

**THE VALUE AND TEACHINGS OF FAIRY TALES ABOUT FAMILY
RELATIONSHIPS FOR CHILDREN: A PSYCHO-PHILOSOPHICAL READING OF
SNOW WHITE**

**O VALOR E OS ENSINAMENTOS DOS CONTOS DE FADAS SOBRE AS
RELAÇÕES FAMILIARES PARA AS CRIANÇAS: UMA LEITURA PSICO-
FILOSÓFICA DE BRANCA DE NEVE**

**EL VALOR Y LAS ENSEÑANZAS DE LOS CUENTOS DE HADAS SOBRE LAS
RELACIONES FAMILIARES PARA LOS NIÑOS: UNA LECTURA
PSICOFILOSÓFICA DE BLANCANIEVES**



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ABSTRACT

Fairy tales, despite their age, continue to exert a lasting fascination over younger generations. This article explores how these classic elements persist in contemporary culture, especially among teenagers. Through focus groups, we investigate how the themes and archetypes of fairy tales still influence popular TV series, movies, and books. Although there are adaptations and departures from the original texts, the essence of these narratives remains relevant. Critical analysis reveals deep-seated issues. Female rivalry, the pursuit of beauty, and gender representation are recurring themes. The paternal figure, symbolized by the hunter who saves Snow White, highlights the need for protection and security in the absence of the father. Additionally, Winnicott's perspective on transitional space and play as a tool for autonomy also applies to fairy tales. These stories not only entertain but also provide a narrative structure that allows young people to explore and understand the challenges inherent in growing up and separating from the familiar world. Thus, fairy tales continue to be relevant, offering insights into the human condition and preparing readers for real-world challenges.

Keywords: Fairy Tale. Family. Psychoanalysis.

RESUMO

Os contos de fadas, apesar de sua antiguidade, continuam a exercer um fascínio duradouro sobre as gerações mais jovens. Este artigo investiga como esses elementos clássicos persistem na cultura contemporânea, especialmente entre adolescentes. Por meio de grupos focais, exploramos como os temas e arquétipos dos contos de fadas ainda influenciam

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séries, filmes e livros populares. Embora haja adaptações e distanciamento dos textos originais, a essência dessas narrativas permanece relevante. A análise crítica revela questões profundas. A rivalidade feminina, a busca pela beleza e a representação de gênero são temas recorrentes. A figura paterna, simbolizada pelo caçador que salva Branca de Neve, destaca a necessidade de proteção e segurança na ausência do pai. Além disso, a perspectiva de Winnicott sobre o espaço transicional e o brincar como ferramenta de autonomia também se aplica aos contos de fadas. Essas histórias não apenas entretêm, mas também oferecem uma estrutura narrativa que permite aos jovens explorar e entender os desafios inerentes ao crescimento e à separação do mundo familiar. Assim, os contos de fadas continuam a ser relevantes, proporcionando insights sobre a condição humana e preparando os leitores para os desafios do mundo real.

Palavras-chave: Conto de Fadas. Família. Psicanálise.

RESUMEN

Los cuentos de hadas, a pesar de su antigüedad, continúan ejerciendo una fascinación duradera sobre las generaciones más jóvenes. Este artículo investiga cómo estos elementos clásicos persisten en la cultura contemporánea, especialmente entre los adolescentes. A través de grupos focales, exploramos cómo los temas y arquetipos de los cuentos de hadas aún influyen en series, películas y libros populares. Aunque existen adaptaciones y un distanciamiento de los textos originales, la esencia de estas narrativas permanece relevante. El análisis crítico revela cuestiones profundas. La rivalidad femenina, la búsqueda de la belleza y la representación de género son temas recurrentes. La figura paterna, simbolizada por el cazador que salva a Blancanieves, destaca la necesidad de protección y seguridad en ausencia del padre. Además, la perspectiva de Winnicott sobre el espacio transicional y el juego como herramienta de autonomía también se aplica a los cuentos de hadas. Estas historias no solo entretienen, sino que también ofrecen una estructura narrativa que permite a los jóvenes explorar y comprender los desafíos inherentes al crecimiento y a la separación del mundo familiar. Así, los cuentos de hadas continúan siendo relevantes, proporcionando perspectivas sobre la condición humana y preparando a los lectores para los desafíos del mundo real.

Palabras clave: Cuento de hadas. Familia. Psicoanálisis.

