a

moral lesson to young women in marriages to search for the good in their mate, the tale becomes

an encouragement for societal members to see beauty in people that do not conform to societal

norms. Beast is an outcast from society simply barred by his appearance yet beneath his

differences he is ultimately revealed as intelligent (de Beaumont 41). In the modern musical

adaptation of *Beauty and the Beast* on Broadway, Beast sings a song expressing his individuality

and the frustration he feels in being restricted to his appearance:

> And in my twisted face there's not the slightest trace
>
> Of anything that even hints of kindness
>
> And from my tortured shape…No comfort, no escape
>
> I see, but deep within is utter blindness…
>
> No beauty could move me
>
> No goodness improve me
>
> No power on earth, if I can't love her (Beauty and the Beast Musical)

In conjunction with the transformation of choice and individuality in society, the

common fairy tale of *Beauty and the Beast* has transformed its moral assertion from one

pertaining to acceptance within forced/arranged marriages to one of acceptance in all individuals.

The shift of focus from Beauty's goodness to Beast's heart truly captures the shift in the moral

lesson of today: the assertion of today's society is for all to find greatness within a person

regardless of looks and appearance.

Another traditional tale type that demonstrates the evolution of societal expectations is

the commonly told story of "Little Red Riding Hood". Going back to Brittany 1885, an ancient

narrative titled "The Story of Grandmother" is "widely seen by scholars to provide the rough

beginning to the Little Red Riding Hood tale type, as it is a literary version of a very old oral

variation of the story" (Tatar 3). This tale follows the story of an innocent yet witty young girl

and a seductively vicious wolf. The tale encompasses elements quite shocking to a modern day

reader, yet these vulgar details coincide with the oral tradition from which fairy tales began. This

specific story asserts a simple moral lesson: to be quick and thoughtful in the face of real danger

and deceit. The story focuses less on the details of the victim being female/child and more on the progression of choice. After being deceived into drinking the blood and eating the flesh of her grandmother, the young girl enters into the bed naked with the wolf. She makes comments on the wolf's appearance such as, "Oh, granny, how hairy you are!" and "What big shoulders you have!" (Tatar 11), ultimately discovering the wolf's true identity. She escapes by saying she 'needs to go' (to the bathroom) outside and attaching 'the rope to a plum tree in the yard' (Tatar 11). Her escape encourages all individuals to be weary of strangers and to think with wit in the face of uncertainty.

Since the time when this oral narrative was in circulation centuries ago, the tale has expanded and diversified, maintaining the primary elements yet rethinking the conclusion. Often, the ending of "Little Red Riding Hood" tale types interchanges between that of Charles Perrault's story "Little Red Riding Hood" and Brothers Grimm's "Little Red Cap". "Little Red Cap" specifically tells the story of a young girl that takes cake and wine to her grandmother only to meet a disguised wolf who eats both her and her grandmother. They are ultimately saved by the arrival of a passing huntsman. In this 'happily ever after' conclusion, a very pronounced moral claim is made in Little Red Cap's final thoughts:

> All three were overjoyed. The huntsman skinned the wolf and went home with the pelt. Grandmother ate the cake and drank the wine Little Red Cap had brought her and recovered her health. Little Red Cap thought to herself: "Never again will you stray from the path and go into the woods, when your mother has forbidden it" (Brothers Grimm)

This story scripted by Brothers Grimm encourages young children to follow orders and not break from the instruction of their parents. Specifically, it targets the perceived naivety of

young girls and instructs them to count only on parents and/or men. Both females in this story stand as victims and the male Huntsman holds the role of 'hero'. Such a moral lesson reflects the male-centered society in the time in which Brothers Grimm wrote "Little Red Cap". It asserts the idea that females need saving by the male-centered hero.

Similarly, "Little Red Riding Hood" written by Charles Perrault also morally asserts that females should stay weary of being taken advantage of. In the conclusion of Perrault's tale, both Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother remain unsaved and eaten by the deceitful wolf. The tale concludes with a straightforward moral written as follows:

> From this story one learns that children,
>
> Especially young girls,
>
> Pretty, well-bred, and genteel,
>
> Are wrong to listen to just anyone,
>
> And it's not at all strange,
>
> If a wolf ends up eating them.
>
> I say a wolf, but not all wolves
>
> Are exactly the same.
>
> Some are perfectly charming,
>
> Not loud, brutal, or angry,
>
> But tame, pleasant, and gentle,
>
> Following young ladies
>
> Right into their homes, into their chambers,
>
> But watch out if you haven't learned that tame wolves
>
> Are the most dangerous of all (Tatar 13).

