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The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not magical creatures have a function or value within fairy tales. Specifically, do the magical creatures have a purpose within the tale or are they simply included for the magical wonder? A random sampling of ten fairy tales was used in this study. By using content analysis, characters physical and personality descriptions was compared to their role within the story as it concerned the protagonist and other relevant characters. Findings showed that the creatures do indeed have a function within the story, particularly as helpful or harmful agents who cause the characters to go through a period of magical transformation.

Headings:

Fairy Tales

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Magical thinking in children

A CONTENT ANALYSIS ON THE FUNCTION OF MAGICAL CREATURES IN
FAIRY TALES

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Introduction

Once thought of as an adult form of literature, fairy tales have since evolved into being one of the most cherished aspects of childhood. Offering an escape into the far off worlds of princes, witches, mermaids, and wicked stepmothers, fairy tales offer the comforting knowledge that good will nearly always triumph over evil. Children, as well as adults, continue to return to their favorite fairy tale over and over again. Images of fairy tales come to our mind, no matter how old we are. Cinderella's glass slipper and Jack's giant beanstalk all trigger a trip down memory lane.

Originally derived from the French term *conte de fées*, fairy tales are stories that are characterized by fantasy and magic (Ashliman 2004). They often involve princes and princesses and tend to have some form of a happy ending. Yet, above all else, it is the magical creatures—elves, gnomes, goblins, and trolls—that I believe, truly allow the fairy tale to make a lasting impression on the mind of the reader. Often these characters are juxtaposed against the human main character as a helper or a villain. The interest in the significance of the magical creature within fairy tales is the focus of my paper.

Problem

Despite the long tradition and popularity of fairy tales, very little scholarly work has been conducted on the function of magical creatures within them. Even the smallest child recognizes the trolls, thumblings, and giants as unusual beings. We embrace them as magical because they do not exist in our reality yet we allow them to easily exist in our minds. Understanding the function of these creatures is important. Why do they exist? In

all points, the majority of these characters are *extra* ordinary creatures. The dwarves are extremely small men while the giant is extremely large. The unicorn is a magical horse, while the golden goose is a goose that happens to lay a very expensive egg. These creatures are included in the story for a reason and this paper attempts to determine what that function happens to be.

For the purpose of this study, magical creatures are defined as animals or beings that do not naturally exist in reality. Aside from the unusual physical characteristics, the creatures must also possess some form of magical or supernatural power that allows them to become extraordinary.

Research Question

What is the function of magical creatures in fairy tales? What is the purpose for using extremes to describe these characters? Do the magical creatures offer something more to the story?

Review of the Literature

A limited amount of research concerning the function of magic in literature currently exists; therefore, this examination attempts to focus on the significance of magic, fantasy literature, and ultimately, the importance of fairy tales. Just as fairy tales have existed for years, magic has also been a significant factor in culture. This review is an attempt to glean an understanding of why magic is so appealing in literature. Why has it existed for so long? Why do we continue to be drawn to it? And, as seen in this study later, what do the extraordinary magical creatures offer to the fairy tales? How do they add to, mystify, or detract, if at all, from the story? Is there a role or function?

For centuries, long before the written word, magical thinking has been apart of cultures worldwide. It is believed that magic is extremely common across cultures, in both traditional and modern societies as well as among all levels of education (Rosengren, Johnson, & Harris 2000). Whether magical thinking acted as a form of religion in cultures or, rather, just as forms of mystical entertainment, scholars (Rosengren et. al. 2000) recognize that the magical thought process is universal in adults. However, as Karl Rosengren (2000) points out, the specific attitude or the degree of the belief is ultimately determined by the culture in which one lives. This can possibly be seen today through the acceptance and avoidance of magical literature like fairy tales.