1 INTRODUCTION

The enchantment with fairy tales is due, firstly, to their value and importance for the processes of subjectivation that begin in childhood. We know little about the origin of fairy tales that were transmitted orally, as part of the intangible goods of the culture of various peoples. It is believed that its origin is Celtic, around the second century B.C. According to Schneider and Torossian, we will find already in Plato and in ancient Egypt, something that already resembles fairy tales as we know them today and that have been used since that time, elements of the human imagination:

Hisada (1998) addresses Plato's writings, in which older women used their stories filled with symbology in the education of children. The author cites Apuleius, a philosopher of the 2nd century AD, and his novel 'The Golden Ass', which is very reminiscent of the tale 'Beauty and the Beast'. Also in Egypt, says Hisada (1998), in the papyri of the brothers Anubis and Bata, records of fairy tales were found. Ferreira (1991) reports that the peoples of Antiquity knew the fantastic universe existing in the tales. Its plot is woven by refined matrices of the human imaginary, whose language, full of symbolic meanings and metaphors, has the ability to interconnect the conscious and the unconscious. (SCHNEIDER; TOROSSIAN, 2009, p.134)

The authors also emphasize that initially these tales were not intended for children, but over time they were adapted for them. Fairy tales are distinct from other types of narratives, in the first place, because they present magical elements and enchanted beings. Myth, in turn, is a sacred narrative of primitive and ancient peoples and has the function of explaining the origin of the universe and everything in it. If we take Greek philosophy as a starting point, we will see that the origin myths refer to how each element of the universe came to be, but the stories reveal the passions of the gods – love, envy, dispute, jealousy and most likely we will not find any happy ending.

One of the first authors to adapt European oral narratives is Charles Perrault (1628-1703) who transposed them to written history that, in addition to entertaining children, also provided moral lessons, aiming to guide and teach them, encouraging them to seek a virtuous life. In addition, it also offers practical teachings. For example, in the short story "*Little Red Riding Hood*," Perrault teaches children about the danger of trusting strangers – a lesson that remains valid to this day.

Fairy tales in general present the main character who faces a series of problems to be solved and overcome, goes through moments of great difficulty or danger, but in the end finds a happy ending.

Cashdan (2000) states that the fairy tale has four stages: the crossing, the journey to the magical world; the encounter with the evil character or the obstacle to be

overcome; the difficulty to be overcome; and conquest (destruction of evil); the celebration of the reward". (SCHEMEIDER; TORROSIAAN apud Cashdan, 2009, p.135).

Among the authors of fairy tales, it is essential to mention the Brothers Grimm who wrote more than two hundred stories:

Numerous tales were also recorded by the Germans Jacob Grimm (1785-1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786-1859), better known as the Brothers Grimm. Philosophers and scholars of Germanic mythology and the history of German law began to collect and study a large mass of medieval texts and popular stories of Germanic and French origin told orally (Robinson, 2004). (SCHEMEIDER; TORROSIAAN, 2009, p.136).

In this regard, for the Romanian anthropologist, Mircea Eliade, what differentiates the fairy tale from a saga or myth, is far beyond the happy ending: "its content itself refers to a terribly serious reality: initiation, that is, the passage, through a symbolic death or resurrection, from ignorance and immaturity to the spiritual life of the adult." (ELIADE, 1972, p. 174). In other words, the hero or heroine will always go through initiatory tests, such as overcoming obstacles, defeating the monster, deciphering riddles and performing very difficult tasks, constituting, according to the author, an initiation at the level of the imaginary. In this way, the relevance of fairy tales focuses on the preparation of the child for life, filled with 'tests', absences, imminent dangers and deaths.

Having pointed out the origins and relevance of fairy tales for the processes of subjectivation, we will dwell, first, on some aspects of Walter Benjamin's philosophy regarding the importance of narratives and, in particular, that of fairy tales.

2 WALTER BENJAMIN AND THE VALUE OF NARRATIVE AND FAIRY TALES

Walter Benjamin wrote *The Narrator* in 1936. This work presents a diversity of ideas about the art of narrative that find great correspondence with the other key ideas of his work. The first of them refers to the art of narrative with history. Now, when you tell a story, you talk about something that has already happened. History is, by definition, melancholic, because its object, the past, is absent by definition. From his Jewish ancestry, Benjamin inherits the idea that history always has a truth to offer, occupying a relevant place in the whole of his philosophy.

For the thinker, the art of narrating goes back to the manual work of medieval artisans that harmonized with the rhythm and an experience of time, qualitatively different from what we have now. The best narratives, according to him, are the ones that are least different from those oral ones that were told during the work - the art of narrating would be linked to

handicraft and manual work, in which the rhythm of the work would provide the conditions for certain stories to be told. The intonation and the narrative itself were intertwined with the threads woven by the artisan's hands, in an inseparable articulation between gesture and word. The narrator has human life as his subject and establishes an artisanal relationship with it.