This section at the end of Perrault's tale is titled 'Moral' and addresses that females are often taken advantage of by 'wolves'…a euphemism for men. Quite profoundly, the moral maintains that 'tame wolves are the most dangerous of all'…an idea upheld in the casting choices of the original Broadway production of *Into The Woods* in 1987 written by James Lapine with music/lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. In this musical, characters of multiple fairy tales connect and their stories integrate together. One such traditional tale is that of "Little Red Riding Hood". In the show, Little Red falls victim to the Wolf's seduction. His notable songs says, "Grandmother first, then Miss Plump…what a delectable couple: utter perfection, one brittle, one supple" ("Hello Little Girl"). His words echo his desire to seduce and eat the young girl, often with many sexual undertones as seen in Little Red's song "I Know Things Now" (i.e. "where lie secrets that I never want to know"). The truly notable choice in production for this fairy-tale montage is to have the Wolf and Prince Charming (a character pulled from the notable tale of "Cinderella") played by the same actor. In the original cast, Robert Westenberg took on the dual role. Such a casting choice reflects on Perrault's assertion that wolves (or deceitful men) can come across as 'loud, brutal, or angry' while others may seem 'perfectly charming'. In the end of *Into the Woods*, Prince Charming shows his true intentions as well, which align with the ill nature of Wolf. He deceives his wife, Cinderella, and kisses the Baker's wife. When Cinderella asks if she is his only love, he replies, "I was raised to be charming, not sincere" (*Into the Woods,* Act II).

Despite the negative stereotype placed upon men as aggressors, both Perrault and Brothers Grimm versions of this specific fairy tale place the female at fault. Though the Wolf is seen as the villain, it is Little Red that should have been weary of her choices and the female audience that should hear the warning the moral maintains. This tale's moral assertion establishes women as everlasting victims at the hands of men. Simultaneously, Little Red Riding

Hood is seen as victim and perpetrator, a confusing and inappropriate description. Such an avowal is relevant in today's society in the realm of sexual assault, rape, and victim blaming. In modern American audiences, the moral interpretations from the Little Red Riding Hood tale type have transformed in a way that warns audiences against victim blaming in sexual assault cases. Victim blaming is known as the act of placing blame on a victim for the harm that befell them. Often, individuals who have been raped or sexually assaulted undergo harsh victim blaming in both legal proceedings and peer interactions. Typical insinuations (especially for female victims) include that victims deserved what happened due to the way they were dressed, how much they were drinking, and the places they chose to visit. This thought can be seen in modern interpretations of the Little Red Riding Hood tale type, as it is the young girl who is scolded for not listening to her mother's instruction. Especially in Perrault's moral assertion, it can be interpreted that 'pretty, well-bred' young girls must obey instruction and be cautious of others or the consequence for their action will be their demise.

This moral assertion arises as a controversial interpretation of the traditional tale; however, other versions of "Little Red Riding Hood" exist in which the female is given more control over her own fate. For example, Roald Dahl wrote "Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf" in 1982, and in his interpretation of the tale, Little Red ends the story by shooting the Wolf with a pistol and making from his body a wolf-skin coat (Dahl). Certain modern adaptations that give Little Red Riding Hood more power over the wolf and describe her as less naïve assert a more feminist message in order to reflect the actualizations of modern society.

Ultimately, these traditional fairy tales of "Beauty and the Beast" and "Little Red Riding Hood" have resurfaced in a variety of different cultures and centuries. Their consistent revival demonstrates the exceptional ability of fairy tales to adapt to the moral assertions and

expectations of the time. In a unique way, these traditional tales have changed plots and details to evolve their lessons; however, often times their stories have remained quite nearly the same while just the interpretations have adapted. By just taking a look into these two traditional tale types, individuals can see the massive impact of fairy tales. In addition to resurfacing and reinventing themselves, these tales have found a way to span from oral narrative, to written poems, to film, and even to Broadway musicals. Traditional fairy-tale tropes create the strong basis for the entirety of the fairy-tale genre. Their dynamic nature and evolving moral interpretations allow the field to transform and include a variety of modern day works that otherwise may not initially appear as fairy tales. All the while, the ominous and dark nature in which the stories are told reaches out to the reader's inner disturbances. Even when the tales have a 'happy' ending, their characters fates leave an unnerving feel within the audience that mirrors humanity's struggle with an intrigue for darkness.

