

Do Children Need Fairy Tales?

A Psychoanalytic Study

By

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—Soy una mosca,
me quiero casar
con un mosquito
que sepa volar.

—Soy un mosquito,
me quiero casar
con una mosca
que sepa bailar.

—Soy una mosca
que sabe bailar,
y el violín también sé tocar.

—Ti—ri—ri—rí,
ti—ri—ri—rá;
con mis patitas
yo llevo el compás.

—Soy un mosquito,
ti—ti—ri—rí;
a nadie pico,
y vivo feliz.

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Abstract

Do children need fairy tales?

In 1976, psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim published a book entitled *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, whose German translation, *Kinder brauchen Marchen*, encapsulates the author's basic premise of "children need fairy tales, examined through a psychoanalytical perspective. Bettelheim's work represented a return to Freud's theories on the importance of fairy tales in the mental life of children, Thus, this thesis proposes another return; the return to Bettelheim's premise of "children need fairy tales" around a psychoanalytical frame of reference shaped by Freud's doctrines on the functioning of the human psyche, expanded by the theories of his contemporary advocates; with particular allusion to the viewpoint of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, On this basis, the purpose of this research project is to elucidate the influential role (if any) of fairy tales in alleviating the psychic struggles inherent to children's early development. The achievement of such purpose will be approached by dividing the research content into two chapters which will follow the twofold aims of this thesis. Chapter one, "*A fantasy World Full of Phantasy*", aims to gain an understanding on the nature of the inner conflicts which agitate the child's mental life, as well as investigating the psychic mechanisms through which such conflicts seek to be settled, at an unconscious (phantasies) and conscious (play, fairy tales) level. Thus, this introductory chapter will explore the concept of "unconscious phantasy" as the psychical mechanism functioning to alleviate inner conflict by means of wish-fulfilment and through its symbolic representation in the world of fantasy via language. Chapter two, "*In the Land of Fairies*", aims to explore the specific implications of fairy tales on children's development by means of delving into the particular manifestations of infantile unconscious crises inherent to the three psychic realities as proposed by Lacan in his paper *Family Complexes in the Formation of the Individual*: the weaning complex, the complex of intrusion and the Oedipus complex. The aim of this chapter will be attempted by examining the said struggles in relation to a particular fairy tale: *Hansel and Gretel*, *Cinderella* and *Jack and the Beanstalk*, respectively. To conclude, chapter three, "*Do Children Need Fairy Tales for A Happy Ever After?*" will evaluate the research findings gathered from the previous chapters in the attempt to provide an answer to the question that gives title to this thesis, as well as recommending possible further areas for research identified as carrying out this study.

Introduction

In 1976, psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim published a book entitled *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, whose German translation, *Kinder brauchen Marchen*, encapsulates the author's basic premise of "children need fairy tales", examined through a psychoanalytic perspective (Dundes, 1991). The theoretical background, on which Bettelheim would base his ideas, was laid in the nineteenth century with the marriage between the tradition of fairy tales and psychoanalysis (Tsitsani et al., 2011). Indeed, as though this union was inevitably bound to happen, the research carried out on both fields of study revealed their compatibility.

In his article *The Favourite Tale of Childhood* (1971), psychoanalyst Hans Dieckmann referred to the emergence of the most acclaimed pioneers in the fairy tale genre as occurring in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. In such a way, Charles Perrault, Hans Christian Andersen and the brothers Jakob and Wilhem Grimm produced a series of literary work that, grounded on "the oral tradition of village lore and country fables", represented the first modern collections of Western traditional fairy tales.

Nevertheless, the nineteenth century also marked the origins of psychoanalysis with the publication of Sigmund Freud's *Studies on Hysteria* (1895/2001), in which a reference was made to Andersen's *Picture-book without Pictures* in allusion to the similarity of its content with certain stories that the patient Fraulein Anna O. was constructing as a means of "talking away" her symptoms (pp. 29, 43). Freud's timid remark was the first of many that he made in reference to the connection between fairy tales and psychoanalysis.

As a matter of fact, this union became stronger when Freud, in his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900/2001), identified the strong link between dreams and folklore in the human psyche (Heisig, 1977). This discovery was further supported in the essay *Dreams in Folklore* (1911), co-authored by Freud with mythologist Oppenheim. Indeed, this publication, which is considered to be one of the first landmarks in the psychoanalytic study of folklore, validated Freudian dream symbolism by establishing a direct correlation with the interpretations of dream symbols in fairy tales made by folk tellers prior to the existence of psychoanalytic theories (Dundes, 1991). Nonetheless, Freud's most relevant development in this matter was reflected in his essay *The Occurrence in dreams of material from fairy tales* (1913/2001) in which he introduced the premise of the influence of fairy tales in children's mental life: "It is not surprising that psycho-analysis confirms our recognition of the important place which folk fairy tales have acquired in the mental life of our children" (p.281).

Having established the connection between fairy tales and psychoanalysis through the link of dreams, and their influence in children's psyche, Freud expanded the field of study beyond the phenomenon of dreams by regarding fairy tales as raw material for the understanding of various aspects of the psyche (as cited in Gonçalves Borges, 2015). Subsequently, psychoanalysis approached the study of fairy tales from a perspective of subjectivity, shifting the focus that other relevant studies had placed at that time on the structural aspect of this literary genre, as reflected in *Morphology of the Folktales* (1929) by Russian structuralist, Vladimir Propp.

Nevertheless, there was a void of almost half a century in the research that Freud had begun in relation to the study of folk tales and the human psyche, until the publication of Bettelheim's most acclaimed work in the mid-1970s, which represented the "return to Freud"

in terms of revisiting the earlier findings on the con-mutuality between psychoanalysis and the genre of folk tales (Wittmann, 2011). In his article, *Bruno Bettelheim and His Window to the Soul* (2009), William Meyer referred to Bettelheim's piece as magical, in which enchanting stories are portrayed as marvellous vehicles that carry children through an imaginary universe parallel to their inner world, helping them address their most pressing developmental struggles.

Moreover, the relevance of Bettelheim's considerations was strengthened by the support that his work gained from the scholars of folklore. On this account, folklorist Maria Tatar (1987) asserted that, as children endure the struggles inherent in their process of developing, fairy tales grant them with the empowerment required to successfully resolve such conflicts (as cited in Dewan, 2016). Moreover, the work of popular folklorist Alan Dundes on this matter has contributed to reinforce the union that folk tales and psychoanalysis have maintained since the nineteenth century by "[appealing to] folklorists to ... overcome [any] bias in order to consult what psychoanalysts have to say about the tale they are investigating" (Dundes, 1987).

Drawing from Dundes' recommendation to consider the psychoanalytic viewpoint when analysing any given tale, and inspired by Bettelheim's return to Freud's theories on the importance of fairy tales in the mental life of children, this thesis proposes another return; a return to Bettelheim's premise of "children need fairy tales" around a psychoanalytical frame of reference shaped by Freud's doctrines on the functioning of the human psyche, and expanded by the theories of his contemporary advocates; with particular allusion to the viewpoint of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan who, in his "return to Freud", established the Lacanian orientation to psychoanalysis.