Storytelling has always been the art of telling them again, and it is lost when the stories are no longer preserved. It is lost because no one else spins or weaves while listening to the story. The more the listener forgets himself, the more deeply what is heard is engraved on him. When the rhythm takes hold of him, he listens to the stories in such a way that he spontaneously acquires the gift of narrating them. (BENJAMIN, 1985, p.205)

Corroborating what we said earlier, for Walter Benjamin, it is narratives that provide a deeper knowledge about life, are able to transmit 'advice' and truths and offer a way out of the most difficult situations. Silva explains to us:

Etymologically, for experience, the word Walter Benjamin uses is *Erfahrung*. Its root is "fahr" which means to travel. In Old German, "fahr" is to cross a region, during a journey, through unknown places. And the Latin word for experience has as its root "per" (experience): to leave a perimeter, to leave the condition of what is already known, of what has already been lived, to expand experiences, events and repercussions of these new events in our lives. And from "per" also comes the word *periculum*: crossing a region, during a trip, where dangers can assault us. And, for these dangers, there is the word that is associated with *periculum*, which is *oportunus* – originating from *portus*, which means exit. So, the experiences that happen to us during a journey into the unknown, on a journey, are experiences that broaden our identity, our knowledge, our sensitivity, our condition in the world. Now, at present, with the contraction of time, experience has been abolished. Experience was something that was transmitted from generation to generation, in the sense that: communicable narratives were made as exemplary models of teachings for generations to come. (SILVA apud Matos, p. 159)

The practice of telling and listening to stories are activities as old as man himself. In this sense, orality has always been present in the genesis of all literature and especially in children's literature. According to Benjamin, the fairy tale is the first counselor of humanity, it offers comfort and help through the advice poured out of manifest and latent conflicts. In terms of narrative, for the thinker, he surpasses myth:

The fairy tale taught humanity many centuries ago, and continues to teach children today, that the most advisable thing is to face the forces of the mythical world with cunning and arrogance. The liberating spell of the fairy tale does not stage nature as a mythical entity, but indicates its complicity with the liberated man. The adult only perceives this complicity occasionally, that is, when he is happy; For the child, it

appears for the first time in the fairy tale and provokes in him a feeling of happiness. (BENJAMIN, 1985, p.215)

In this way, we will find in Benjamin not only the value of narratives through the concept of *Erfahrung*, in the construction of subjectivity, but of the primacy of the fairy tale over myth – he transmits an experience from which one can extract 'advice' for life. In fairy tales, although there are spells and magic potions that make use of elements of nature, in Benjamin's philosophy, nature is a friend and ally of man, because man and nature are works of the same creator and lament the loss of the initial paradisiacal state.

In addition, the central characters of fairy tales find happiness precisely because they have remained virtuous, even though they live miserably. They are persevering to the point of making good prevail over evil and obtain redemption, unlike what happens in myth.

Walter Benjamin highlights the fundamental importance of orality in the fairy tale tradition, a practice that he considers essential for maintaining the relevance and vitality of these stories over time. According to the German thinker, the oral transmission of fairy tales allows these narratives not only to survive, but also to transform, adapting to the cultural, social, and historical changes of each era. Through orality, stories are shaped by the collective experiences, values, and needs of each generation, ensuring that they continue to be a source of wisdom and moral guidance.

And, among the written narratives, the best are those that are least distinguished from the oral histories told by the numerous anonymous narrators. Between these, there are two groups, which interpenetrate each other in multiple ways. The figure of the narrator only becomes fully tangible if we keep these two groups in mind. (BENJAMIN, 1985, p.198)

Regarding *Erfahrung's concept*, we ask ourselves the following question: Could it be that in the contemporary world, dominated by digital technologies and social networks, are these fairy tales that are appropriated by the entertainment industry, even if they make very interesting reinterpretations, capable of providing children with this collective experience? Or is she being reduced to a mere experience – '*Erlebnis*', an inauthentic experience?

The great difference between these two concepts focuses on the idea that *Erfahrung's* concept presents the idea of a community, in which the subject is perfectly integrated, enabling him to sediment learning over time. Benjamin points out that modernity has been showing a decline in this experience, as the subject is isolated in an increasingly fragmented society.