Evolving to Include Modern Stories: Harry Potter and Horror Film Assertions of Virtue

Due to the dynamic and ever changing nature of the fairy-tale genre, fairy tales have been able to develop to include more than just the traditional tropes. While audience members intuitively associate the term 'fairy tale' with stories like "Beauty and the Beast" and "Little Red Riding Hood", the evolution of these traditional moral assertions allows the category to expand to any and all tropes that incorporate a moral lesson and an element of the fantastical while feeding on the disturbing intrigues of the audience.

Within the traditional tales previously mentioned, the first element of the fairy-tale genre, evolving moral assertions, has been discussed. Both of these traditional tropes also include an element of accepted fantasy. For example, the plot of *Beauty and the Beast* would not progress

without the audience accepting the appearance and characterization of the Beast as normal within the confines of the tale. Beast, though human in nature, has the physical appearance described as 'dreadful', 'hideous', and 'a monster' (Tatar 35). Even the conclusion demands the reader to accept the magic of the fairy as plausible. In addition, "Little Red Riding Hood" requires the same acceptance of the fantastical in multiple ways. Firstly, the reader must accept the Wolf's human qualities (similar to the Beast). The reader must also accept the variety of ways in which the story concludes: the wolf eating both the grandmother and the young girl whole, the Huntsman being able to retrieve the two women alive, and the wolf living even with stones in his stomach. Each of these scenarios drives the plot with an amount of magic and impracticality, sufficing the second element of the fairy-tale genre.

With these two elements in mind, the genre captures modern day stories as a new type of fairy tale. For instance, a variety of 20th century horror films have the characteristics fitting to the fairy-tale genre: they accept fantasy as fact and they assert a societal expectation upon the audience. One film in particular stands at the forefront of horror trope. *Halloween,* a 1978 thriller directed and written by John Carpenter and starring Jamie Lee Curtis, perfectly aligns as a modern day fairy-tale trope.

In a variety of ways, *Halloween* demands viewers to accept impractical and near magical happenings as possible in order for the plot to progress successfully. For example, in many instances in the film, Michael Myers, the film's ominous and masked villain, escapes death in haunting and unnatural ways. One specific scene, nearing the end of the film, portrays this. At 1:10:40 of the film, the movie's heroine (Laurie) stabs Michael in the throat with a knitting needle, causing him to collapse on the floor seemingly hurt beyond repair. At 1:12:35 of the film, Laurie pronounces to the two young charges she is babysitting, "I killed him." Immediately upon

announcing this, the villain returns once more, appearing behind her unhurt and determined. He once again attacks her as she hides in the closet. His strength is enough that he is able to punch through the closet doors to reach her.

Even more compelling is Laurie's final attack of the film that occurs immediately after this suspenseful rising action. Laurie stabs Michael Myers in the chest with his own knife at 1:14:06, causing him to fall in defeat and become unresponsive in certain death. However, in true fantastical fashion, Michael Myers's body resurrects once more, rising confidently (*Halloween* 1:15:30) and attacking Laurie when she least expects it just moments later.

Michael Myers somehow survives both of these brutal wounds that would most certainly cause death or serious ailment in reality. However, villains in the horror film trope fit more accurately into the genre of fairy tales in their ability to survive in an unnatural way. Other elements of the film also require the audience to accept the unnatural turn of events: how no neighbors answer Laurie's desperate screams/knocks, how the phone happens to be dead so she cannot call for help, and how often Laurie is able to escape in just the right amount of time before being in the villain's clutches. In order for the film to achieve its purpose, viewers must accept these elements as reality, despite their eerie, fantastical, and unnatural nature.