Thus, the purpose of this research project is to interrogate the premise of “children need fairy tales” by exploring their influential role (if any) in alleviating the psychic struggles inherent to children’s early development. Such exploration has a twofold aim: firstly, it will attempt to gain an understanding on the nature of these inner conflicts which agitate the child’s mental life, as well as investigating the psychic mechanisms through which such conflicts seek to be settled, at an unconscious (phantasies) and conscious (play, fairy tales) level. Secondly, this study will explore the specific implications of fairy tales on children’s development, by means of relating selected fairy tales to each of the developmental complexes proposed by Lacan in his paper *Family Complexes in the Formation of the Individual* (1938).

This thesis will be divided into three chapters whose research content will follow the two aims mentioned above and evaluate said research, respectively. Chapter One: “A Fantasy World Full of Phantasy” will explore the concept of “unconscious phantasy”, as the psychical mechanism functioning to alleviate inner conflict by means of wish-fulfilment and through its symbolic representation in the world of fantasy, through language. Chapter Two: “In the Land of Fairies” will elaborate on the hurdles, as experienced by the characters of fairyland, which are inherent to three specific psychic realities proposed by Lacan (1938): the weaning complex, the complex of intrusion and the Oedipus complex. To conclude, Chapter Three: “Do Children Need Fairy Tales for a Happy Ever After?” will evaluate the research findings gathered from the two previous chapters in the attempt to provide an answer to the question that gives title to the chapter; that is the same question which gives *raison d’être* to the adventure that is about to begin ... And so it begins ...

... Do children need fairy tales? ...

Chapter One – A Fantasy World Full of Phantasy

Will you please tell me, if, on this island, there are places where one may eat without necessarily being eaten?

(C. Collodi, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, p. 32)

Sigmund Freud states in lecture XXII of his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1916/2001, p. 349) that, “our mental life is ... perpetually agitated by conflicts which we have to settle”. This introductory chapter explores the concept of “phantasy” as a primary mental activity through which the psyche endeavours to alleviate such conflicts at two distinct, yet interconnected, levels; at an intra-psyche level, “phantasy” attempts to ease this internal struggle by becoming its mental representative, and at an extraneous level, this “unconscious phantasy” seeks relief from conflict through its concrete expression in the outer world of reality by way of “conscious activities”, such as spontaneous make-believe play, as well as through “conscious fantasies”, such as those portrayed in fairy tales.

1.1 A Phantasy Is Born; A Wish Upon A Star Comes True

In his paper *Formulations on the two principles of mental functioning* (1911/2001), Freud refers to the propensity of the subject's mental life for achieving pleasure and avoiding unpleasure, as being guided by the two main principles operating within the psychic apparatus; the pleasure principle and the reality principle. The former, Freud explains, aims at re-producing and re-presenting past pleasurable experiences as well as attempting to avoid or eliminate past unpleasurable experiences. Hence, the activity of this principle involves a process of selection made possible through the wish-fulfilment of pleasurable experiences and through the repression of unpleasurable experiences (Freud, 1911/2001, p. 219). As a matter of fact, Susan Isaacs advocates in her paper *On the nature and function of phantasy* (1948) that these two principles steer the development of instinctual life and thus of the ego in a parallel process to the evolving of the form and content of unconscious phantasies; Freud's notion of "phantasy", that is.

Freud (1911/2001) asserts that in the early phases of instinctual development, the most primitive formations of phantasy are regarded as being "hallucinatory" psychic representatives of the drive. In this respect, bodily wishes and impulses are imagined as self-fulfilling owing to their omnipotent character, and as abiding by the rules of the pleasure principle. Thus, the organism "hallucinates" the fulfilment of its internal needs. Freud refers to this archaic form of phantasy life as the infant's "attempt at satisfaction by hallucination" (1911/2001, p. 219).

Melanie Klein supports Freud's proposition in her paper *Weaning* (1936) by advocating that "phantasy-building" can be considered the most primitive mental activity, by which the

organism seeks initial satisfaction from the taking-in of nourishment (1936, p. 290). This assertion is in agreement with Freud's view of the oral impulse as being the first at play in endeavouring instinctual pleasure, as suggested in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905/2001, p. 232).

Both, Freud, in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917[1915]/2001, pp. 249-250) and Klein, in her above publication (1936/2001, p. 291) relate the need of being fed with the "incorporation" of the breast, as the first "ingested" aspect of the mother that is bound up with the earliest forms of phantasy life. Through this phenomenon of "primary introjection" (1917[1915]/2001), satisfaction or frustration of the drive, via this introjected object of desire, correlates with the emergence of phantasies of an either pleasurable ("to eat up") or aggressive nature ("fear of being eaten") respectively (Klein, 1936, p. 291).

A manifestation of the latter alternative is alluded to in Freud's paper *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis* (1918[1914]/2001, p. 32), whereby the author, in the process of interpreting a dream by means of referring to the *Little Red Riding-Hood* fairy tale, speculates about the possible infantile fear of his patient Sergei Pankejeff, alias the Wolf Man, of being "gobbled up" by his father. Analogously, in his paper *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926/2001), Freud refers to the former alternative, that is phantasies of pleasurable nature, such as "oral greed", as also being portrayed in fairy tales.

The above illustration gleaned from the case study of the Wolf Man alludes to an advanced aspect of the wish-fulfilling function of unconscious phantasies, since this case study implies a possible relation between dreams and phantasies, as explored by Freud in his paper *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900/2001). Indeed, he suggests that dream-formation and

phantasy-formation are similar wish-fulfilment processes, both involving the transformation of primary unconscious content as a consequence of frustrated libidinal and aggressive impulses in their quest for satisfaction. In point of fact, Freud reports a dream that his daughter Anna had when she was child that would confirm his hypothesis of the motive force of dreams as being that which has been suppressed (1900/2001b, p. 591); in her sleep, Anna began to call out certain foods, in particular strawberries, which had been temporarily forbidden to her as it was believed that a surfeit of them had caused the child “an attack of vomiting”. Here, she could enjoy the forbidden strawberries once again in the realm of dreams (Freud, 1900/2001a, pp. 209-210).

In lecture XXIII of his *Introductory Lectures of Psychoanalysis* (1916/2001), Freud implies a progression in the development of instinctual life by exploring the nature of the conflict that emerges from the frustration of instinctual wishes, which subsequently influences the phenomenon of phantasy formation. Indeed, Freud reaffirms this idea in his paper *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920/2001, p. 255) by asserting that throughout the course of libidinal development, certain bodily wishes and impulses (sexual instincts, in particular), that once found gratification via “hallucinatory phantasy”, are met with the frustration of their aim, for not being in accord with the self-preservation demands of the more evolved ego-instincts.