Since scholars do accept the universality of magical thinking, they realize that there must be some reason as to why magic is so attractive and appealing. Rosengren (2000) attempts to explain this with his definition of what magic does to the believer. He

claims that it “involves a blurring of the unusual, mundane boundary between internal/self and external/world...” This definition is particularly applicable when looking at literature. Stories are known to offer the reader a variety of different worlds, therefore, providing a wonderful outlet for magic.

Fantasy literature has been, and continues to be, a popular genre among children and adults alike. One aspect important to fantasy literature is that it begins with entertaining the impossible (Morse 1984). However, this idea of the impossible or the fantastic differs amongst individuals for everyone’s perception of what is real and fantastic varies based on culture. For example, Donald Morse (1984) points out that “in rural Ireland the ‘little people’ are real, whereas to someone reading about them in New York, they seem fantastic, or at most, a literary invention,” (1). Thus, this blurring between real and impossible continues to be fundamental to the fantasy. It should be noted that fantasy, as a genre, constantly looks backwards for inspiration. Considering the great body of materials within folk and fairy tales, myth, legends and fables, much of modern fantasy derives itself from the old and traditional (Ruddick 1990). Morse (1989) reconfirms this for he believes that “the recurrent fairy godmother, the magic wish, the evil stepmother, goblins or witches—old threats from older forests,” (10). Ultimately, we can see that fairy tales, and the fantastical and magical aspects within them are important to understand.

D.L. Ashliman (2004) perhaps explains the role of fairy tales best by explaining that “these are stories that admit to being fictitious; they are products of fantasy, make-believe stories that create new worlds thus providing an outlet for our frustrations and fears and a platform for our hopes and dreams,” (1). Similarly, Jack Zipes (1987) follows

this view for he believes that fairy tales were created out of necessity due to our innate struggles and fears. He says that we need to “humanize bestial and barbaric forces, which have terrorized our minds and communities in concrete ways, threatening to destroy free will and human compassion. The fairy tale sets out to conquer this concrete terror through metaphors,” (1).

As any child knows, fairy tales are often filled with witches, dwarfs, goblins, and giants. Ashliman (2004) believes that many of these supernatural beings (he does not specify which ones) are “likely derived from ancient polytheistic religions where individual deities were neither inherently good nor evil, and often capricious in their dealings with humans,” (15). Whether this is true or not, we can see that fairy tales hold more than just an entertaining story.

The significance of fairy tales lies in what they tell the reader. While they may have been used to transmit cultural fancy, they later became endowed with moral and didactic teaching. It is well known, for example, that the brothers Grimm, ostensibly two of the most famous collectors of fairy tales, filled their tales with Christian morality and work ethic, (Zipes, 1987). Yet, despite the occasional lesson, fairy tales are still filled with wonder. Bruno Bettelheim (1977) explains that one of the intriguing aspects of the structure of fairy tales is that many of the tales are simply suggestive in nature. The tales are filled with metaphorical characters doing things that typically don't occur in reality. However, the events and messages within the tale often do imply solutions to everyday problems. Bettelheim (1977) furthers his explanation by stating that “fairy tales leave to the child's fantasizing whether and how to apply to himself what the story reveals about life and human nature,” (145). Knowing the possible ways in which fairy tales have

influenced listeners and readers may provide a better understanding of the purpose of the magic within.

Despite the fact that many scholars believe magical thinking is an innate belief, many still shy away from literature that expels such fantastic characters and ideas. While the fantasy genre is growing, many parents and teachers fear that exposure to fairy tales will cause children to become carried away by their fantasies as well as cause them to believe in magic. Yet, Bettelheim (1977) claims that it is foolish to prevent children from reading fairy tales for “every child believes in magic...” (118)

Methodology

This study is a content analysis of fairy tales in order to determine what, if any, the functions are of magical creatures within the tale. According to Babbie (2004), content analysis “is the study of recorded human communications,” (312). Although this study is primarily a latent content analysis, some manifest content analysis will be used. “Manifest content is the visible, surface content—of a communication...latent content of the communication is its underlying meaning,” (Babbie, 312). Ole Holsti (1969) explains that manifest content analysis examines only the surface meaning of the text, while latent content analysis allows the researcher to read between the lines of the text (12).

