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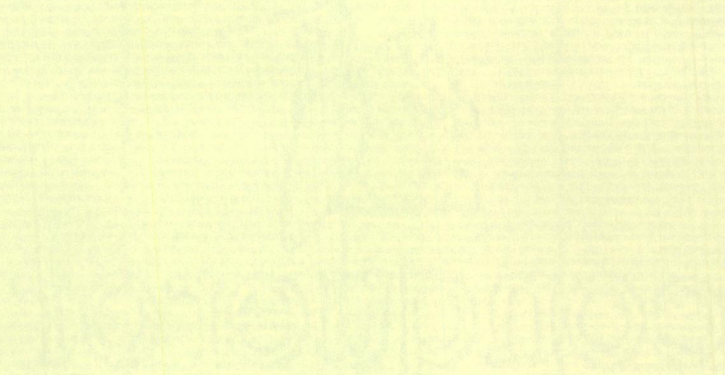
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SONIC THE HEDGEHOG VERSES LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

FAIRYTALES, VIDEO GAMES AND THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD'S CREATIVITY

INTRODUCTION

"The Sultan summons the poor man and demands to know the
secret of his wife's happiness. `Very simple', he replied.
`I feed her the meat of the tongue'. The Sultan sends out
for all the tongues money can buy - ox tongues and lambs
tongues and larks tongues; still his sad Sultana withers
away. He orders his litter, makes her change place with
the poor mans wife; she immediately starts to thrive
becoming the picture of health, plumper, rosier, gayer.
Meanwhile, in the place, her replacement languishes, and
soon has become scrawny and miserable as the former queen.

For the tongue meats the poor man feeds the women are not
material, of course. They are fairytales, stories, jokes,
songs; he nourishes them on talk, he wraps them in
language; he banishes melancholy by refusing silence".

> - An analogy of fairytales by Angela
> Carter taken from "From the Beast to
> the Blonde" by Marina Warner p.X1

The meats of the tongue - Fairytales, fantasy, escapism, solace
from the rigid doctrines of society: belief in magical, mystical
tales strengthens and nurtures the child and adult, conveying the
message that all things are possible and ultimately good and what
is right will win true.

To the young child, confusion can render the world a daunting and
obscure trial, without the benefit of previous experiences on
which to make judgements. Fairytales provide an elixir of hope
and fantasy - an example of human interrelations and morals which
are easily understood. The lessons learnt are unique and
fashioned by the individuals interpretation - coloured by visions
of each minds eye - allowing the child to develop free to be
themselves.

In our highly evolved technological society, computer games have superceeded much of the fairy and folklore of yester-years. Children are incited as if from birth, bombarded with sterile performed images - "A Cathode Ray Nipple" prepare the child to function in an automated society where the object of the game is merely to win.

Fantasy and development have become or possibly always were, an integral part in human existence, the search for the self and the cultivation of creativity. In one sense the computer is the modern day fairytale, however, they do not provide the scope of an ancient art which teaches the child or adult to find solutions to his problems, understand his emotions among other things, develop his imagination and creative outlet, allowing him to turn what could be a negative experience of life into a positive and fruitful existence.

It is my intention in this essay to investigate how fairytales (as an example of a traditional childrens pastime), which have an existence in toy-boxes since the fourteen-hundreds and probably before, address childrens need for direction and tuition guiding them, in comparison with computer games - the modern entertainment. Nowadays, an awareness of a child's development of learning, creativity and self-awareness has become an essential part of schooling and play. In order to examine this, we must understand the child's ability to see underlying moral messages and their development of this way of thinking, how children identify with games and how they are motivated by them.

Understanding simple concepts earlier leads the confused child into a chronological comprehension of social communication learnt easily through play. For it is what one enjoys that a deeper level of meaning can be extracted and can be contributed towards reality. Questions must be asked as to how our journeys into the imagination, belief in all things being possible or how the lack of fantasising can contribute to our adult existence and the move toward or array to conformity as reason becomes a part of our thinking.

As technology develops, the computer games of today are replacing almost every kind of child's play. With the emergence of virtual reality even the sacred movement children enjoy has been stolen and transported into a visor on a screen leaving traditional games behind for the gluttony of competition. A book cannot project the florescent flashing lights so easily obtained by the switch of a button, while it sits on a tale, yet sparkling images filled with natural colour can live in the imagination, if only they are sought.