Accordingly, through the functioning of the other principle operating within the mental apparatus, that is the reality principle, the ego represses these most primitive instincts preventing them from becoming conscious as well as from obtaining satisfaction (1920/2001, p. 246). However, as Freud alleges, “the repressed instinct never ceases to strive for complete satisfaction” (1920, pp. 42-43). Consequently, inhibited wishes and desires are obliged to come to expression in a distinct form and so they retreat to the phantasy domain as an

alternative way of obtaining gratification, in accordance with the functioning of the pleasure principle; Freud calls this activity “phantasying” (1911/2001, p. 211) by which “all abandoned sources of pleasure and methods of achieving pleasure are granted a further existence” away from the demands of the reality principle. Once in the realm of phantasy, every unconscious wish is met with its imaginary fulfilment (1916/2001, pp. 372-373).

When you wish upon a star
Makes no difference who you are
Anything your heart desires
Will come to you
If your heart is in your dream
No request is too extreme
When you wish upon a star
(Disney)

1.2 Phantasy Goes Down The Rabbit Hole For The Lost Object

Meanwhile, in a different domain of the mental apparatus, the demands of the reality principle continue to exert their influence in the selection process of the developing ego, whose ultimate endeavour, as with the pleasure principle, is that of gaining gratification, however by means of taking reality into account, which implies a sacrifice in the immediacy and the levels of the pleasure obtained (Freud, 1916/2001).

In his paper titled *Negation* (1925/2001), Freud makes reference to this selective process of the ego in terms of “reality testing”. According to him, this phenomenon transcends the primal inter-exchange with the external world; a dynamic consisting in the projection of the “pleasure-ego” of objects presenting themselves as sources of unpleasure, and of the “absorbing” - or introjecting - those experienced as pleasurable (1925/2001). As a matter of fact, albeit evolved from the pleasure-ego, “reality-testing” is an activity that belongs to the reality-ego. Thus, such an operation involves the more advanced capacity of “thinking”, whereby the ego assures itself that, in the external world, there exists the re-presentation of the object that was once the source of satisfaction, so that it can be re-found in the attempt to repeat the original gratification (1925/2001).

On this account, Freud establishes a connection between the interplay of primary instinctual impulses, responsible for the primeval experience of gratification, and the function of “reality-testing”, responsible for the “re-finding” of such experience (1925/2001). Drawing on from Freud’s assertion, Isaacs (1948) deduces that insofar as phantasies represent the “language” of primary instinctual urges, these psychic representations are bound to take part

in the development of the ego in terms of its relation to reality through such phenomenon of “reality-testing”, which in turn results in an ever-increasing knowledge of the external world.

In this inter-relation between phantasies and the proceedings of the developing ego with the external world, Freud claims that “there is a path that leads from phantasy to reality – the path ... of art” (1916/2001, p. 376); a way that facilitates the externalisation of wishes belonging to phantasy-life which, in their quest for the object that once brought satisfaction, are shaped into a different type of reality by becoming what is desired without having to make “real alterations in the outer world” (Freud, 1911/2001, p. 224).

Aside from art, Isaacs (1948) refers to the above connection between thought and phantasy as being present in children’s make-believe play, whereby the content of unconscious phantasies is manifested through forms of “as if” thinking involved in such infantile activity, in the two-fold attempt to re-create certain past situations facilitating the working-through of specific developmental needs of the present, as well as to adapt to the reality of the external environment.

An illustration of the significance of play in the psychical life of children is found in Freud’s interpretation of a game carried out by his eighteen-month-old grandson (1920/2001, pp. 14-18). This game consisted, on one hand, in making a wooden reel tied with a piece of string disappear by throwing it over the edge of his cot and, on the other hand, in making the reel return by pulling it out of the cot once again; a game of disappearance and return referred to as “Fort/Da” insofar as the first stage of the game was accompanied by the expression “o-o-o-o”, interpreted by Freud as meaning “fort” [“gone”], and the action of second stage was hailed with a joyful “da” [“there”] (Freud, 1920/2001, pp. 14-15).

Freud interprets this “Fort/Da” game as an operation of disavowal of immediate instinctual satisfaction; the pro-active action of making the reel disappear symbolises situations of absence (“disappearance”) of the mother, these of a “passive” nature (1920/2001, p. 15). The representation of such unpleasurable experience is followed by the active retrieval of the lost object (Freud, 1920/2001, p. 15). At this point, Freud speculates about the essence of this repetitive sequence (1920/2001, p. 16); on one hand, he questions the possible attainment of satisfaction through the repetition of an unpleasurable experience, that is, the mother’s absence. On the other hand, he hypothesises about the “fort” action being repeated more frequently than the “da” movement, in spite of the former being more of a distressing experience than the latter. The causal force underlying these speculations, according to Freud, goes beyond the pleasure principle (1920/2001, p. 17). Indeed, he alleges that, by way of this game, the child is allowed to, at a symbolic level, adopt an active role in a painful situation that originally was of a passive nature, in this way the child masters the situation (Freud, 1920/2001, p. 16).

Moreover, Freud asserts that, beyond this “instinct of mastery” (1920/2001, p. 16), there appears to be a compulsion to repeat painful experiences driven by “some daemonic force at work” that instigates the urge to return to an earlier stage of development as though in an attempt to re-find the desired object that was once lost in it (Freud, 1920/2001, pp. 35-36). Far from the exigencies of the pleasure principle hereof, the compulsion to repeat seems to function in accordance with the previously described phenomenon of reality testing (Freud, 1925/2001). In the Fort/Da game, the repetitive throwing away and pulling back of the wooden plaything symbolises, according to Freud (1920/2001, p. 15), the alternating absence and presence, articulated by the word pair: “o-o-o-o” – “da”, of the external object: the mother. This unfolding sequence of events demonstrates, without the object having to be

present, a way of working through the overpowering experience of the object's absence by attempting to re-discover the satisfaction once obtained by its presence.

Meanwhile down in the rabbit hole ...

... [Alice] waited for a few minutes to see if she was going to shrink any further ...; 'for it might end, you know, ... in my going out all together, like a candle. I wonder what I should be like then.' And she tried to fancy what the flame of a candle is like after it is blown out, for she could not remember having seen such a thing.

(Carroll, Tenniel & Irwin, 2001, p. 42)

1.3 Phantasy Meets Fantasy In “The World of Words”

Down in the rabbit hole, the image of a candle and its flame as representing Alice and the lost object, perhaps. In the playground of the Fort/Da game, the wooden-reel and two words: “o-o-o (fort)” and “da” as symbolising, according to Freud, the boy’s mother and her “becoming” the lost object by her absence (1920/2001, p. 16).

Through the word – which is already a presence made of absence – absence itself comes to be named in an original moment whose perpetual recreation [is] detected in [this] child’s game. And from this articulated couple of presence and absence – also sufficiently constituted by [the acoustic image of the burning flame of a candle and its opposite possibility of being, that is not-being] – a language’s [langue] world of meaning is born, in which the world of things will situate itself.

(Lacan, 1953/2006, p. 228)

The above paragraph is an extract from Lacan’s paper titled *The function and field of speech and language in Psychoanalysis* (1953/2006). In this publication, the author refers to the theory of the three orders of Being: the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic, indicating that the latter embodies the realm to which “language’s world of meaning” belongs. Moreover, Lacan alleges that since in the beginning was the Word, the Symbolic order pre-exists the immersion of the subject into it from the preceding state of being inherent to the Imaginary order (1953/2006).

