The Origins Of Wonder Tales Essay, Research Paper

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The Origins of Wonder Tales and the Reason for Their Creation and Evolution

Folk tales, fairy tales, wise tales, and wonder tales are all a part of virtually everyone?s lives from one point of time to another. Whether your a child an adult or a grandparent these stories play a significant role in ones continuing development. Although they have an effect on people of all ages children are most susceptible to the primary goal of telling and recording these stories. The purpose of this form of interaction (again primarily focusing on the application of story telling to mold children) is to instill moral codes and hope in our youth and to do so in an entertaining way which is also most often the primary directive but should not be considered the only purpose.

The majority of these stories originated during the middle ages, or at least the written versions, given the fact that social interaction was not a concept and potentially dangerous given the territorial basis of human life before the beginning of agriculture. During this time people were what we call today nomadic: they wandered from one area to another following the seasons and whatever food source they depended upon(HY101). During this time there was no need for writing consequently it was never developed. Language itself was primary and regional, only those tribes native to the area could efficiently communicate with each other. These two factors deteriorate the argument that the stories are any older than agriculture.

This new way of life (agricultural) presented a problem, how do you communicate efficiently with others and keep track of debts. These were the primary directives of establishing a written language. Soon writing made the transition from purely business oriented to the social entertainment realm. These wonder tales, including Cinderella, were seldom recorded and some would argue that this very fact is what gives them their character. “The childhood game comes to mind in which one child whispers a sentence into the ear of another; by the time the second child repeats the sentence to a third, and the third to the fourth (and so on ), the sentence has changed considerably.(595)” This is a good illustration of how the stories changed over the years. Each time it is repeated the orator inevitably either consciously or otherwise changes the context. Sometimes they modify sections in order to more properly deliver the intended message. This is one of the primary reasons that we have so many different versions of any specific wonder-tale. The intentional modification of the story line is a good indication that these stories carry more than the single purpose of entertainment. The implication here is that they are modified in order to deliver a specific message relative to the society in order to shape ones moral values which brings us back to our original theory of the application of moral code being the core intention of the orator. These moral codes include honor, respect, and dignity. Whichever of these was most emphasized is relative only to the civilization and time period it originated in or was modified.

Another aspect which is generally overlooked in today?s society is hope. Cinderella provides a good example of this. In the story (its basic and general form) Cinderella is oppressed by a social superior and her peers. She is at the bottom of the social structure, dreaming for a way to better her standard of living. The prince is a means of escape and shouldn?t necessarily be taken in his literal form. One could consider their prince to be any way or means of improving upon their position or way of life including a better job, a spouse, or even the introduction of a child into their life. The prince would take many different forms depending on the needs of the person as well as the societies values and expectations.

The social conditions and general way of living play a considerable role in shaping fairy-tales. One could speculate that they are derived from a true story, something that really did happen “once upon a time” but only took their magical form after years of retelling. Cinderella alone has over seven hundred different versions (591), could it be that one of these is close to the truth? What about the other thousands of stories we tell our children? For example, Snow White is a very popular wonder-tale and although not necessarily feasible, could it be based on actual events? Another interesting aspect is that it seems to have a message that has survived its changing form: good vs. Evil. Beauty and the Beast shows us that it is possible to look past the physical features of someone and fall in love with the person. And of course Sleeping Beauty shows us the classic: good triumphs over evil as well.

All of these tales, however similar or different they may be, follow one general interesting theme that once again applies social moral code. This is that all relationships we have discussed have been heterosexual. This complete absence of homosexuality (which is unacceptable in most societies until the twentieth century) once again gives us the impression that it was left out for the very reason that it was not acceptable and shouldn?t be taught. This brings us again to the assumption that the primary function of the creation of these stories is to instill a moral code in the listener.

In conclusion we have found two ideas to be true that are relative to the question asked on page six hundred and sixty one. First it was decided that wonder-tales and other like stories did not originate until the time of agriculture. More importantly though, is the reason for their creation. It is my personal opinion, and popular belief that these stories serve a particular purpose. This purpose is to set example, give hope, and encourage everyone, especially our young, to do what society believes is right.