CHAPTER ONE

According to Frued the purpose of psychoanalysis is to enable man to accept the problematic nature of life without being defeated by it. The psychoanalysis of children's thinking is an attempt to soften the blow of their problems by the use of understanding. Research is constantly being done by psychologists from Frued to Young so that people can enjoy a better psychological standard of life. Studies of Human behaviour, Motivational Analysis, Perception, Concept formation, Personality Creative Thinking, all contribute to a happier state of mind for them later in life.

Between the ages of birth to adolescence the capacity and extent to the learning capabilities of a child are enormous. What is in question here is what a child should or should not learn or to be more exact, what is benifical for a child between their crucial ages and how this benefits him when he is older. For many young children most learning is gathered during play-time where he is open to trust, which first began between mother and child. The child while playing is open to make decisions for himself and to what he likes doing most. He is free to be creative and through creative learning the child can search for himself.

Let us firstly attempt to define creativity. Although many analysts have found difficulty in this definition and have come to the conclusion that there is no clear definition of it, Dr. W. Winnicott, a child psychologist, has explained creativity as; that which motivates the individual for worthwhile living. He has used an example of un-creativeness as an aid to understanding creativity. He believes that uncreative living as a relationship to external reality should be recognised as something to conform with or being caught up with the creativeness of someone or something else, i.e., schizoid. He says;

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"The creative impulse is therefore something that can be looked at as a thing in itself, something that of course is necessary if an artist is to produce a work of art, but also as something that is present when anyone - baby, child, adolescent, adult, old man or women - looks in a healthy way at anything or does anything deliberately. Such as making a mess with faces or prolonging the art of crying to enjoy a musical sound. It is present as much in the moment by moment living of a backward child who is enjoying breathing as it is in the inspiration of an architect who suddenly knows what it is he wishes to construct".

- "Playing and Reality"
- Dr. Winnicott p. 69

The primary years of a child's schooling incorporates learning through play. The child plays in the outside world. Although he plays this way, he is still within his own reality, allowing him to take these experiences and learn from them that experience is the groundwork for a better quality of living. A child will learn more within the area of play because during this time he is preoccupied with what he is doing. Patricia Marks Greenfield mentions in her book "Mind and Media", that "Sesame Street" is an important television programme for children as the contribution of playing and learning is exciting to the child. Where a child plays he takes objects or ideas from reality juxta-posing dreams and fantasies (also an import part of creativity and learning) and uses them for his own inner reality and feeling.

Dr. Winnicott has written in his book "Playing and Reality" an interesting chapter on "Playing, Creative activity, and the Search for the Self". He says;

"It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to create and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self".

Experience in playing comes from the object or idea taken from reality as we have said earlier. The child in playing relates to the object in the same form or another, taking it out of an everyday location and invents a new place for it, it is only through this form of exploration that later in life an adult can become creative through inventing, intuition, originality using imaginative and divergent thinking. It could be said then that through playing a child clarifies his emotions and problems.

Jean Piaqet, a French analyst studying a child's concept formation and the evolution of children's thinking, has investigated also the capacity for creative outlet in a child, monitoring children from birth to adolescence, their formation of concepts. It is interesting to note that children have only been given the opportunity to be children in the last few centuries, before they were treated much like adults.