Such plunging of the subject into the pool of language is identified by Lacan as one of the two logical moments that constitute human subjectivity, which he terms as “alienation”. The peculiarities of this particular moment are detailed in Bruce Fink’s seminal paper *Alienation and Separation: Logical moments of Lacan’s dialectic of desire* (1990). In this publication, Fink defines this moment of subjectivity as the young child’s move outside of an exclusive

imaginary state of being into the symbolic order; the former indicating therefore the state of being that precedes the child's acquisition of language.

According to Lacan, and as explained by Derek Hook in his essay *Lacan, the meaning of the phallus, and the "sexed" subject* (2006), prior to the onset of alienation, the pre-subject exists in an imaginary plane sustained by the infant's earliest pre-verbal and pre-social interactions with the Other, that is the primary caregiver, in whom the pre-subject ascertains a desire; the desire of the Other, through which he finds his own representation in the world. Thus, the infant recognises himself by virtue of words from an Other who designates him, indicating that in the imaginary state of being, there is no clear distinction between self and Other: between internal and external world, insofar as "the subject fails to come forth as a someone, a particular being: in the most radical sense, he is not; he has no being" (Fink, 1990), other than through the Other.

This imaginary status of being, as granted through the Other, seems to provide clarification to a paradox latent in Lacan's logical moment of alienation (Fink, 1990); even though "existence" in the pre-symbolic realm implies the "*manque-à-être*" of the subject, that is the subject's lack of being, the stepping out of this realm into the symbolic also involves the consent to one's own disappearance (Fink, 1990). Thus, the question of the disappearance of something that does not exist to begin with is resolved if taking into consideration the two distinct ways of being; the imaginary, only possible in relation to the Other, and the "pure possibility of being", as elicited by alienation (Fink, 1990).

In his *Seminar X: The Four Fundamentals of Psychoanalysis* ([1973]1979, p. 62) Lacan captures a concrete moment of the alienation of subjectivity in Freud's grandson as he plays

the Fort/Da game. According to Lacan's interpretation of this game, the wooden reel represents the subject himself, and in such a manner, Freud's "instinct of mastery" is deciphered by Lacan as correlating with the child's active consenting to his own disappearance from an imaginary state of being, while striving to find his own representation in the symbolic order through the expression of two words: Fort - Da; that is, through the expression of language.

Regarding the infant's agreeing to his own disappearance, Rose claims that "symbolisation starts ... when the child gets its first sense that something could be missing. Words stand for objects when those objects are experienced as lost" (as cited in Hook, 2006); this being either the "lost" mother, in Freud's viewpoint of the Fort/Da game, or being a "piece" of the child himself, as suggested by Lacan. Along these lines, the latter refers to the function of this experience of lack in the infant's insertion into the symbolic, by stressing the substitution of the lost object with words in the attempt to restore what is missing.

Christopher Bell asserts in *The Lacanian Subject: Subject of Desire or the Subject of Drive?* (2014) that in such insertion into the symbolic, the subject seeks the assignation of a place therein, as being inscribed in this world of meaning through language. Moreover, Lacan (1973/1979) advocates that, in the realm of the symbolic, where language is comprised of a set of signifiers, the subject becomes eclipsed by meaning, by the signified, and in such penumbra the subject is completely absorbed by language; hence Lacan's idea of the signifier dominating the subject.

Lacan refers to the unstable relationship between that which is capable of bestowing meaning: the signifier, and the given meaning that comes to be attached to the signifier: the

signified (Hook, 2006). As a result of their particular dynamic, there exists the constant sliding of the signifier over the signified, Lacan considers this phenomenon as a precondition for the functioning of the unconscious (Fink, 1990); through the repression of certain disturbing impulses and wishes, their signifieds become split off from the signifiers that would bring them to consciousness.

According to Lacan (Fink, 1990), the effects of the signifier on the subject's psyche is what constitutes the unconscious. Little Hans' phobia is a testament of this phenomenon; hereof, Lacan refers to Freud's "psychical representation of the drive", as "vostellung repräsentanz"; that is the material repressed in the primal repression, which is expressed by means of unconscious phantasy, as described in previous sections of this chapter. In Hans' giraffe phantasy, there is the wish of the child to penetrate this mother. Lacan (1973/1979) asserts that these primitive representations attract in the unconscious other "secondary" representations consisting of words with which the parents surround a child from birth: the word giraffe seems to refer to the boys' surname "Graf". Nevertheless, the signifier "giraffe" is one of many in a signifying chain whereby the signifier "horse" forms as representing Little Hans' initial phobic object.

Thus, from a linguistic viewpoint, Lacan equates Freud's "psychical representative of drive", that is "unconscious phantasy", with the signifier, which he proposes as the "ideational representative" lurking in the unconscious (1973/1979) and potentially holding several significations; hence, multiple signifieds might emerge from the same signifier (Hook, 2006). Such arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified relates to the creative process of fantasy, as elucidated by William Stern in his book *Psychology of Early Childhood: Up to the Sixth Year of Age* (1975), whereby fantasy draws on elements that belong to actual

experiences, dissociates these elements from their former setting and indistinctly creates new combinations, also termed as “fantasy-percepts” which represent “something that never was on land and sea”.

In reference to the above ideas, “fantasy-percepts” and “unconscious phantasies” stand as symbols of either a reality of another kind or repressed delegates of the drives respectively; both acting as signifiers under which secret desires find expression and seek an outlet in their shared “language’s [langue] world of meaning” (Lacan, 1953/2006, p. 228).

When I use a word, Humpty Dumpty said ..., it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.

The question is, said Alice, whether you can make words mean different things.
(Carroll, Tenniel & Irwin, 2001, p. 223)

Nevertheless, the relationship between fantasy and unconscious phantasy extends beyond their sheer meeting in the “world of words”. On this account, the following chapter of this dissertation explores the dynamics established between these two phenomena, by which the symbolic character of fantasy, as manifested in fairy tales, communicates with the child’s unconscious, awakening phantasies on the basis of such symbols (signifiers) having several significations, as a condition for unconscious meanings to emerge, as advocated by Lacan (1963/1988).

Chapter Two – In the Land of Fairies

*Where are the gold pieces now? - the Fairy asked.
I lost them - answered Pinocchio.*

(C. Collodi, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, p. 46)

The conjecture about the symbolic dialogue between fantasy and the child's unconscious postulated at the conclusion of the first chapter is ratified by Bettelheim in his book *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1976). Here, he asserts that it is indeed the metaphoric nature of the language of fairy tales that allows the communication between unconscious phantasies and conscious fantasies; hereof, through this symbolic language the child's unconscious identifies with certain elements of the story as narrated in the folk tale, and is able to find expression to the most pressuring inner conflicts (Bettelheim, 1976, p. 31, p. 62).