The result was the predominance of an attitude of disorientation thanks to the fragmented character of impressions: discontinuous experience or perception, which is opposed to experience (*Erfahrung*) characterized by the attachment to personal memory and reflection: In the modern world, all psychic energies have to be concentrated in immediate consciousness, in order to intercept the shocks of everyday life, which involves the impoverishment of other instances, such as memory, and with this the 'modern hero' loses all contact with tradition, becoming a victim of amnesia (ROUANET, 1993, p. 64). (LIMA; MAGALHÃES, 2010, p.148)

Walter Benjamin's reflections on the decline of experience, in this sense, take up this question: even though fairy tales undergo adaptations and rereadings, is it still possible to make meaningful the child's approach to these tales, presented through the most diverse dynamics and media? It seems to us that, although these media offer new ways of telling these stories, they also have the merit of fixing these narratives in a way that arouses interest so that they can be read later. However, the fluidity and adaptability of oral tradition can be severely compromised in the light of Benjamin's ideas.

3 THE VALUE AND TEACHINGS OF FAIRY TALES

Walter Benjamin discusses the importance of narratives as the possibility of carrying out an experience lived and shared collectively over time. In his work, he differentiates "*Erfahrung*" from "*Erlebnis*," which refers to individual, momentary and isolated experiences, typical of modernity. Traditional storytelling is a form of "*Erfahrung*" because it transmits the accumulated knowledge and practical wisdom of generations. These stories are not just accounts of events, but carriers of deep meanings that help shape the collective understanding of the world and human relationships.

He also states that the fairy tale is the greatest counselor of children. It is in him that the true narrator is found, without a doubt he knows how to give good advice and propitiates the child that it is through courage, which is a kind of confrontation with the forces of the world of myth, that fear is lost; And then this child gets a taste of the feeling of being happy. The fairy tale passed on teachings to humanity: the kindness and friendly relationship of man with nature are present, according to Benjamin: "the character of the animal that rescues a child shows that nature prefers to associate itself with man than with myth". (BENJAMIN, 1985, p.215).

The mythical characters exist in the narrative to save human life, they are beings: just, wise, kind and consoling of humanity. The fairy tale manages to show man the path to be followed through the courage of choice and humanization from the advice that permeates it. In it, the "voice of nature" stands out, in which there is a reconciliation of man with her, showing how part of it and they as friends show the elective affinity between souls who are

good and their tendency to help each other. It is not uncommon in these tales to see animals helping the heroes in their journey. As with myths (observing their differences), fairy tales provide models for human conduct, as we follow in the footsteps of Benjamin's philosophy.

Both in Benjamin and in psychoanalysis, narratives always have a utility that can be translated as a moral teaching, a practical suggestion or a norm of life.

Fairy tales come with this purpose, as they address issues that refer to conscious and unconscious conflicts experienced during life and especially during childhood, facilitating the emotional and psychological maturation of the human being. 'Fairy stories speak to our conscious and our unconscious, as they easily coexist in our unconscious.' (BETTELHEIM, 2007, p.242)

However, for Mircea Eliade, in contemporary times, fairy tales will become entertainment, and with the cultural industry, entertainment. However, its structure retains its value and its initiatory character:

Although in the West the marvellous tale has long since become a literature of amusement (for children and peasants) or of evasion (for the inhabitants of the cities), it still presents the structure of an infinitely serious and responsible adventure, for it is reduced, in short, to an initiatory plot: in it we always find the initiatory tests (fights against the monster, seemingly insurmountable obstacles, puzzles to be solved, impossible tasks, etc.) the descent into hell or the ascension to Heaven (or - what comes to the same - death and resurrection) and marriage to the Princess. It is true, as Jan de Vries rightly pointed out, that the story always concludes with a *happy ending*. (ELIADE, 1972, p. 173)

In view of the previous considerations, we will seek to understand the relevance of fairy tales for the formation of the *psyche* through the psychoanalysis of these narratives and, especially, of the tale of Snow White, which we will discuss below. Following the thoughts of Walter Benjamin, in addition to the issues already addressed, we can observe in his work reflections on specific themes that stand out for the depth of his cultural and historical analysis. A striking example of this is his interpretation of the short story "Sleeping Beauty".

Benjamin reflects on how "*Sleeping Beauty*" can be interpreted as a metaphor for power dynamics and the passage of time in monarchical societies. The sleeping princess's long wait symbolizes stagnation or a transitional period in monarchies, in which power is suspended, awaiting a significant change, often represented by the arrival of a new ruler. This interpretation suggests that the tale goes beyond a simple fantasy story, also functioning as an allegory of the political and social realities of its time.

By analyzing fairy tales such as "*Sleeping Beauty*," Benjamin points out how these narratives reflect a society's anxieties and hopes, often related to shifts in power and

uncertainty about the future. Thus, the tale can be read as a commentary on the cyclical nature of history, in which periods of inactivity and expectation are followed by moments of renewal and transformation.