Piaqet has narrowed concept growth down to three important factors or origins, firstly it comes from a genetic origin, rooted in the nervous system, secondly, something that accumulates with age and thirdly, a growth that develops in chronological stages. Piaget similarly agrees with Winnicott in that a newborn baby has the ability to be creative as much as a great artist. He believes that a child between seven to eight has the ability to develop concepts for himself. He has monitored this by a mathematical theory of number reversal, although at their ages, there is a failure to understand the difference between hypothesis and reality. The child adjusts the facts to meet his own reality. For example, Elkind has explained this by the cognitive conceit; if a child realises at this stage that adults are not always right and a child sometimes is, he distorts this in his own mind by the assumption that if adults are sometimes wrong, they are then wrong in most things and that if a child is sometimes right, then he is right in most things. This is most evident in children's stories like "Winnie the Pooh", "Peter Pan" and "Alice in Wonderland".
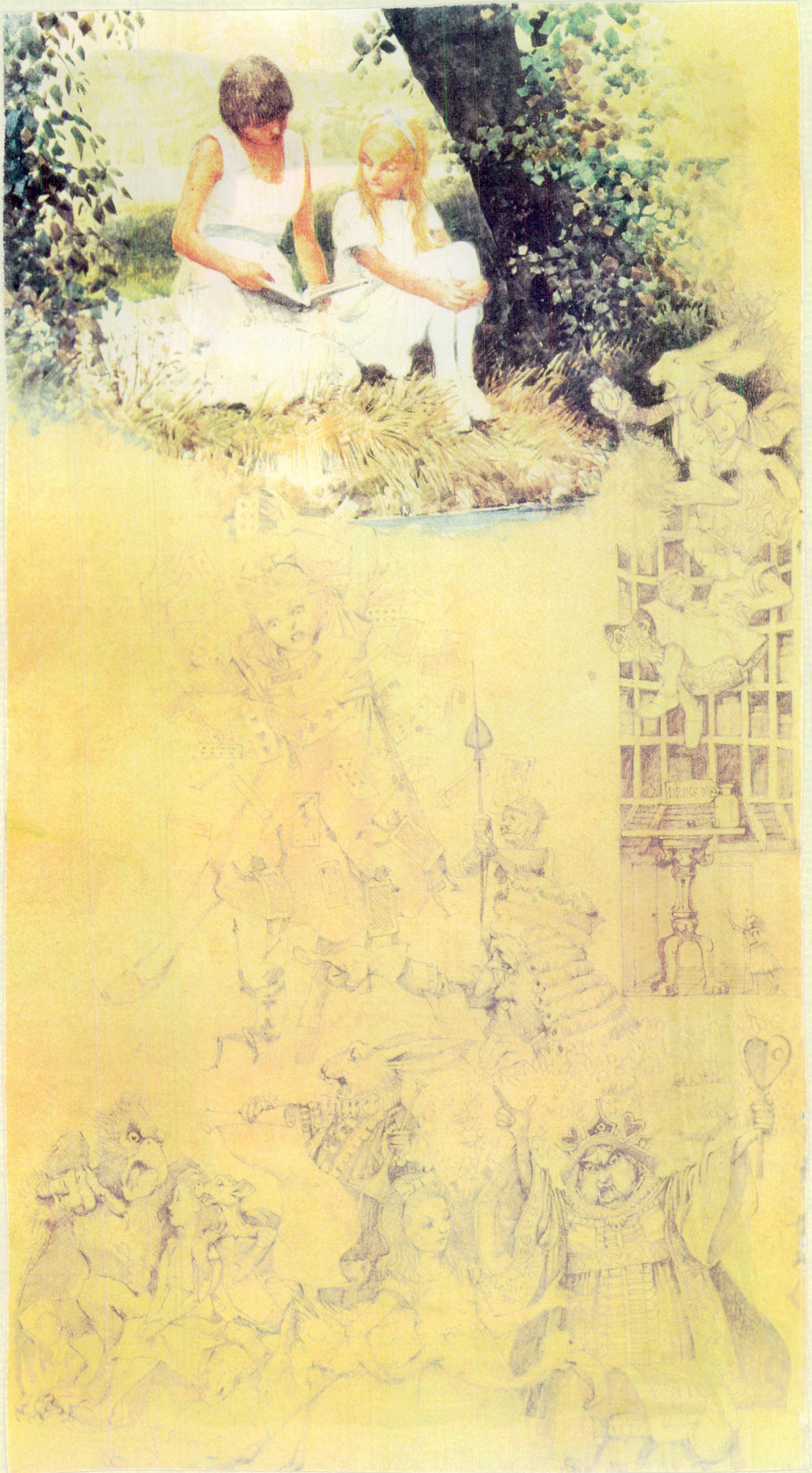
"ALICE IN WONDERLAND" BY LEWIS CARROLL

The character the child identifies with in each of these stories, becomes smarter (so to speak) than the adults who cast off their adventures as being silly. In "Winnie the Pooh", Christopher Robbin is presented to us as an intelligent young boy who solves many problems for his woodland friends and indeed his own bear. In "Alice in Wonderland", Alice was seen as silly by her nanny but in fact she was telling the truth and the same is to be found in "Peter Pan". Although in these stories the message is not to see the parents as wrong but to have the strength of character to carry on with ones own imaginative games alone and not to be disheartened. This gives the child a sense of importance within his own world.