This study examines fairy tales that contain at least one character that is magical in appearance as well as possesses supernatural abilities. It will examine the physical descriptions of these characters and their role in the story in order to determine if there is a value to their extraordinary being.

Procedure

In order to limit the number of fairy tales included in this study, I first developed a set of criteria based on my definition of magical creatures. Each tale had to include at least one creature that was magical in appearance and ability. I then collected a list of fairy tales from the *Storyteller's Sourcebook* (MacDonald & Sturm 2001), and two different compilations of *Classic Fairy Tales* (Opie 1974; Tatar 1999). A random sampling was done in order to ensure a fair representation of the fairy tales in existence. No attention was paid to authors because the focus of this study was on the stories rather

than writing style. When possible, further research and comparison was given to the tales. This was done in order to compare translations, cultural interpretations, and adaptations. If differences were discovered a note was made for possible further research. The fairy tales chosen are the following:

Andersen, H. C. The Little Mermaid.

Grimm, J. & Grimm, W. The Elves and the Shoemaker.

Grimm, J. & Grimm, W. Hansel and Gretel.

Grimm, J. & Grimm, W. Rapunzel.

Galdone, P. Rumpelstiltskin

Grimm, J. & Grimm, W. Snow White and Rose Red.

Perrault, C. (1965). Cinderella.

Perrault, C. (1965). Sleeping Beauty.

Perrault, C. (1965). Toads and Diamonds.

Perrault, C. (1965). Beauty and the Beast.

While reading each tale, I made note of the author, title, as well as any known variants. I then recorded any descriptions of the characters' physical being and personality. Finally, I documented the role the character played within the story, if there was one.

Results

When I originally began thinking about this study, I expected to find that magical creatures would ultimately be the device that would connect the real and imaginary worlds together. I shared this view with Maria Nikolajeva (1988) who, in her doctoral dissertation abstract, stated that fantasy is “where two worlds, a real one and magic one, are described, and where the magical elements are used as literary devices to connect the two worlds.” While this may be true for some stories, none of the twelve tales analyzed below exhibited this characteristic. I believe the difference lies in distinguishing between magical objects and creatures. The magical creatures simply exist side by side with what we would call “normal” characters. Neither set tends to be surprised by the existence of the other nor by the possibility of supernatural powers. Of the fairy tales studied for this paper, the magical creatures all fell into one (or more) of three functions: the helper, the troublemaker, and the transformer. The characteristics of these categories will be explained in more detail further in the paper.

Troublemaker

Nearly every plot in literature has to have an antagonist, that person or creature that makes the life of the hero/heroine difficult. Many times in fairy tales it is the magical creature that fulfills this role. It is important to remember that fairies or dwarves that were good and helpful in other tales can easily cross over to the harmful sides (Bettelheim, 1977). Within the tale of Sleeping Beauty there exist both good and evil fairies. The good fairies, upon the invitation of the christening of the King’s daughter,

sought to give the child pleasant gifts of virtue and love; however, there was one fairy who was angry.

The old fairy though she was treated with contempt, and muttered some threats between her teeth...It was now the turn of the old fairy, and she said, while her head shook with malice than with age, that the Princess should pierce her hand with a spindle and die of the wound, (Perrault, 4).

While one of the good fairies was able to lessen the threat,

It is true; I have not sufficient power to undo entirely what my elder has done. The Princess will pierce her hand with a spindle; but instead of dying, she will only fall into a deep sleep, which shall last a hundred years, at the end of which time a king's son shall come and awake her (Perrault, 4).