The second aspect of the fairy-tale genre (a societal moral assertion) is also prominent in *Halloween* and its plot progression. In two different time frames of the film, the audience sees Michael Myers's distaste for babysitters who choose to ignore their responsibilities. The first instance of this is seen in the very beginning of the film. The introduction takes the audience into a scene in which a young, 6 year old Michael Myers is being watched on Halloween by his older teenage sister, who is distracted in the throws of intimacy with a boy. Michael travels through the otherwise empty house and obtains a kitchen knife and a mask. He enters into his sister's room

where she is nearly naked and stabs her. This introduction sets up the audience for the remainder of the film's plot in which Michael murders an assortment of teenagers on Halloween many years later.

An important note that supplements the moral assertion is the way in which the characters often meet their demise. Annie, Laurie's good friend who begins the film as Lindsey's babysitter, leaves her duties to Laurie in one key scene of the film. At 43:25, Annie gets a call from her boyfriend, Paul, in the midst of watching Lindsey. He says, "My parents are gone," to which Annie responds with an invite for him to come over while making a variety of sexual innuendos. Escaping her responsibilities, Annie drops Lindsey off with Laurie and makes the decision to meet instead with Paul. At 47:12, just moments after her decision to abandon her duties Annie is killed by Michael.

Yet another friend of Laurie's meets her demise while in the midst of what may be inferred as 'bad decision making'. Lynda and Bob sneak into the house at which Annie was babysitting in order to have sex while their parents and peers are gone for the night. Right after having sex, Lynda lights a cigarette and asks Bob to go get her a beer. In the throws of deceit, sex, and drunk decision making both Lynda and Bob are killed by Michael, Bob at 57:30 and Lynda at 59:35. Annie, Lynda, and Michael's sister each die while they are underdressed/naked…a symbol of their less than virtuous behavior in the eyes of society at this time.

There are three primary survivors in the film that help promote the moral avowal that individuals of society should be well behaved and virtuous. Laurie, the main heroine throughout the film, and the two children she is watching on the night of Michael's attacks, all survive and remain primarily unharmed until the conclusion of the film. The two children, Lindsey and

Tommy, survive to the end and rarely encounter any danger. This indicates and supports a

supplementary societal norm/ideal in which children are viewed as primarily innocent. Even

Michael Myers's character as a young child is seen as disturbed rather than evil…explaining why

he was sent to a hospital for killing his sister and the gap in the storyline, allowing him to age so

that his character can become more malicious in the hearts of audience members. His age at the

introduction automatically gives him a sense of innocence that must be superimposed in order for

him to become a true villain. The two young children Laurie babysits survive until the

conclusion of the film because they embody the morality and goodness that are being imparted

upon viewers as a quality.

In addition, Laurie is the only one amongst each of her friends that chooses to maintain

her responsibilities and not sneak away to do other things. She struggles with not having fun and

refers to herself as 'the girl scout who saves the day', but she never wavers in her choice to stay

with Tommy and Lindsey. Whereas each of her female friends dies while underdressed/naked in

the throws of what is perceived by viewers as teenage sin, Laurie remains the idealistic, honest,

and obedient character throughout the duration of the film. Her actions in being well behaved

and supportive mirror the positivity seen in Beauty's character from *Beauty in the Beast*. Beauty

is rewarded with romance and love; however, in the modern trope of horror, virtue is rewarded

with survival against all odds.

Another example of this moral assertion is in the dialogue of a character in the 1996

Horror film *Scream* written by Kevin Williamson and directed by Wes Craven. This specific film

once more follows many of the tropes ever-present in horror films. One notable speech perfectly

exemplifies the moral assertion element of horror films as fairy tales. Randy, a movie enthused

secondary character, speaks to a group of his peers at a party in the midst of watching

Halloween. He attempts to explain to the others 'the rules' of horror film survival when he says:

> You don't know the rules? There are certain rules that one must abide by in order
> to successfully survive a horror movie. For instance, number one, you can never
> have sex. Sex equals death. Number two…you can never drink or do drugs. It's
> the sin factor. It's an extension of number one (*Scream* 1:28:00).