Between the ages of nine and ten, a child's concept and understanding evolves further. Piaqet believed he understands weight, distance and temperature for example, yet cannot fully comprehend density or volume or indeed justice or cruelty. We have all heard the saying "children can be cruel". This requires subtle reasoning according to Piaqet.

It would seem most probable then that it is through creative thinking and the development of concept understanding that a child learns in play-time. Yet there are other factors the child learns from their dreaming and fantasising. In fantasy what happens is immediate, therefore the child has the benefit of many fast experiences even though they are not real. Winnicott says that of two dreams, one case study had "formerly been looked in the fixity of fantasising" was now released for both dreaming and living two phenomena that are in many respects the same, he also says;

> "that creative playing is allied to dreaming and to living but eventually does not belong to fantasising"
>
>   - "Playing and Reality" p. 31

Therefore the child who lives in dreams understands through trial and error in his imagination what is right and wrong for himself. Children according to Dennis Child, prefer to play alone or when

with others, side by side without much mixing, so then they have the chance to develop moral judgements themselves. Could it be said then that play is a "natural education".

It is however widely known that they do take imaginary voyages in their minds and have imaginary companions. It is seen as important that a child escapes to his imagination and wrong to prevent them from doing so. It was old-fashioned thinking that believed the imagination was for the insane or the creative. Or also that the creative who used their imagination were in fact insane. Van Gogh was one example of this. Today the imagination is encouraged, as Catherine Lee has written;

"Children ought to muck around with sand, pretend to be pirates, fire their fingers at each other, and love stories which transport them to another world".

- The Growth and Development of Children p.15

She also says;

"The imaginative play of young children is real to them because they are still discovering the difference between what is in their own minds and what is outside fact. As they grow older, children become conscious of their own identities and are able to watch what is going on around them in a more detached way. They can decide then to pretend and when to stop and thus make-believe games gradually turn into dramatic play in the adult sense".

- p. 71

The value of imaginative play is encouragable as it helps them in their development. As we have said earlier, because play is fun, children relax and are at home with themselves. While dressing up or role playing realistically or in their imagination, they pretend to be other people which gives them the chance to feel like the parts they are playing. This teaches them or gives them some kind of understanding of adult roles and

responsibilities to each other.   Like other forms of play, it releases anxieties and worries bottled up in their minds.

By being creative, making things, role playing, imaginative play children tell us what is in their minds without words. Childrens imagination are stimulated by many outside influences but sometimes children draw on local settings for fantasies and based on their knowledge. Let us take an example from an extract from "The Development of the Imagination" by David Cohen and Stephen A. MacKeith. They discuss a young girl named Joy who lived with three sisters. She fantasised or day-dreamed about fairies that lived in a part of a forest near her house. The say;

> "but Fairyland was also a place to escape to. A place away from the noisy public life of the family. It was always comforting. Nothing dangerous happened. It was a very gentle world"

p. 39

We can see that it is not only a child alone who has imagination, it is a child in need of his own time to create a personal world by expressing personal feelings. Another story of childhood imaginings was told by Kate, aged 7, and Brian, aged 10. Their imaginary world lasted three years. They were brother and sister.   Their teddies lived in "Petsland", "Petsville", "Juville" and "Hamville". The president "Edward Smythe-Holand" ended in jail through drink. The events in their world were often based on real events. It was an offence not to work unless you were a mother. The children went to school and were taught by a "Miss Peabody". Kate liked her. Kate and Brian say that it "lifted" restrictions of the real world. In "The Development of the Imagination", Stephen A. MacKeith and David Cohen have written of imaginative play;

> "The imaginative play of young children is real to them because they are still discovering the difference between what is in their own minds and what is outside fact. As

they grow older, children become conscious of their own identities and are able to watch what is going on around them in a more detached way. They can decide when to pretend and when to stop and thus make-believe games gradually turn into dramatic play in the adult sense. Six and seven year olds begin to dramatise favourite stories and poems, usually a leader in the group giving sketchy directions and the others speaking their parts as they play. They use the dressing up clothes and any materials to hand. Gradually their spontaneous plays develop into more carefully planned performances with prepared parts and properties made by children. Advice and help with the arrangements are sought by adults, tickets and programmes are written out and the audience is organised. Thus, again, in infant and junior schools, creative and imaginative play is closely interwoven".