Ultimately, it is the wicked fairy that creates the story. She sets into motion the long sleep, the rescuing prince, and the happy ever after ending (Travers, 1975). Similarly, in *Snow White and Rose Red*, the reader discovers at the end that their beloved friend, the bear, is actually the “king’s son...the wicked dwarf bewitched me, stole my treasures, and made me wander about in this forest in the form of a bear. Only his death could set me free,” (Grimm, 39). Without the dwarf’s curse the girls would never have come across the bear, nor would they have married him and his brother. Not only does the “wicked dwarf” exhibit his mean spirited ways when he calls the girls names like “stupid inquisitive goose!” “crazy blockheads,” and “rude wretches,” he also refused to recognize their help when they repeatedly save his life. However, it is then we discover that, as part of the curse, the girls must rescue the dwarf three times in order for the bear to gain power over it and thus become disenchanting. Therefore, the evil fairy in *Sleeping Beauty*

and the wicked dwarf in Snow White and Rose Red, along with many other characters in tales not mentioned here, act as the catalyst that drives the plot of the story.

On a different note, in Hansel and Gretel we see the evil witch who lures the starving children to her by creating a house “made of bread and roofed with cakes, while the window was made of transparent sugar,” (Grimm, 9). The reader discovers that “when anyone came into her power she killed, cooked, and ate him and held a regular feast-day for the occasion,” (Grimm, 11). Upon discovering that the witch intended to eat Hansel, the children are forced to develop initiative in order to create a plan for their own survival. Also, the witch’s evil intentions provided Gretel with the opportunity to separate from her brother. Previously, Hansel was the one who took control of their desperate situation but when the witch forces him into captivity, Gretel is the one who comes up with the plan and, ultimately, “Gretel gave her [the witch] a shove that sent her right in [the oven], shut the iron door, and drew the bolt,” (Grimm, 20). We see this independence at the end when it’s time for Hansel and Gretel to travel across the lake. “The duck swam toward them, and Hansel got on her back and bade his little sister sit beside him. ‘No,’ answered Gretel, ‘she shall carry us across separately,’” (Grimm, 30). We can see then that the antagonizing magical creatures spur the story on while also allowing the characters to grow emotionally in independence or in love.

Much like we will see with Rumpelstiltskin and the sorceress in the Little Mermaid, the witch in Rapunzel is brought into the story out of circumstance. She does not intentionally seek to do harm, at least that we know of, but because of the selfish actions of the man and woman, she seeks revenge. “‘How dare you,’ she said, with a wrathful glance. ‘Climb into my garden and steal my rampion like a common thief? You

shall suffer for your foolhardiness,’” (Grimm, 5) However, upon hearing of the circumstance for why the man steals, the witch eases her anger. Unlike Rumpelstiltskin, who asks for the girl’s first daughter as payment for his helpful deeds, the witch asks for the child that will soon be born as a punishment. It should be mentioned that the brothers Grimm had originally used the word “fairy” and then “enchantress” to describe the character of the witch (Tatar 2002). Some believe that this implies that the witch grew the garden in order to entice the pregnant lady, much like the witch does in Hansel and Gretel. Many of the English translations use witch as a descriptor, though, perhaps because the belief in witches existed in nearly every culture at the time (Leach 1949).

Helpers

Just as there are a variety of evil troublemakers in the fairy tale world, and there are definitely more than the three mentioned previously, there are also those characters that exist solely to lend a helping hand. Sometimes this creature is an old friend or companion, while other times this creature appears out of thin air to offer their magical services. Max Luthi (1970) explains that in order for a magical creature to offer its helpful services, the protagonist typically accomplishes some type of correct or moral behavior. This action also tends to be a subconscious behavior for the protagonist is naturally acting in accordance to his personality.

Perhaps one of the most popular, and oldest, fairy tales, Cinderella certainly contains a helpful magical creature. At the point of complete despair for Cinderella, the fairy godmother appears in order to provide the girl with the material possessions necessary to carry out her dream, as well as the emotional support of hope and love. After

the godmother created a coach with footmen and a driver from a pumpkin, mice and a rat, she then turned to Cinderella.