Just as with fairy-tale characters, the characters in horror films must be exposed, sometimes

viciously, to a moral claim made by society. The disturbance within horror films matches the

disturbance of other traditional tales. It once again allows the audience to find within themselves

a dark draw to the messed up and horrific progression of events. Viewers find themselves

reveling in the disquieting way characters are taught to behave. Not only do they recognize the

moral assertion being made, they enjoy the way in which the tale plays out. Simultaneously,

audience members hope for disturbance and death while maintaining their expectation for

reconciliation and happiness: a pattern seen across fairy tales both traditional and novel.

Horror films often follow a similar pattern to that of traditional fairy tales. Just like

"Little Red Riding Hood" has been reinvented in numerous ways, so too has *Halloween* and

other notable horror films. With the consistent presence of remakes, sequels, and spin-offs in the

horror industry (like *Scream*), many different versions of these tale types surface, each unique

film asserting its own moral claim on the society it relates to and the individuals it captures.

Another notable modernized fairy tale that has spanned across countries and cultures is

the epic tale of *Harry Potter*. In obvious ways, this series meets the expectation of its genre to

make the implausible realistic. Harry Potter, a young boy, discovers on his 11th birthday that he

is a wizard in possession of magical abilities. Immediately upon this discovery, the reader must

accept and believe the world of magic that proceeds in order to truly understand and enjoy the characters, plot, and theme. Throughout the series, the audience experiences the mystical at the turn of nearly every page: elves, unicorns, hippogriffs, phoenixes, wood lore/wand making, spells, mysterious creatures, and so much more. With the exception of perhaps the time Harry spends with his 'muggle' (or non-magic) aunt, uncle, and cousin, the characters meet magic at every turn of every new adventure. The unrealistic is accepted as fact, and the story is able to progress to the second element of fairy telling: setting a moral standard/societal expectation.

In two prominent ways the *Harry Potter* series meets the second expectation of its genre. In its length, it makes a variety of supplementary assertions, yet two stand strongly ahead and can be found throughout the plot. With the use of characters, setting, themes, and dialogue, these two moral claims, the attainment of knowledge and love, can be distinguished.

The first is the advocating of education. In established modern societies, a shared principle is that of education and development of knowledge in individuals. Schooling has become an expectation in the youth of most developed countries, and often time, education is required in order to succeed in the professional world. In simplest terms, education and its structure has become an important aspect of governments worldwide. The epic makes a claim on behalf of this notion that education is vital through the ubiquitous setting of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The school itself takes on a persona throughout the series with its variety of eccentricities and unique abilities: for instance, its architecture seems to have a mind all its own:

> There were a hundred and forty-two staircases at Hogwarts: wide, sweeping ones; narrow, rickety ones; some that led somewhere different on a Friday; some with a vanishing step halfway up that you had to remember to jump. Then there were

doors that wouldn't open unless you asked politely, or tickled them in exactly the

right place, and doors that weren't really doors at all, but solid walls just

pretending. It was also very hard to remember where anything was, because it all

seemed to move around a lot. The people in the portraits kept going to visit each

other, and Harry was sure the coats of armor could walk (*Sorcerer's Stone* 131-

132).

By giving such quirky descriptions to the halls, stairs, and decorations of Hogwarts, the reader

immediately associates the school with human like qualities. In this short description, Hogwarts

is personified and given a heightened sense of importance usually reserved for living characters;

however, if Hogwarts is capable of 'pretending', 'moving', and giving life to its portraits and

statues, then it also stands that the school itself is capable of thought and emotion. This humanity

embedded in the Hogwarts castle becomes extremely important throughout the series. Harry

considers the school his home and sanctuary and establishes a connection with Hogwarts as if it

were alive. The character Albus Dumbledore, Headmaster of Hogwarts, also gives life to the

institute when he comments on the many secrets hidden within the walls and says, "Only this

morning for instance, I took a wrong turn on the way to the bathroom and found myself in a

beautifully proportioned room I have never seen before…When I went back to investigate more

closely, I discovered that the room had vanished" (*Goblet of Fire* 417). Ultimately, the school

itself becomes a character…heightening the importance of Hogwarts and making it more than

just a setting.

Once again, at the conclusion of the series in *The Deathly Hallows*, the importance of

Hogwarts as a home is captured in the final chapters by a multitude of characters. The final battle

in the epic against Harry Potter and Voldemort, the constant villain, takes place at the school.