Fairy tales are filled with symbols and metaphors that carry deep meanings, allowing for multiple interpretations and analyses. Each story offers a rich tapestry of symbolic elements that reflect psychological, cultural, and social aspects.

In addition, some professionals use fairy tales in the clinical context, both in the treatment of adults and children, to help understand and express feelings, anguish, and emotions that are often difficult to understand on their own. This practice is especially common in children who find themselves in situations of vulnerability or illness, as they tend to identify their pain and frustration with the adversities faced by the characters in the stories. This identification facilitates the openness to talk about their own problems, as they recognize themselves in the narratives of the tales.

Reading or narrating fairy tales is considered a powerful tool to provoke deep reflections, even when the child is alone in his room, whether during the day or at night. By recalling history, you can feel more comforted, finding relief and understanding in the midst of your own challenges.

History, in addition to its reflective value, is seen as one of the transitional tools that can enrich the therapeutic work, as highlighted by Hisada Hilst, when addressing the encounter that occurs, during the analytic session, between the patient and his analyst. It is in this meeting space, known as potential space, that the process of illusion manifests itself, influencing the formation of human subjectivity. The use of stories in the analytical context has the power to improve the patient's communicative pattern, promoting a more effective way of expressing and understanding their emotions.

According to Caldin, the pleasure generated by reading fairy tales produces joy, and this joy has a therapeutic effect. This effect is particularly significant because children feel a deep relief and satisfaction when they see that, at the end of the story, everything ends well. In this way, fairy tales not only entertain but also play a crucial role in the emotional healing and psychological empowerment of children.

Tales and stories are, therefore, an excellent transitional medium, acting as a kind of therapeutic play. According to the theory presented by Winnicott, it is through playful action that the individual is able to favor human maturation, emphasizing, with this, the importance of emotional and psychological development.

In this way, the use of stories in a clinical context not only enriches the therapeutic experience but also plays a crucial role in the healing process and the patient's personal growth.

Winnicott, when discussing the importance of play in psychoanalysis, states:

I can now restate what I am trying to convey. I wish to draw attention away from the sequence of psychoanalysis, psychotherapy, play material, play, and propose all this again, in reverse. In other words, it is play that is universal and that is proper to health: play facilitates growth and, therefore, health; play leads to group relationships; Playing can be a form of communication in psychotherapy; Finally, psychoanalysis was developed as a highly specialized form of play, in the service of communication with oneself and with others. (WINNICOTT, 1975, p.70).

The child begins to engage with the stories by adding details, characters, or even remembering events that the narrator may have left out. These narratives are essential for children to build their identity, better understand family dynamics, and, in addition, develop a significant affective bond with those who are telling the story.

The analysis of fairy tales proposed by Bruno Bettelheim in "*The Psychoanalysis of Fairy Tales*" and Winnicott's reflection in "*Playing and Reality*" on the relationship between mother and baby offer a rich and complementary perspective on human emotional and psychological development, especially in childhood.

By connecting the ideas of Bettelheim and Winnicott, we can see how the tale of "Snow White" can be interpreted as a narrative that addresses the breakdown and transformation of the mother-child relationship. The stepmother symbolizes the negative aspect of the maternal figure, which threatens the development of the child's autonomy. However, it is through overcoming the challenges presented by this threatening figure that Snow White, like the child, manages to reach emotional maturity, a theme that we will address below.

4 THE PSYCHOANALYSIS OF FAIRY TALES: ANALYSIS OF SNOW WHITE

In the story of Snow White, according to the Brothers Grimm, it is possible to notice the queen's happiness at being pregnant. She was in the castle sewing something near the window watching the snowflakes fall softly, when suddenly she pricked her finger with a needle. When she saw her blood flow and mix with the snow, she found the image beautiful and wished that her daughter had skin as white as snow, lips as red as blood and hair as black as the wood of the window. After giving birth to a girl named Snow White, the queen passed away: "Some time later, she had a daughter, who was white as snow, red as blood, and had hair as black as ebony. They named her Snow White, but when she was born, the queen died." (GRIMM, p.1)

After the birth of his heiress and the death of the queen, the King after a year, remarries. The new queen was beautiful and extremely vain. So she couldn't bear the thought of anyone being more beautiful than her. In possession of a magic mirror, the queen asked him: "Who was the most beautiful woman in the country?" And he always replied that he was the queen. However, time passed and Snow White, with each passing day, became more beautiful. Once, when Snow White was already a beautiful girl, the mirror answered the usual question, stating that Snow White was the most beautiful woman.