Her godmother touched her lightly with her wand, and in the same instant her dress was changed into one of gold and silver covered with precious stones. She then gave her a pair of glass slippers, the prettiest in the world, (Perrault, 50).

It should be mentioned, however, that the fairy godmother is a relatively recent inclusion with the story. In past versions, it was often a white bird or a friendly animal that would act as Cinderella's magical helper, perhaps as the spirit or reincarnation of her deceased mother (Opie, 1974). Much of what we are now familiar with concerning the story, such as the fairy godmother, the glass slippers, and the pumpkin coach, were actually the creation of Charles Perrault (Bettelheim 1977).

However, for the purpose of this study, I focused on the familiar fairy godmother. In general, when fairy godmothers are introduced in a story, they nearly always act as supernatural benefactors. Historically it is believed that the godmother character is derived from the common Three Fates character. Nevertheless, the difference between them is that while godmothers are benevolent, the fairies can be evil or helpful, just as we saw previously with *Sleeping Beauty* (Tatar 2002). Ultimately, the fairy godmother provides Cinderella with the necessary objects so that she can attend the ball and meet the prince. Without this help, Cinderella would undoubtedly been unable to move past her destitute situation.

Along the same lines, the story entitled *Toads and Diamonds*, sometimes called the *Fairies*, also consists of a magical benefactor that provides an unlucky girl an outlet to escape her unpleasant situation. The magical creature in this story is introduced when the

“good” girl stumbles upon an old woman while fetching water. After completing a variety of kind acts, the woman thanks the child by bestowing a gift on her.

“You are so beautiful, so good and so kind, that I cannot refrain from conferring a gift upon you,” For she was really a fairy, who had taken the form of a poor village woman in order to see how far the girl’s kindness would go. “This gift I make you,” continued the Fairy, “that with at every word you speak, a flower or precious stone will fall from your mouth,” (Perrault, 41).

Ironically, when her evil sister attempts to receive the same gift she is granted the curse of having snakes, toads, and other vile creatures come out of her mouth. This tale happens to be extremely popular, for there are nearly a thousand variants among more than twenty countries that deal with the theme of the “kind and unkind” girl, (Opie, 1974). Other versions of the story describe a three headed ogre that tests the girls by asking them to scratch their head and perform other menial tasks. As a reward, or punishment, the ogre bestows the girls with the aforementioned gifts in return (Bender 1995). By providing the kind girl with the gift of speaking jewels, the girl is then given the opportunity to escape her wretched lifestyle. Ultimately, she stumbles upon the prince and after telling him the whole story, he “fell in love with her...he carried her off his father’s palace, and there married her,” (Perrault, 44). Without the help of the magical creature, the kind girl, like Cinderella, would be destined to stay in pitiful situations.

Yet another helpful creature exists in the tale of the Elves and the Shoemaker. Like Cinderella and the kind girl in Diamonds and Toads, the shoemaker and his wife had reached desperate times and only dreamed of rising beyond their pitiful situation. The

story begins with the explanation that “no matter how many shoes he made, he could not earn enough money for him and his wife to live upon. Finally, the day came when all that he had left in his workshop was one small piece of leather,” (Grimm, 1). Just as the shoemaker was about to give up, he miraculously found a pair of shoes that “had not one false stitch in the whole job; they were the most exquisite pair of shoes he had ever seen,” (Grimm, 6). At that point on, the shoemaker slowly began to sell shoes at a profit, allowing him to regain control over his business and status in life. After some time, the shoemaker and his wife sought to find who was lending them such a helping hand. Much to their surprise they discover that it was “two pretty little naked men” who came in during the night and stitched, sewed, and hammered the shoes together. The elves were responsible for providing helpful assistance to the couple at their darkest moment. Without them, the shoemaker surely would have lost his business and livelihood.