This setting choice once more enhances the institute's importance in all aspects of the characters' lives. Not only is Hogwarts their home and their center for attending classes but it expands their learning past just books. The students learn from Hogwarts in a variety of sentiments, enhancing their education in immeasurable ways and in life experiences. Professor McGonagall, the school's Headmistress and Transfiguration teacher, speaks to the walls of Hogwarts in a moment of preparation for war, and her words echo the protective sentiments of all when she says, "Hogwarts is threatened. Man the boundaries, protect us, do your duty to our school!" (*Deathly Hallows* 602). Each individual finds solace in the building because they find comfort in its purpose. Harry particularly connects with Hogwarts, and he expresses these sentimentalities as he goes toward what he imagines will be his death and says: "He wanted to be stopped, to be dragged back, to be sent home…But he was home. Hogwarts was the first and best home he had known. He and Voldemort and Snape, the abandoned boys, had all found home here" (*Deathly Hallows* 697).

Hogwarts becomes a representation of the importance of education in individuals within a society. Harry and Voldemort both consider Hogwarts their foundation and their home, asserting the notion that all things come back to the importance of education: whether that education is attained from a classroom lecture, a textbook, or a unique life experience. The series and its characters demonstrate the continual importance of education and encourage readers to recognize the magic and everlasting importance in knowledge.

A second moral assertion, and the prominent lesson of the series is the notion that the most powerful magic is love. In so many ways, the relationships in the series exhibit love: familial love, true friendship, and even romantic love. The moral assertion is that despite the cruelties and evil in the world, goodness and love overcome even the toughest of adversaries. To

begin, there is the relationship between Harry Potter and his deceased parents, James and Lily

Potter. Prior to the story's beginning, James and Lily were killed by Voldemort in the first war of

the magical world. In an effort to save Harry's life when he was only a child, Lily sacrificed

herself and gave him the protection of love. In Albus Dumbledore's words to Harry at the

conclusion of the first novel, *The Sorcerer's Stone*, he is able to explain the basis of Harry's

ability to escape the danger of Voldemort and his evil companions:

> Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand,
>
> it is love. HE didn't realize that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves
>
> its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign…to have been loved so deeply, even
>
> though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever…It
>
> was agony to touch a person marked by something so good (*Sorcerer's Stone*
>
> 299).

The familial love that Harry's mother gave to him gives him protection from the villain

throughout the entire series. Her love runs in his blood as an unbreakable and universal form of

magic that even the most learned of the dark arts, Voldemort, can not find a way to master it,

control it, or beat it. Its power in the series against the darkest evil imparts its importance in the

hearts of readers.

In addition to the familial love that gives Harry protection, he also experiences love in the

manner of true friendship. His relationship with his two best friends, Ron and Hermione,

develops throughout the series and gives Harry the courage he needs to approach any given

challenge. Their support and encouragement continuously give him the ability to overcome his

fears and achieve his successes. Hermione comments on the importance of friendship in the first

novel when she says, "Books! And cleverness! There are more important things – friendship and

bravery!" (*Sorcerer's Stone* 287). As their friendship grows, Harry's appreciation for his two

closest allies also swells. Additionally, in times when Harry must muster thoughts of happiness

to perform a Patronus Charm, he recalls memories with Ron and Hermione. The love between

the three of them is best expressed when they have a conversation at the conclusion of the 6th

installment:

> "We'll be there, Harry," said Ron. "We'll go with wherever you're going."
>
> "No—" said Harry quickly; he had not counted on this, he had meant them to
>
> understand that he was undertaking this most dangerous journey alone.
>
> "You said to us once before," said Hermione quietly, "that there was time to turn
>
> back if we wanted to. We've had time, haven't we?"
>
> "We're with you whatever happens," said Ron. (*Half Blood Prince* 651)

Upon agreeing to follow Harry into the darkest of adventures, Ron and Hermione prove their

loyalty, the extent of their love for him, and for each other. Their love fuels him through the final

adventure and their relationship offers him protection by means of support and faith.