Thus, this second chapter explores the externalisation, through the metaphoric language of fairy tales, of unconscious phantasies as an attempt to ease the earliest internal struggles, whose peculiarities vary at each given stage of psychic development. In his paper *Family Complexes in the Formation of the Individual* (1938, p. 12), Lacan identifies three complexes as the representatives of the realities in which these peculiarities manifest; the weaning complex, the intrusion complex and the Oedipus complex; each of which, in accordance with the aim of this chapter, is examined in relation to a particular fairy tale: *Hansel and Gretel*, *Cinderella* and *Jack and the Beanstalk*, respectively.

2.1 - Weaning Complex and *Hansel and Gretel*

Early tomorrow morning, [the stepmother said], we will take the children out into the forest ... and give each one more piece of bread ... and we shall be rid of them.

(Grimm and Grimm, 1812)

Once upon a time ...

... there was a brother and a sister named Hansel and Gretel whose stepmother convinced their father to abandon them in the woods to die. Once in the wilderness, the children came upon the edible house of an old woman, who was revealed to be an evil witch in disguise who planned to eat them ... (as adapted from Grimm and Grimm, 1812).

Bettelheim (1976) suggests that the fairy tale of *Hansel and Gretel* gives symbolic expression to the child's inner experiences, characteristic of the psychic reality termed by Lacan (1938, p. 15) as the weaning complex, which is directly related to the earliest relationship with the mother. As a matter of fact, Lacan advocates that this complex is inherent to the parasitic-psychic relationship established between mother and infant on the basis of the latter's vital demand to be fed (1938, p. 14). More specifically, this primeval attachment between mother and baby results from the instinctive fundamental behaviour, which according to Lacan, arises from the representation in the psyche of a biological function; that is lactation (1938, p. 15).

By way of this nursing relationship, the imago of the maternal breast is deep-rooted in the baby's psyche as the source of gratification of its most primitive desires, creating a dependency on the maternal imago and subsequently, a latent fear of abandonment or/and

rejection (Lacan, 1938, p. 20). Freud's reflection: "love and hunger ... meet at a woman's breast" provides a first-hand account on this matter considering that such assertion is made in reference to the interpretation of one of his own dreams, as revealed in Chapter V of his *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900/2001a).

In her paper *Weaning* (1936), Klein reaffirms the idea of the satisfaction obtained from the feeding experience as being the first gratification derived from the external world. Analogously, Hansel and Gretel's stepmother represents their source of food and nourishment. However, at the time that she determines that "the children must be gotten rid of" (Bettelheim, 1976, p. 170), she is no longer willing to meet her stepchildren's oral demands, precipitating in them the psychic trauma of weaning, which relates to the "biological relationship it interrupts" (Lacan, 1938, p. 16). In the land of fantasy, Hansel and Gretel experience the frustration of not being able to obtain the desired object when, after returning home from their desertion, their stepmother decides to abandon them in the forest once again. On this account, Ernest Jones asserts that such frustration is experienced as deprivation: just as it happens in fairy land, for Hansel and Gretel believe that their source of satisfaction is being denied to them by the "evil" stepmother (as cited in Klein, 1936).

Nevertheless, in their compulsion to re-find the gratification received from the good breast, and in the height of starvation anxiety, Hansel and Gretel endeavour to return home a second time, only to be met once more with the refusal from their stepmother; in his paper *Negation* (1925/2001), Freud refers to the urge to return to an earlier stage of regression seeking to regain the satisfaction once obtained by means of re-finding the object that was once lost in it, that is the object of early weaning. Lacan agrees with Freud's view of the impossibility of recovering the lost object, as Joanne Conway explains in her article *Lacan with D. Winnicott*

(2011). Here, the author refers to Lacan's notion that the object can only exist by virtue of the separation between the two subjects that are mother and child, whereby the child assumes that "something" has fallen from the mOther (Conway, 2011).

According to Klein, in *A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States* (1935, p. 146), the failed attempt at securing the good object equates the process by which the loss of the loved object takes place in the developmental context of the ego's transition from partial to total incorporation of the object. This failure forms the basis for the depressive psychological position. Moreover, Klein asserts that such an occurrence of the loss of the good object magnifies the anxieties and fears inherent to this depressive position, to the extent that the child is initially compelled to remain fixated in a state of oral greediness by means of regression and denial (Klein, 1935, p 147). Thus, the above mentioned incorporation of the object as a "whole" by the ego, at this stage of development, results in a complicated set of ambivalent feelings and depressive anxieties about the condition of this object; the earliest persecutory anxieties directed to the frustrating object, so as to protect the gratifying one, are now realised as being inflicted on a "whole" object, which contains both aspects; the good and the bad.

As Hansel and Gretel wander in the forest of fairyland, a gingerbread house comes into sight: home of an old woman who, on seeing the children, coaxes them to eat her edible house. Victims to their oral fixation, they give in to the temptation and devour the house, which symbolises the body of the good mother who provides nourishment to her children. However, this kind lady turns out to be an evil witch who is planning to eat the children, thus representing the primitive persecutory anxieties of being devoured by the bad object. After

all, the old woman represents the children's "whole object", as suggested by Klein above (1936).

Just as Hansel and Gretel devised a creative way of dealing with their disquieting adventures by marking the way back home through the dropping of either little stones or bread, in his publication *Transitional objects and Transitional Phenomena* (1953), Donald Winnicott proposes the concept of transitional object as a tool to ease the child's separation anxiety by means of mediating in the struggles between id impulses (oral greed) and the ego in its function to guarantee a successful developmental progress. In fantasy land, and in the language of the School of Object Relations, the ego manages to trick the witch into climbing into the oven thus symbolising the defeat of Hansel and Gretel's primitive orality and their reaching a higher stage of development as represented by the jewels, brought home as a gift for their mother, crowning the end of this fairy tale (Bettelheim, 1976).

2.2 - Complex of Intrusion and Cinderella

At last the happy day came; they went to Court, and Cinderella followed them with her eyes as long as she could, and then when she had lost sight of them, she fell a-crying.

(Perrault, 1697)

Once upon a time ...

... there was a beautiful young girl named Cinderella who was constantly humiliated and tormented by her wicked stepmother and her two ugly stepsisters. As Cinderella assisted her stepsisters to get ready to attend the Royal Ball, she secretly resented her situation of standing no chance of being a guest to the dance ... until the grand appearance of a fairy godmother who magically transformed Cinderella's reality into a dream come true ... (as adapted from Perrault, 1697).

Bettelheim (1976, p. 238) suggests that the symbolism expressed through the fairy tale of Cinderella refers to the phenomenon of sibling rivalry, experienced by the child as an unconscious crisis, whose psychic activity represents the psychic reality characteristic of the complex of intrusion as proposed by Lacan (1938). According to him, the emergence of this complex coincides with the subject's realisation of the existence of siblings with whom the parental relationship is shared; this intrusion is perceived as a threat to the child's narcissistic world (Lacan, 1938, p. 23).