Transformative Figure

Considering that nearly every story contains a helping figure and/or a troublemaker, magical or not, these functions are not altogether surprising. Certainly, though, the magical element increases the wonder, mystique, and consequence. Just as the magic makes the creatures extraordinary, it makes the story a bit more astonishing and memorable. However, the third function that I have found these magical creatures to fill is that of the transformative figure. In this paper, I am referring to transformation in that the magical creature itself transforms into another being or it has the capability to transform someone else. Jack Zipes (1987) explains that one of the elements of fairy tales is that the protagonist is often given the opportunity to change themselves as well as their destinies. It is this ability that allows fairy tales to continue subscribing to the

Utopian ideal of a happily ever after. Zipes (1987) furthers this by saying that fairy tales subscribe to the notion “of the transformation of humans, that is, the redemption of the humane qualities and the overcoming of bestial desires,” (22). From the analysis of this study, it is believed that the magical creatures in nearly all fairy tales cause some type of transformation. Below are the details from those tales in which the transformation is most apparent.

While the story of Snow White and Rose Red was mentioned previously due to the evil antics of the dwarf, the story also falls into this category for the dwarf had placed a curse on the prince transforming him into a bear. While the prince is in this enchanted state he comes across these two kind and unassuming girls. We can probably imagine that without this transformation the prince would likely never to have come across these girls. The enchantment may have been a curse but it blessed the prince with the ability to view people without pretense. He saw the girls when they were afraid, playful, and kind, giving him the advantage in observing human qualities at their most honest moments. Yet, like many of the other transformative tales, the bear is unable to reveal his true identity in his enchanted state. It is as if he must be honest to the girls just as they are when he is observing them.

In a reversed situation, Cinderella is also transformed by a magical creature, yet from a poverty stricken child into what many assumed to be a beautiful unknown princess. Like the prince in Snow White and Rose Red, she is unable to reveal her true identity while in her transformed state. While Cinderella clearly appears to have won the love of the prince while at the ball, she is unable to be with the prince until “she has been recognized by her suitor in her mundane, degraded state,” (Opie 121). It is almost as if

Cinderella is aware that if she is recognized while in her enchanted state she may never escape from her life, for as the clock struck twelve:

She then rose and fled, as lightly as a fawn. The prince followed, but could not overtake her. She dropped one of her glass slippers, which the Prince picked up carefully. Cinderella reached home almost breathless without coach or footmen, and in her shabby clothes, with nothing remaining of her finery but one of her little slippers..." (Perrault, 52).

Honesty definitely plays a roll in how these characters handle their magical transformations.

Another popular fairy tale that subscribes to this function is Beauty and the Beast. The Beast clearly possesses magical abilities for, within his enchanted castle, he is, among other things, able to make things appear and disappear. But, most important is the Beast himself. The reader discovers that the Beast is actually a prince cursed to be ugly and only when a girl willingly falls in love with him will the curse be broken. He appears as an animal to Beauty, initially terrifying and disgusting to her. But, through time, not only is the Beast a transformed prince, but his enchanted state also causes the transformation of love. Beauty slowly stops seeing the Beast's deformities but rather focuses on the nature of his personality. He then stops being a beast, "for he did not seem at all ferocious," and "Beauty quite ceased to be afraid of him," (Perrault, 114) and instead becomes her friend. It is their love that transforms their perceptions of each other. It is the powerful nature of Beauty's love that ultimately allows the Beast to break away from his transformed state to return to his original human form. After dreaming that the Beast was dying, Beauty discovered that he was indeed on his death bed. In

anguish, Beauty cries to him “I never knew how much I loved you until just now, when I feared I was too late to save your life,” (Perrault, 118) Like the other tales, the two are not able to fully be together until they conquer the transformative state placed upon them.