The last element of love that occurs in the series is romantic love. The love that Severus

Snape, the mysterious Potions Professor that outwardly dislikes Harry, has for Lily Potter

(Harry's mother) is the final push that allows good to conquer evil. A dynamic character that

does not show his true self until the very end, Snape claims his title as true hero in his final

confessions to Harry. Though Snape's love for Lily was forever unrequited, he spared his own

life for years to protect her and to protect her son…Harry:

> "Severus Snape wasn't yours," said Harry. "Snape was Dumbledore's,
>
> Dumbledore's from the moment you started hunting down my mother. And you
>
> never realized it, because of the thing you can't understand. You never saw Snape

cast a Patronus, did you?...(It) was a doe. The same as my mother's, because he

loved her for nearly all of his life, from the time when they were children"

(*Deathly Hallows* 740).

Snape's resilient love for Lily expresses yet another type of love that helps Harry defeat

Voldemort. Snape begs for Lily's life to be spared, yet loses her despite his pleas. In turn, he

does all he can to ensure Harry's survival and fulfill the last wishes of his truest and deepest

love.

In the conclusion of the series, the moral assertion that love is the strongest form of

magic becomes apparent in three prominent ways: the familial love between Harry and his

mother, the love of friends between Harry, Ron, and Hermione, and the undying love between

Snape and Lily. Each of these elements aids in the lesson that love, in any form, conquers even

the deepest evils, encouraging individuals to express and cherish the magic associated with

loving others.

Both moral claims implore readers to achieve these attributes; however, the characters

must again be exposed to sincere suffering and truly horrific scenarios in the progression of

achieving/understanding knowledge and love. Readers relate to the self-deprecating way in

which the lessons are presented: the audience finds in themselves the battle between good and

evil and the draw toward darkness.

Conclusion:

Throughout time, centuries, culture, and transitioning societies, the presence of fairy tales

has been a constant in a variety of different mediums. Fairy-tale types have been expressed in

oral narratives, poems, short stories, novels, music, film, and theater. The typical tropes have

integrated themselves into many academic and casual conversations, finding a way to become a part of immeasurable entities and incorporating into so many different facets of ancient and modern society. Their presence is boundless, and the genre continually evolves surpassing definition.

The ever-presence of fairy tales allows the genre to be inclusive and integrate a variety of different stories. The two elements all stories in the genre share, however, are (1) the acceptance of the fantastical as plausible and (2) the ability to assert a moral lesson on individuals of societies. These two components of stories claimed within the fairy-tale genre allow so many different tales to share a mystical foundation: from the 2nd Century AD, to today…an assortment of characters, settings, and plots have entered into the realm of fairy tale.

Traditional tales like "Beauty and the Beast" and "Little Red Riding Hood" remain in the minds and hearts of many children and adults. Their stories expand across time and culture through continuous revisions to the tales or reevaluations of the central messaging and morals. Their shared details allow them to create overarching 'tale types' that incorporate many stories into a single name (i.e. "Little Red Riding Hood", "Little Red Cap", and "The Story of Grandmother"). These tale types incorporate a variety of unique stories.

Traditional tales, however, are not the only stories individuals can include in the fairy-tale domain. In modern society, the types of fairy tales being created and renewed range from renovated traditional tale types, to modern epics like *Harry Potter*, and even films in the Horror genre. Many horror films follow the same mold as one another, similar to the traditional tales ability to follow 'tale types'. Films like *Scream* and *Halloween* have many shared elements, grouping them into a similar threshold. These numerous and unique horror films, however, easily fulfill the two prominent characteristics of the fairy-tale genre. Consistently, their villains escape

death in mystical manners and audience members must accept the eccentricities as reality for the plot to progress appropriately. Horror films also assert moral standards to individuals in society: for instance, it is quite often that the 'innocent' survive the entirety of the film.

The *Harry Potter* series also stands as an example of a modern day fairy tale. It enters the reader into a world in which magic and impossible things are true. This particular series also asserts two valuable moral lessons to its readers: the importance of knowledge/education and the insurmountable power of love.

Ultimately, the genre of fairy-tale expands to include so many memorable stories and so many beloved characters. Fairy tales across time have had the unique ability to teach their listeners about life, expectation, and the importance of various virtues that pertain to the time and society in which they are told. The stories find a way to draw innate urges, darkness, and messed-up perceptions from the readers in a compelling way that demonstrates the hidden and sometimes disturbing feelings within all. Fairy tales break the boundaries of age, culture, and time. The everlasting power of the genre explains its exceptional ability to enter into the hearts of all.

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