The queen's vanity and the idea of not being the most graceful in the kingdom made her ask the huntsman to take the girl to the forest and kill her, also demanding that he bring her liver and lungs so that the cooks could prepare them for her dinner:

The queen swallowed, turned yellow and green with envy. Every time she looked at Snow White after that, she hated her so much that her blood even boiled in her chest. Envy and pride grew like weeds within the queen's heart until she could not have a moment of quiet, neither night nor day. Finally, he sent for a hunter and said:
- Disappear with this girl in front of me. I want you to take it to the bottom of the forest and kill it. To prove that you really did it, bring me her lungs and liver. (GRIMM, p. 01)

The hunter, however, was not brave enough to kill the princess because of her beauty (he either took pity on her or imagined that the animals of the forest themselves would soon do this job). Snow White fled through the forest at night, very frightened and afraid of the dangerous and hungry animals. After walking for hours, he saw a small house. So, she went in and noticed that everything was small, organized and clean, she looked at the table where there was a white tablecloth, seven plates, forks, knives and mugs, she ate and drank a little of each plate and mug, she looked for a place to take a nap, one bed was too small, another was too wide, one was cramped until she found a perfect one to sleep in.

The dwarfs arrived from work in the mine and noticed that someone had entered their house: the chairs were messy, the dishes were missing food, some mugs were empty, and their beds were unmade. Until one of them realized that there was someone lying on his bed, when they got close they found Snow White so beautiful that they did not have the courage to wake her:

"God in heaven!" they cried, "God in heaven! What a beautiful girl!" They were so amazed at her that they didn't even wake her up, but they let her continue sleeping in the bed. The seventh dwarf slept with his companions, an hour with each one, and then the night was over." (GRIMM, p. 06)

The dwarfs woke up early as usual and asked the girl what her name was, she replied, apologized and told her story. Compassionate, the dwarves allowed her to stay, as long as she kept the house clean, washed the dishes, and prepared dinner.

The dwarfs said, "If you take care of our house, cook for us, make the beds, wash, sew, and darn our clothes, and keep everything neat and tidy at all times, you can stay with us, and you will never lack anything." - Good! - said Snow White - I would love it... And that's how she took care of the house. Every morning they went out to the mountain to pan for gold and silver, and every night they came home and she had to have made dinner. But she spent all day alone, and the kind dwarfs thought it good to warn: "Be very careful with your stepmother. She'll soon find out that you're here. Don't let anyone in, ever. (GRIMM, p. 07)

Days later, the queen went to the mirror to ask again who the most beautiful woman was, firmly believing that the mirror would give her the answer she expected. The mirror then betrays Snow White. She had been tricked by the hunter. Faced with this, he decides to kill her personally. First, she dresses like a peasant girl and sells Snow White a beautiful bodice. This one, as soon as she put it on, ran out of air, almost suffocated to death and, luckily, the dwarves arrived in time to save her. The second attempt was the sale of a hair comb that, when placed, would cause the princess to fall into a deep sleep, again the dwarves saved her. In the last attempt, the stepmother poisoned an apple – and as soon as Snow White bit it, she fell to the ground as if she were dead.

The dwarves, when they found her fallen, imagined her dead. They then placed her in a glass coffin so that everyone who walked by could see her beauty. One day, a prince approached the coffin, came across the princess and decided to take her, because he had been amazed and enchanted by such beauty. She wanted to pay the dwarfs to keep her. His sudden passion also did not let him move away from the princess. Moved, the dwarves allowed him to take her, as they found no solution to the situation. As the coffin moved, the piece of apple that was stuck in Snow White's throat came loose and she awoke.

The prince told her what had happened and confessed his love to her and immediately asked her to marry him. Snow White accepted the proposal, as she had also fallen in love with the prince.

Snow White's stepmother was invited to the wedding. After getting ready for the ceremony, he stopped in front of the mirror and asked again if she was still the most beautiful: the mirror replied that the most beautiful was the new queen.

Lady Queen, you are the most beautiful one that is here, but the young queen is a thousand times more beautiful than all the beautiful ones out there. Hearing this, the evil one cursed and cursed. She was so horrified that she didn't know what to do. At

first he did not want to go to the wedding, but he could not resist the curiosity of seeing the young queen. The moment she entered the hall, she recognized Snow White and was so terrified that she couldn't even move. But they had already ordered two iron slippers to be put on the coals. Someone took them out with tongs and placed them in front of her, who was forced to put on her red-hot shoes and dance until she fell dead. (GRIMM, p. 12)

For Walter Benjamin, fairy tales can show man the path to be followed through courage, choice and humanization from the advice that permeates him. In it stands out the "voice of nature" in which there is a reconciliation of man with her, showing him as part of it, and they as friends, evidencing the elective affinity between souls that are good, and their tendency to help each other. It is not uncommon in these tales to see animals helping the heroes in their journey. As with myths (observing their differences), fairy tales provide models for human conduct, as we follow in the footsteps of Benjamin's philosophy.