p. 71

We can see now the value of creative and imaginative play and when children learn or develop this form of personal expression. It also is important not to prevent children from their little rituals. I can recall being aged six or seven and a little friend called `Audrey' invited myself and another friend to her house because she had a wardrobe that when it was opened a ladder was behind it and it went up into the clouds and reached another land. We were excited and trundled off down the road for our adventures in Audrey's wardrobe. When we got to the door her mother was very annoyed, gave out to Audrey and made us go home. We were very upset and felt very stupid for believing such a ridiculous story. It is wrong to make a child to feel silly because of their imagination. Childhood is a short-time and it should be cherished and enjoyed to the full extent.

"The word fairy in the Romance languages indicates a meaning of the wonder or fairy-tale, for it goes back to a latin feminine work, fata, a rare variant of fatum (fate) which refers to the goddess of destiny. the fairies refer to the goddess of this kind, for they too know the course of fate. Fatum, literally, that which is spoken, the part participle of the very fari, to speak, gives French fee, Italian fata, Spanish Lada, all meaning fairy and enclosing connotations of fate; fairies share with Sibyls knowledge of the future and the past, and in the stories which feature them, both types of figure foretell events to come, and give warnings".

> - "From the Beast to The Blonde"
> - Marina Warner p.15

This quote can be said of fairytales, for they too give warnings of events to come. The fairytale is a manual of life to come. An encyclopedia of the good and bad that will face us in many guises in our everyday life. The big bad wolf, the fairy godmother or goblin king are what face us outside the fantasy of play. The fairytale while it presents to us a frilly, interesting language, throws the blatant facts before us in a gentle informative manner. We understand that Hansel and Gretal's parents have disowned them in the forest, yet the horrific realisation of the facts are blunted by the comfortable and well thought out words. A rational explanation of Hansel and Gretal's situation could be very confusing to a child who needs a solution to his conscious thoughts, yet the fairytale works deeper into the child's sub-conscious mind, so that when he sleeps he can piece together the answers to many questions in dreaming and fantasising.

Fairytales are difficult to originate as many emerged from "gossips" and "old wife's tales". Also it is difficult to speak about fairytales in general as different fairytales from different countries have many alternative meanings derived from

religious connotations and nationwide beliefs and customs. Charles Perrualt, famous for stories like Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Red Riding Hood, Bluebeard among others, published "Histories ou contes du temp passe" in 1697, the Brothers Grimm, published "Children and Household Tales" in 1812 to 1857, Hans Christian Anderson's collection dated from 1837 to 1874, each had different versions of similar tales, yet there were the popular tales but not the only ones. Many variations from different countries are widespread. Suffice to say fairytales have been in children's playrooms and on adult bookshelves for well over a century.

The history behind fairytales (as we will examine later in more detail) is as interesting as the tales themselves. So adults and children alike can reap the benefits fairytales offer. The symbols the fairytales have are mostly fantasy, yet beliefs in the different eras are where many of the explanations live. Although fairytales were mainly read by a young female audience in times past, as they were deemed fanciful and unintellectual for boys. Today we should be of a different opinion, for fairytales do not plant false notions in children's minds.

The definition of a fairytale reads as a story that conveys a message or moral. In comparison to the fable which through stories of animals attempts to make man appear to be less intelligent than he thinks. The fairytale is similar in that it attempts to teach man morals, yet the morals are seen by a protagonist who watches what happens for wrongdoers.

The fairytale consists of the hero and the enemy. It is written in such a way that the reader learns the mistakes and lessons of the hero. For a young child, an abundance of messages or ideas at once can be confusing. In an attempt to clarify a theme, the fairytale polarizes ideas, i.e., they are singled out so that one idea does not overshadow another. This enables a child to understand and have preference over certain more interesting parts of the tale. Bruno Bettelhiem has made an analysis of polarization with regard to "Hansel and Gretal" in his book

"BLUEBEARD" BY HARRY CLARKE, 1922.