Similarly, the story of Rumpelstiltskin continues to support the theme of characters being transformed by a magical creature. Rumpelstiltskin appears in the story to offer the miller’s daughter assistance in spinning straw into gold. He certainly possesses the magical capability of transforming a seemingly worthless substance like straw into gold. Ironically, by helping the miller’s daughter he also turns her, a poor, seemingly worthless girl, into the golden queen. Added to that, Rumpelstiltskin transforms the girl into a more aware state of mind. Previously she is only focused on her life as queen and the new child she brings into the world. When Rumpelstiltskin arrives to make good on their deal—she owes him her first born child—she is forced to look beyond herself. She sends “a messenger out to search far and wide for other names,” (Galdone, 24) in order to discover the little man’s name. He makes her more observant and aware in that he gives her the opportunity to save her child if she can only discover his name. Ultimately, the queen succeeds. She looks past what is familiar to her and opens her eyes to the world around her (and her footman’s) to discover Rumpelstiltskin’s name. It is Rumpelstiltskin’s ability to transform things, both physically and mentally, that allow the miller’s daughter to live happily ever after.

The ironic aspect of the Little Mermaid is that as the main character she is also the unusual creature that offers assistance to the human prince as he is drowning in the ocean. However, she does not possess magical powers of her own. Instead, she must visit the sorceress in order to receive the powers necessary for her to acquire an immortal soul. In

order for this dream to be achieved a man must love you “so much that you meant more to him than his father or mother; unless his mind and heart were set on you,” (Andersen, 22). While the sea witch is a vile creature, she is not necessarily evil. Like Rumpelstiltskin, she exists to assist the main character, although she does not perform such services for free. Not only must the Little Mermaid pay the price of never seeing her family again for this dream of hers, she must also give her most prized possession to the sea witch.

“But you must pay me too,” said the witch, “and it is no small price I ask. You have a sweeter voice than anyone here on the sea bed, you probably think you can enchant the prince with it, but you must give me your voice. I want the very best thing you have in payment for my precious potion! I have to mix in my own blood with the potion to make it as sharp as a two-edged sword,” (Andersen, 28).

Once the deal is made between the Little Mermaid and the Sorceress, the magical draught is created. The Little Mermaid is transformed into a human being for her “tail will then disappear, and shrink up into what mankind calls legs,” (Andersen, 30). Like many of the other tails mentioned, it is the power of love that saves the transformation from becoming a tragedy. When given the opportunity to save herself by killing her beloved prince, the Little Mermaid is unable to carry out the act. This selfless form of love links her with the Daughters of the Air which provides her with the opportunity to gain her wish of immortal freedom, for “the daughters of the air, although they have no immortal souls either, but they can win a soul by doing good deeds,” (Andersen, 40).

Conclusion

It is important to remember that while this paper separates the functions of the magical creatures into three distinct categories, there are quite possibly many more.

Also, many of these tales have creatures that overlap in function. I was surprised to discover, though, that in nearly every tale analyzed, as well as many more, the magical creature fulfilled some form of transformative role. The theme of transformation within fairy tales is clearly a common occurrence. Even those tales that were not analyzed in the transformation function could claim that ability. The elves certainly transform the shoemaker from a poor man into a prosperous businessman, and the ogre in *Diamonds and toads* provides the kind girl the means necessary to transform herself into a princess.

Therefore, we can see that magical creatures certainly contain value within the fairy tale story. Whether it is to provide the protagonist with the means necessary to succeed or to be the force in which they are fighting against, the creatures are often crucial to the story. Without their magical antics the story would lose its wonder and charm.

However, one thing to take into consideration is the historical context of these stories. As I mentioned previously, many of these stories have long pasts across many cultures. Depending on translation and culture, the characters have transformed through time. What once was a magical tree is now a fairy godmother (*Cinderella*) or where wise women were once invited to a christening now they are known as fairies (*Sleeping Beauty*). These changes do not appear to have an affect on the analysis of this study, but

there is a possibility that the function of these characters may have become more powerful and valued through time. Ultimately, though, I think Peter and Iona Opie (1974) said it best in that “fairy tales are now considered a reputable subject for research.” I believe that more research is necessary on magic and fairy tales as a whole in order for scholars to fully understand and appreciate their value and function.

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