Both in Benjamin and in psychoanalysis, narratives always have a utility that can be translated as a moral teaching, a practical suggestion or a norm of life.

Fairy tales come with this purpose, as they address issues that refer to conscious and unconscious conflicts experienced during life and especially during childhood, facilitating the emotional and psychological maturation of the human being. 'Fairy stories speak to our conscious and our unconscious, as they easily coexist in our unconscious.' (BETTELHEIM, 2007, p.242)

The analysis we intend to make about the tale of *Snow White* is not exhausted in the space available for this article. We aim to present some key ideas that focus on family relationships, in the light of the work *The Psychoanalysis of Fairy Tales* by Bruno Bettelheim. Thus, Bettelheim's analysis of "*Snow White*" can be enriched by Winnicott's understanding of the importance of play and transitional space in the formation of identity. Both perspectives underline the complexity of family relationships and the importance of distancing and symbolic elaboration for healthy emotional development. Ultimately, fairy tales, such as the one in "*Snow White*," not only entertain but also offer a narrative structure that allows the child to explore and understand the challenges inherent in growing up and separating from the family world.

The challenges inherent to growing up and separating from the family world, addressed by both Bruno Bettelheim and Winnicott, are central to understanding children's emotional development. In "*The Psychoanalysis of Fairy Tales*", the author argues that tales like "*Snow White*" are not just entertainment stories, but symbolic narratives that help the child to face and elaborate the emotional conflicts that arise as he grows up and distances himself from the family nucleus.

In this tale, the stepmother represents an archetypal challenge: the confrontation with a maternal figure who not only ceases to be protective, but who becomes a direct threat to the child's development. This conflict symbolizes the painful but necessary process of separation of the child from the mother, a process that is both psychological and emotional. The stepmother, in trying to eliminate Snow White, personifies the difficulties that the child faces when trying to establish her own identity, independent of maternal expectations and influences.

Winnicott, in "*Playing and Reality*", offers a complementary perspective when discussing the concept of transitional space, which is the psychological environment in which the child learns to exist separately from the mother, developing a sense of *autonomous self*. According to Winnicott, this space is crucial for the child to be able to begin to explore the outside world, while still feeling safe within the structure of their family world. Playing is a central activity in this process, as it allows the child to experience independence in a safe and controlled way, creating a balance between dependence on maternal care and the need for autonomy. It is worth highlighting at this point, the stepmother's magic mirror: a powerful symbol of vanity and narcissism. The mirror not only reflects the stepmother's obsession with her own beauty, but also functions as a device that feeds her insecurity and cruelty, as she finds herself constantly threatened by Snow White's youth and purity. These two elements, vanity and narcissism, also adulterate the healthy relationship between parents and children.

When we connect Bettelheim's and Winnicott's ideas, we can see that the challenges of growth and separation are represented in fairy tales as critical phases of child development. The distancing from the maternal figure, whether represented by the mother or a stepmother, requires the child to face fears, insecurities and, eventually, discover new ways of existing in the world.

Another metaphorical representation of this growth that we can highlight takes place in the space of the forest. This represents the child's inner world, a space where he must confront the unknown and his own weaknesses in order to emerge stronger and more independent. The forest, where Snow White takes refuge, can be seen as the transitional space described by Winnicott, in which the character is removed from maternal protection and under the imminent threat of her stepmother. It is in this scenario that the child will discover himself and build his identity.

This process of isolation and self-knowledge, although painful, is essential for emotional growth, reflecting the need for separation from the maternal figure so that the child can fully develop. It is also worth mentioning the figure of the hunter, which carries an equally deep symbolism, in which his figure represents danger and salvation. It represents the

possibility of moral choice, showing that even in a world full of evil, there is room for compassion and a change of heart. This act of mercy also allows the narrative to continue, leading Snow White to face new challenges and eventually find her own identity and strength.

Therefore, the huntsman in "Snow White" can be seen as an embodiment of human duality—the ability to harm or protect, to blindly obey cruel orders or to act in accordance with higher moral principles. It serves as a catalyst for Snow White's journey, pushing her into the woods, where true transformation and growth can happen.

For Bettelheim, fairy tales provide the child with a symbolic script to deal with these challenges. They show that while separation and growth can be painful and daunting, they are also necessary for the development of a solid and resilient identity. For Winnicott, the process of playing offers a means by which the child can smooth the transition between dependence on the mother and the discovery of himself, as a separate individual.