In his paper *On Narcissism: An Introduction* (1914/2001, pp. 69-102), Freud refers to primary narcissism as a premature state, precedent to the development of the ego, whereby the infant places itself as the object of exclusive love; Cinderella had enjoyed her place as the centre of her father's universe until his marriage to the stepmother, and the subsequent arrival

of her two stepsisters. According to Freud, this early state of primary narcissism is followed by a more advanced state, namely secondary narcissism (1914/2001, p. 75), which involves the infant's capacity to turn towards external objects in order to form an emotional bond through the phenomenon of identification, as alluded to by Freud in his publication *The Ego and the Id* (1923/2001).

According to Lacan in his essay *The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I* (1949, p. 79), the shift from primary narcissism to secondary narcissism is analogous to the evolving of the subject's specular I into the social I; that is the subject's move from a state of narcissism by which the image of its body is sustained by the image of the other, as reflected in a mirror, to a state of recognition of others as its semblables, its imaginary rivals. In Lacan's words, this moment inaugurates, "through identification with the imago of one's semblable and the drama of primordial jealousy ..., the dialectic that will henceforth link the socially elaborated situations" (Lacan, 1949, p. 79). Furthermore, Owen Hewitson relates this moment of the subject's instauration of its "social I" to the emergence of aggressivity and jealousy in the infant, as he explains in an article published in Lacanonline.com titled *What Does Lacan Say About ... The Mirror Stage? – Part I* (2010).

In the context of sibling rivalry, Lacan claims that one of the inner conflicts arising from this phenomenon is infantile jealousy, which he defines as "the archetype of all social sentiments" (1938, p. 23). Cinderella's place as the centre of her father's universe is threatened by the arrival of her two stepsisters; the recognition of these two rivals as equals, in terms of identification with their sibling's status, fulfils the precondition that according to Aristotle is required for the manifestation of jealousy: "we shall feel it if we have, or think we have,

equals; and by equals”, as cited in Roberto Harari’s book *Lacan’s Seminar on Anxiety: An Introduction* (2013).

Thus, Lacan’s assertion that jealousy represents a mental identification seems to be justified (1938, p. 24). He explores the occurrence of identification in the context of sibling rivalry as being an internal conflict between two paradoxical attitudes existing in each partner; as Cinderella helps her stepsisters prepare for the ball, she fantasises about being the one attending the dance; in her mind she “confuses” her stepsisters’ situation (their role) with her own and moreover, she mentally identifies with it (Lacan, 1938, p. 25). At this imaginary level, the child develops shame and guilt over forbidden wishes and actions. These punitive feelings alienate the child from others whom she believes to be free of such abominations and to whom the feelings of resentment and enviousness are directed (Bettelheim, 1976, p. 240). Thus, Cinderella experiences the two attitudes of “confusion” and “identification”, along with the emotions evoked by them, with a quite insignificant degree of participation from her rivals, hence the idea of jealousy being a mental identification of imaginary value (Lacan, 1938, p. 25).

“Infantile jealousy has long struck observers”, Lacan states as the introduction to this matter, whose essence is encapsulated in the following vignette (1938, p. 24):

I saw with my own eyes, says St Augustine, and I observed carefully, a young child devoured by jealousy: he was not yet able to speak, yet he could not prevent himself from going pale at the bitter spectacle of his brother at the breast.

(Hippo as cited in Lacan, 1938, p. 24)

The above scenario implies the element of aggressivity within sibling rivalry in terms of the young child's "going pale" from seeing himself being replaced by his brother at the not-long-gone source of gratification of his most primitive desires (Lacan, 1938, p. 24). Freud attributes the origin of such hostile feelings to the subject's reluctance to abandon the source of pleasure, which in the present case had been experienced by the young child within the "narcissistic perfection of [breast-feeding]" (1914, p. 94). Hence, the subject's tendency to seek for an alternative path in order to recover the primal satisfaction by means of forming an external ideal as the agency before which the subject projects the "lost narcissism of his childhood" in the attempt to re-create the lost gratification (Freud, 1914/2001, p. 94). In fairyland, Cinderella's wish to attend the ball corresponds to an unconscious wish to regain her lost place as the centre of her father's attention by replacing the paternal figure with that of the prince, relegating her ugly sisters to the background.

Lacan's viewpoint on the emergence of aggressivity in the child is similar to Freud's; the former explains this phenomenon drawing an analogy between the dynamics implied in Saint Augustine's observation and the dynamics of the Fort/Da game, as described in the previous chapter. According to Lacan, whilst visualising his brother in the act of suckling evokes aggressive feelings in the young child as being reminded of the lost imago of the maternal situation (the fort action in the game), the mastery involved in this masochistic observation of the un-weaned sibling provokes in the child a sense of triumph over this unpleasurable experience, as well as allowing the "division", which began through the weaning process, to be completed through the identification with the sibling; with the imago of a fellow human (Lacan, 1938, p. 28).

As Cinderella's stepsisters prepare to attend the royal ball, they enjoy being the centre of attention and the source of jealousy for Cinderella, who observes their joy while yearning for her lost place of preference in his father's world and wishing to re-gain it by attending the dance. Immersed in her "masochistic" reflections, Cinderella's thoughts are interrupted by a fairy godmother who grants the young lady with her wish to attend the ball; from a Freudian/Lacanian perspective, this turn of events might symbolise Cinderella's particular Fort/Da game: the mastery achieved by the masochistic activity of observing those who remind her of her lost narcissistic position (fort action) evokes in Cinderella a sense of accomplishment embodied in the imaginary presence of the fairy godmother who facilitates the process of identification with the stepsisters by assisting Cinderella in her preening for the dance where she happily re-finds (da action) the lost narcissistic gratification by being the one chosen by the Prince to become his future wife (as adapted from Lacan, 1938, p. 28).

2.3 - Oedipus Complex and *Jack and the Beanstalk*

Go away, my boy - said the big, tall woman - or else my man will eat you up for breakfast.

(Joseph Jacobs)

Once upon a time ...

... there was a poor boy named Jack whose mother sent him away one day to sell their cow, Milky-white, for it had stopped giving milk. On the way, Jack met a stranger who, in exchange for the cow, told him a riddle and offered five magic beans that 'by morning [would] grow right up to the sky'. The prophecy fulfilled and the following morning a giant beanstalk had grown up to the sky to where Jack climbed and where he found a house; the home of an ogre and his wife. In his adventures, Jack fought the giant and stole his treasure: a golden hen and a golden harp... (as adapted from Jacobs).

Bettelheim (1976, p. 193) analyses the fairy tale of *Jack and the Beanstalk* as symbolising the inner conflicts that the child is confronted with throughout the Oedipal crisis, whose particularities manifest in the stage of psychic development known as the Oedipus complex, as explored by Lacan (1938, p. 35) drawing on the theories that the father of psychoanalysis had originally discovered on this matter.

Indeed, the Oedipus complex as a pivotal concept in the psychoanalytic arena is initially posited by Freud in chapter IV of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900/2001a), specifically in his study on "*Dreams of the death of persons of whom the dreamer is fond of*" whereby the author connects his discovery of the parental influence in the psychic life of children as arousing feelings of "being in love with the one parent and hating the other", with the legend

of the King Oedipus and Sophocles' drama which bears his name, and in which the former slays his father Laius and marries his mother Jocasta; legend that according to Freud portrays the fulfilment of childhood wishes (1900/2001a).