"The uses of Enchantment";

> "In a girls oedipal fantasy, the mother is split into two
> figures; the pre-oedipal wonderful good mother and the
> oedipal evil stepmother".

also

> "After they have become familiar with "Hansel and Gretal",
> most children comprehend, at least unconsciously, that what
> happens in the parental home and at the witches house are
> but separate aspects of what in reality is one experience.
> Initially, the witch is a perfectly gratifying mother
> figure, as we are told how "she took them both by the hand,
> and let them into her little house. Then good food was set
> before them, milk and pancakes with sugar, apples and nuts.
> Afterwards two pretty beds were covered with clean white
> linen, and Hansel and Gretal laid down in them and thought
> they were in heaven". Only the following morning comes a
> rude awakening from such dreams of infantile bliss. "The
> old woman had only pretended to be so kind; she was in
> reality a wicked witch....."   - p. 163

Children today spend much of their time alone watching television
(as we discuss later in Chapter Three). Although it is
beneficial for a child to be surrounded by others his own age,
the fairytale is helpful in teaching the child about
independence. The child (reader) is associated with one
character (as before) - the hero. With the exception of Hansel
and Gretal and a few others, most fairytales tell the story of
one hero. This enables the child to understand that it is
acceptable to be alone and to rely on one's own thinking, in some
respects it brings the child into his own head. Many teenagers
experience insecurity during adolescence, due to the fact that
they feel uncomfortable alone and feel a need to be popular and
known to be in the company of others. If the fairytale shows a
child about independence, this could be a helpful message in
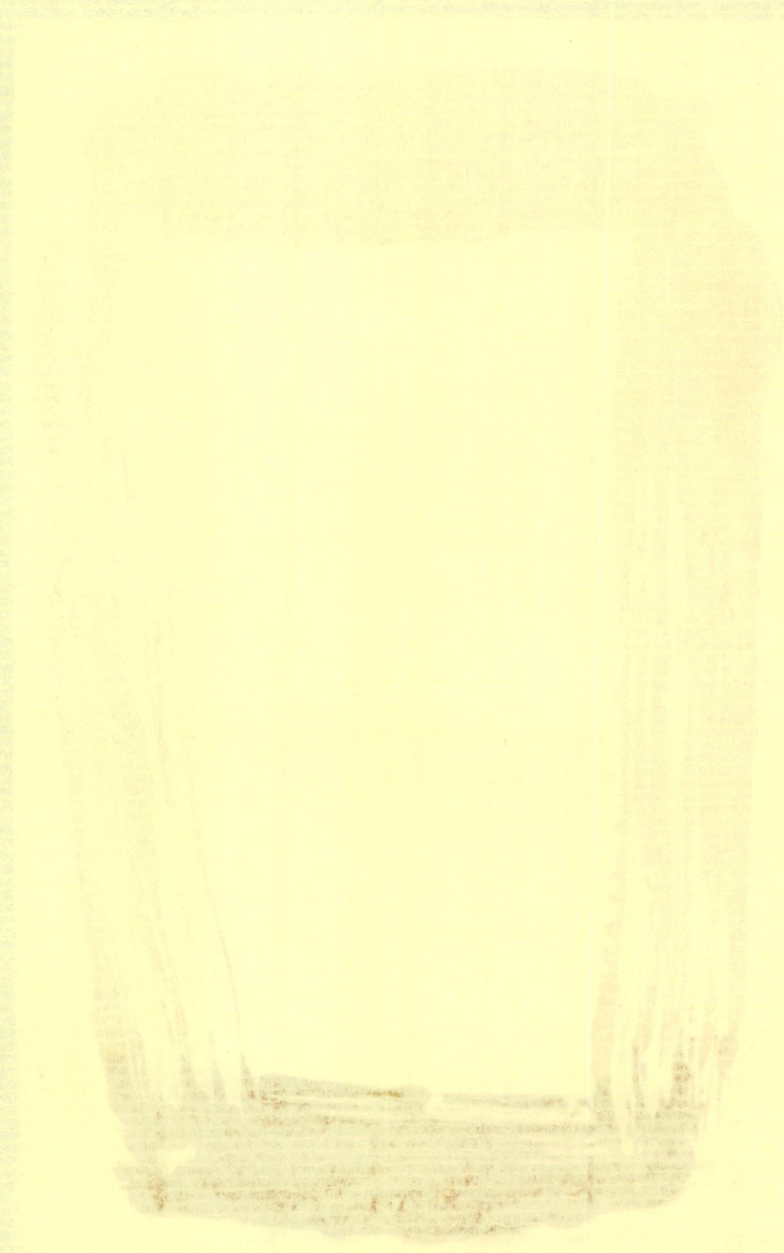later years. Another interesting