Therefore, both Bettelheim and Winnicott underline the importance of addressing these challenges of growth and separation, recognizing that they are key steps in healthy emotional and psychological development. Fairy tales, by dramatizing these internal struggles, allow children to symbolically experience these difficult transitions, preparing them for the real challenges they will face as they grow up to become independent adults. Thus, the tale of "Snow White", like many others, uses these symbols to explore universal themes such as the conflict between good and evil, envy, ephemeral beauty, and the inevitability of change.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

First of all, it is necessary to emphasize that the article has the merit of deepening the interfaces between philosophy and psychology within the academic sphere through the fairy tale. Second, because fairy tales, understood as oral narrative, with *Erfahrung*, contribute significantly to the processes of subjectivation.

In this way, we intend to contribute to our studies on psychoanalysis in an attempt to offer possibilities for qualitative changes to occur in the relationships between parents and children, making them healthier. Thus, we intend to contribute to the advancement of an interdisciplinary modality of studies, as it recovers the dialogue of various areas of knowledge, making this production significant, as it demanded research from us, a necessary condition for the continuation of our studies.

We emphasize that fairy tales play a fundamental role in the subjective formation of children, providing not only entertainment, but also learning and emotional development. Their origin dates back to ancient times, being transmitted orally through various cultures

before being adapted and recorded by writers such as Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm. Initially intended for an adult audience, these tales have been modified over time to meet children's needs, introducing moral lessons and narratives structured in challenges, overcoming, and happy endings.

In addition to their playful character, fairy tales represent a process of symbolic initiation, as pointed out by Mircea Eliade, preparing the child to face real-life challenges. They connect the conscious and the unconscious, allowing little ones to develop emotional resilience and better understand the world around them. Thus, the relevance of these narratives goes beyond simple enchantment, becoming a valuable means for the psychological, cultural and philosophical development of humanity.

From Walter Benjamin's reflections, it becomes evident that fairy tales have an essential narrative value, functioning as transmitters of experience and knowledge throughout the generations. Their traditional orality allowed these stories to be molded to the needs and values of different times, providing not only entertainment, but also fundamental advice and teachings for the construction of subjectivity. However, Benjamin points out that modernity brought with it a rupture in the transmission of this experience (*Erfahrung*), replacing it with fragmented and superficial experiences (*Erlebnis*). The advancement of digital media and the entertainment industry, although it has contributed to the diffusion and reinvention of fairy tales, also raises the question of whether these new forms of narrative still preserve the richness and depth of oral versions.

Thus, the challenge of today's society is to find a balance between innovation and tradition, ensuring that stories continue to play their formative role in childhood. Despite the changes in the way tales are told, their power to convey values and assist in children's emotional development remains, as long as there is an effort to preserve their narrative essence and their connection to the human experience.

From the above, it is evident that fairy tales have a significant value both in cultural transmission and in the psychological and emotional formation of the individual. As presented by Walter Benjamin, these narratives are more than simple stories; They carry profound teachings, transmitted over generations, helping to build the collective experience and understand the world. In addition, the psychoanalytic analysis of authors such as Bettelheim and Winnicott demonstrates how these stories help in the emotional maturation of children, allowing them to face fears, internal conflicts, and life challenges in a symbolic and transformative way. Even in the face of modernization and the influence of the cultural industry, fairy tales maintain their initiatory structure and therapeutic potential, serving as a

valuable tool for the development of human subjectivity and for the understanding of interpersonal relationships.

The psychoanalytic analysis of "Snow White" allows us to understand that fairy tales are not only playful narratives, but also symbolic representations of the emotional and psychological challenges faced in child development. From the contributions of Bruno Bettelheim and Donald Winnicott, it can be seen that this tale approaches, in a metaphorical way, the separation of the maternal figure, the construction of identity and the emotional maturation of the child.

The stepmother represents the necessary break between the child and maternal protection, while the forest symbolizes the transitional space in which the process of self-discovery takes place. In addition, Snow White's journey illustrates the challenges of growing up and seeking autonomy, showing how facing adversity is fundamental for the formation of an independent *self*.

Fairy tales, therefore, play an essential role in the child *psyche*, helping the child to elaborate their fears, insecurities and desires through symbolic identification. At the end of the narrative, the outcome of Snow White reaffirms the overcoming of challenges and the achievement of maturity, demonstrating that the journey of growth, although full of difficulties, leads to development and independence. In this way, "Snow White" remains a timeless example of the structuring function of fairy tales in the emotional and psychological construction of the individual.

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