In the case history of *Analysis of a phobia in a five-year-old boy*, Freud introduces his readers to a real-life “little Oedipus who wanted to have his father ‘out of the way’, to get rid of him, so that he might [sleep with his mother]” (1909/2001, p. 111). Hence, implied in Freud's statement are the dynamics of this complex as a two-fold phenomenon (Lacan, 1938, p. 36): firstly, there exists an increased activity of the child's genital drives which, in the search for satisfaction, attach to the his closest object, that is the parent of opposite sex, by means of sexual desire. The second occurrence is that of the frustration of the child's libidinal urges which attaches itself to a third object, namely the parent of the same sex, motivating the emergence of the Oedipal conflict.

Freud could have possibly referred to the tale of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, instead of the myth of Oedipus, to enlighten Hans about his Oedipal crisis, insofar as Jack's adventures reflect some of the struggles that the little boy was enduring at the time of his analysis (1909/2001, p. 42). As a matter of fact, in his *Seminar V: On The Formations of the Unconscious* (1958), Lacan deduces that insofar as the frustration of the libidinal drives forms the core of such struggles, the agents seen as responsible for this dissatisfaction play a relevant and distinct function at each one of the three stages through which the “adventures” of the Oedipus complex unfold (1958, p. 137).

The first moment in such adventure is characterised by the development of the pre-oedipal triangle (imaginary triangle) whereby in the mirroring relationship between two of its

vertices, Jack and his mother, the child perceives that his mother desires something beyond the child himself, namely the phallus that she lacks (as adapted from Lacan, 1958 p. 112). The child, seeking to become the object of his mother's desire, exchanges Milky-White (his primitive oral desires) for five magic (imaginary) seeds which would become a giant beanstalk (phallus), adding the third vertex that completes the triangle (as adapted from Lacan, 1958, p. 132). However, with the emergence of the real of Jack's sexual drive, the child is confronted with his mother's disappointment about the exchange; in such way the mother becomes the first agent of "frustration" in what the child perceives as a threat of castration (as adapted from Lacan, 1958, 134). Furthermore, the child's realisation that his real organ does not correspond to the imaginary phallus his mother desires evokes anxiety in the child; he must not remain trapped as his mother's desire and so he climbs the beanstalk up to the sky leading to the second moment in the adventure of the Oedipus complex (as adapted from Lacan, 1958, p. 137).

Up in the sky, lives an ogre who assists Jack in his reluctant attempts to free himself from the trap of his mother's desire; Jack and the ogre's wife are entangled in the primitive bond of a nursing relationship, for Jack is always fed by this Oedipal mother in his visits to her. Nevertheless, Lacan alleges in his seminar on *Identification* that such desire-bound attachment is to be broken by the father, the ogre in fairyland, by virtue of a demand: "thou shalt not desire who has been my desire" (1962, p. 138). Thus, in this second stage of the adventure, it is the father who acts as the agent of "frustration" by establishing the law of prohibiting incest which, besides prohibiting the mother, it regulates desire, that is, the real satisfaction of the impulse (Lacan, 1958, p. 138). Indeed, "law and repressed desire are one and the same", Lacan states as cited by Bruce Fink (1999, p. 67).

The father as the “bearer of the law”, in this third moment of the journey through the Oedipus complex, introduces into repression an ideal in the form of a promise allowing the child find his identity through the identification with the father (Lacan, 1938, p. 51). Meanwhile in fairyland, as the Oedipal battle between Jack and the ogre is coming to an end, a symbolic identification with the Oedipal father occurs; the child manages to make his the two items most dear to the giant: a golden hen and a golden harp which, once home down under the clouds, establish an unconscious connection (imago) with the symbolic father via the newly formed psychic agency of the ego-ideal, that allows the parent of the same sex become the preferred object in the process of identification (Lacan, 1958, p. 124). As a matter of fact, the dynamics of such unconscious connection clarify a paradox identified by Cormac Gallagher in his paper *The Function of the Father in the Contemporary Family* (1986), which relates to the aspect of the child’s identification with the person who has been his rival in the Oedipal triangle and not with the person desired. In the same publication, Gallagher (1986) alludes to the dissolution of the Oedipus complex, and thus to the end of this adventure, as occurring at the moment when the individual moves from the imaginary order to the symbolic order by means of the phenomenon of identification facilitated by the unconscious image of the father, that is his imago.

This second chapter was introduced by Pinnocchio’s confession to the Fairy that he had lost his gold pieces. Drawing from the theories explored in the first chapter, Lacan might interpret this situation as the little marionette being forced by this lack into the Symbolic order; into a world of words that he might have explored in the attempt to re-find such treasure (Hook, 2006). However, such a task would not have been easy for he would have had to endure three struggles: separation, competition and his finally becoming a real boy. In his adventures

through the land of meaning, he would have been guided by the stories of three fairy tales, acting as his interpreters, “speaking” a language that he could have understood when entangled in his predicaments. As explored in this chapter, the relevance of the communication established between the child’s unconscious and the world of fantasy seems to justify children’s needs for fairy tales in helping them throughout their developmental struggles.

Yet, do children really need fairy tales for a happily ever after?

Chapter Three – Do Children Need Fairy Tales For A Happily Ever After?

The open question with which the previous section concluded is posed in this final chapter as to ascertain “do children need fairy tales for a happily ever after?” A version of this formulation was proposed at the start of this project: “Do children need fairy tales?” as its working hypothesis which was drawn from Bettelheim’s premise “children need fairy tales” as proposed in his book *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1976). Subsequently, each chapter sought to explore such hypothesis and in doing so attempted to construct a response to this question.

The aim was hereof to investigate, through a psychoanalytic lens, the influential role (if any) of fairy tales in alleviating the struggles inherent to children’s early development. This required a twofold aim, as evidenced in the material of the two research chapters; firstly, it aimed at understanding the nature of the inner conflicts agitating the child’s mental life, as well as the mechanisms through which such conflicts seek to be settled, at an unconscious (phantasies) and conscious (play, fairy tales) level. The second aim of the investigation was to explore the specific implications of fairy tales on children’s development, by means of interrogating three selected fairy tales via the developmental complexes proposed by Lacan in his paper *Family Complexes in the Formation of the Individual* (1938).

As mentioned, the project was divided into two research chapters: “A fantasy world full of phantasy” and “In the land of fairies”, as the method to organise the findings in accordance with the established aims. As a matter of fact, the findings of said research make it relevant to revisit the initial hypothetical question: “Do children need fairy tales?” by summarising the

information established in the previous chapters, in order to review its relevance in terms of answering the core question of this thesis. Thus, these findings will serve as the beacon light guiding the conclusions to be drawn in this final chapter.

Do children need fairy tales? Freud may have been the first theorist to ask this question. His statement in the opening chapter of this research, “our mental life is ... perpetually agitated by conflicts which we have to settle” (Freud, 1916/2001, p. 349) laid the foundations for the work that followed. Nevertheless, it was in his essay *The Occurrence in Dreams of Material from Fairy Tales* that Freud emphasised the importance of fairy tales in the mental life of children. In his words: “It is not surprising that psycho-analysis confirms our recognition of the important place which folk fairy tales have acquired in the mental life of our children” (1913/2001, p. 281). This statement provides a relatively straightforward answer to the initial question; this response however is the product of a series of observations made by the father of psychoanalysis in his study of the human psyche.

As explored in chapter one, Freud’s theories on the phenomenon of unconscious phantasies laid the groundwork for the understanding of the nature of infantile psychic conflicts; that is their emergence, as well as their attempt to find mitigation by means of resorting to internal mechanisms, such as “phantasying”, which allow the fulfilment of the wishes that these unconscious phantasies represented (Freud, 1911/2001, p. 211). In this regard, Freud established a connection between the mechanisms of phantasy formation and dream formation as wish-fulfilment processes (1900/2001b, p. 492).

This correlation leads to the following deduction, which might support the premise that “children need fairy tales”: provided that unconscious phantasies and dreams respond to the

same psychological need of the fulfilment of forbidden impulses. Freud's assertion of the strong link between dreams and folk tales in the human psyche, as proposed in *Dreams in Folklore* (1911) examines the relation between unconscious phantasies, as being part of human psyche like dreams, and fairy tales. Bettelheim confirms such a relation by advocating the influential role that fairy tales play for a healthy mental life of children. Moreover, he claims that, like dreams, phantasies are necessary to give expression to the hidden aspects of the unconscious. Consequently, fairy tale deprivation, like dream deprivation might lead to emotional disturbance (1976, p. 36).

Bettelheim refers to such this phenomenon of "giving expression to the hidden aspects of the unconscious" as "externalisation" (1976, p. 61) by which the child projects onto a "somebody" in fairyland all the bad things which are too scary to be recognised as part of oneself (1976, pp. 56, 70). The importance that Bettelheim assigns to the mechanism of externalisation in alleviating inner conflicts had already been established by Freud's study of this phenomenon, which he defined as projection (1920/2001, p. 29). Significantly, in his paper *Projection in Folklore: A Plea for Psychoanalytic Semiotics* (1976) Alan Dundes presents a folklorist's perspective on the importance of projecting inner conflicts onto the land of folk, which reinforces the hypothesis of "children need fairy tales".

The phenomenon of projection (externalisation) was explored in the first chapter of this thesis in the context of a child's spontaneous make-believe play. The Fort/Da game, as representing a "conscious" activity through which unconscious phantasies could be manifested in their seeking to be fulfilled out in the world of reality by means of the principle of reality- testing, as proposed by Freud (1925/2001). The importance of the conclusions reached by Freud of this game, was the discovery of an instinct of mastery by which the child would repeat more

frequently the action (fort) that caused unpleasure (mother's absence) as opposed to that (da) which resulted in pleasurable feelings (mother's presence). In terms of providing further clarity to the premise "children need fairy tales", the discovery of a compulsion to repeat unbearable experiences sustains the need of children to listen to the same story on repeated occasions as if trying to find "something" in the tale that would satisfy that need to listen to it again.

Do children need fairy tales? At this point in the gathering of research findings, Lacan's theory in relation to the Fort/Da game could possibly provide some clarification on this matter. Although his answer to the question might not be as straightforward as Freud's, the new dimension which he observed and studied as taking part of the game dynamics, might serve to elucidate his possible response to the question, as well as providing with the definite evidence to draw a final conclusion for the purpose of this thesis.

As described, this new dimension introduced by Lacan's interpretation of the Fort/Da game was the linguistic dimension, whereby the child's articulation of the words "fort" and "da" was the way to "articulate" presence and absence, which responded to the child's moment of alienation by which he consented to his own disappearance (fort) from an imaginary state of being (da), stepping into the realm of the Symbolic; into the "language's [langue] world of meaning" (Lacan, 1953, p. 228).

In the context of the premise "children need fairy tales", a deduction may be drawn from Lacan's (and also Freud's) findings on the Fort/Da game: provided that the word fort represents the absence of the mother, according to Freud, and the disappearance of a "piece" of the child himself, according to Lacan. The statement 'words stand for objects when those

objects are experienced as lost” (Hook, 2006) might be extrapolated to the field of fairy tales as representing the vehicles that take the child on a journey into a world of words, of objects and of images which stand for what has been lost and is attempted to be re-found.

The analysis, in the second chapter of this project, of the three selected fairy tales is a testament of such a journey, which seems to occur in parallel with the child’s “journey” from the Imaginary order of being into the Symbolic order of being. Indeed, both adventures involve the diving into the pool of language (of signifiers), which awaits the child to find his place in it; however the finding of one’s place in the land of meaning is not an easy task, neither on fairyland as the stories of Hansel and Gretel, Cinderella and Jack reveal, nor in reality land as the lives of many a child reflect. Yet, both lands are united by the same language, a shared language of symbols that allows the communication between these two worlds, as witnessed in the second chapter in which the above fairyland characters were described to be experiencing the unconscious crises characteristic of the three psychic realities that the child must endure as part of his development: weaning, sibling intrusion and the Oedipal crisis. This interrelationship between the world of reality and the world of fantasy through language might represent the categorical evidence of the relevance that fairy tales have in the mental lives of children, as Freud had already proposed.

Thus, do children need fairy tales? Keeping in mind Maurice Blanchot’s allegation “*la réponse est le malheur de la question*” (1969), the response that follows from the evidence gathered throughout the thesis, and in particular from the deductions elucidated in this concluding chapter, is that fairy tales do seem to have an influential effect throughout children’s development at various levels; fairy tales give hope for the fulfilment of wishes, they present themselves as fantastic arenas onto which conflicts agitating the mind may be

externalised so that relief is gained after the battle, and they are always ready to be told time after time, patiently allowing inner struggles to be worked through. Above all, as already existing in the Symbolic order, fairy tales ease the child's evolving into this same order where the child attempts to situate himself in a state of "pure possibility of being" (Fink, 1990).

Returning to the question that gave name to this concluding chapter "Do children need fairy tales for a happy ever after?" it is intentional that the phrase "for a happy ever after?" has not been addressed until this point, insofar as it implies an open ending, a "to be continued", in terms of the areas for further research that have been identified throughout this work, which makes it unrealistic to suggest a definite conclusion to the initial hypothesis of "children need fairy tales".

In fact, a certain stagnation has been identified in the field of the study of the relationship between fairy tales and child development, from the point of view of Freud's most contemporary advocates, represented by the Lacanian orientation of psychoanalysis. Furthermore, the majority of studies carried out on the topic of fairy tales and psychoanalysis seem to be of a theoretical/academic nature. Thus, opening a potential further area of research, which might focus on a practical application of fairy tales as an intervention technique in children's therapy.

Thus, this tale is to be continued ...

Children yet, the tale to hear,
Eager eye and willing ear,
Lovingly shall nestle near.

In a Wonderland they lie,
Dreaming as the days go by,
Dreaming as the summers die:

Ever drifting down the stream –
Lingering in the golden gleam –
Life, what is it but a dream?

(Carroll, p. 279)

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