Frontispiece by Arthur Rackham
from *Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, 1900

"HANSEL AND GRETAL"

point in regard to this would be that a child alone in the fairytale is often helped by animals and nature, for example "The Queen Bee" - a story of a young boy and his brothers finding their way in the world. The youngest boy at different intervals on their journey prevents the older brothers from hurting the animals. The King's three sons go to seek adventure, the two eldest sons mock the youngest simpleton as he cannot get through life as easily as them. They go through the forest, the eldest brothers come across an anthill and they want to stir it up so that they can see the ants hurry about in fright carrying off their eggs. The simpleton protests, so they carry on. They come to a lake where ducks were swimming. The two eldest want to catch a couple and cook them and the youngest son protests "leave the creatures alone, I will not suffer them to be killed". Then they came to a bees'-nest in a tree which overflowed with honey. The two eldest sons wanted to make a fire beneath the tree so that the bees would be stifled with smoke and they could then steal the honey. The simpleton protests further. Finally they arrive at a castle where in the stables stood many horses made of stone. They saw a grey-haired man, who fed them and showed them somewhere to sleep. The whole castle and it's contents had been turned to stone and the task was to free the castle from it's enchantment and the person to do the task could marry the princess. The first task was to collect one thousand pearls from the moss in the forest. The eldest brother set out and because he did not finish the task before sunset, was turned to stone. The second brother undertook the task and also failed, he too was turned to stone. At last it was the simpleton's turn. He searched the moss but became tired and began to weep. Along came one thousand ants with one pearl each and put them in a heap. The next thing he had to do was take the key out of the lake to the princess sleeping chamber. The ducks whose lives he saved, swam down and got it for him. The last and most difficult task was to choose the youngest and most beautiful daughter of the king out of the three identical princesses. The only difference was that they had, before they went to sleep, eaten a different sweet, one sugar, one syrup and one honey. The queen bee of the hive he had saved earlier, settled on the princess with honey on

her lips who was the youngest. The spell was broken and they
were married.

This tale sets the child hero apart, helped by nature. So that
the child can learn that help can be got from places other than
the obvious. Also it promotes strong morals with regard to
nature.

It is thought nowadays that many fairytales (due to the fact that
they were written in a different era) are not relevant to present
day. Yet the messages of good and bad are timeless. In any age
there is a wrong and right way of looking at things. It is also
a consideration that the "happily ever after" notion is an
unrealistic idea for children to understand. The positivity
within this shows a child that things can work out even in the
most bizarre of circumstances and that negative thinking can lead
you morally down the wrong path, for it is always the wicked
character in the fairytale that comes out worst. Good will
always reign over evil. The ending also prevents the child from
the anxiety of lose ends. As Angela Yannicopoulou says;

> "Fairytales, on the other hand, supply their readers with
> the depiction of a moral outline which governs the universe
> and applied to every case regardless of nature and specific
> situations. Thus, fairytales always end with triumph of
> good over evil in spite of the calamities which unfold in
> the stories, the reward of the good hero and severe
> punishment of the villain culminates the plot."
>   - "Fables and Children" p. 27

The fairytale enchants the child with the wonder of the tale he
reads. Children today especially, rarely grow up in a secure
family background, the fairytale provides the child with heros
for him to be guided with. The fairytale offers a path for the
young child to take his first approach into the world. It takes
the problems of a child seriously and offers reassurance against
fear of being deserted (as in Hansel and Gretal), sibling
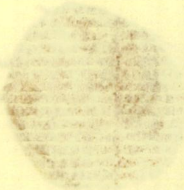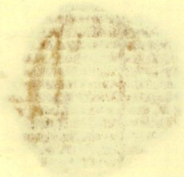rivalry, vanity (Snow White), oedipal conflicts and growing up.
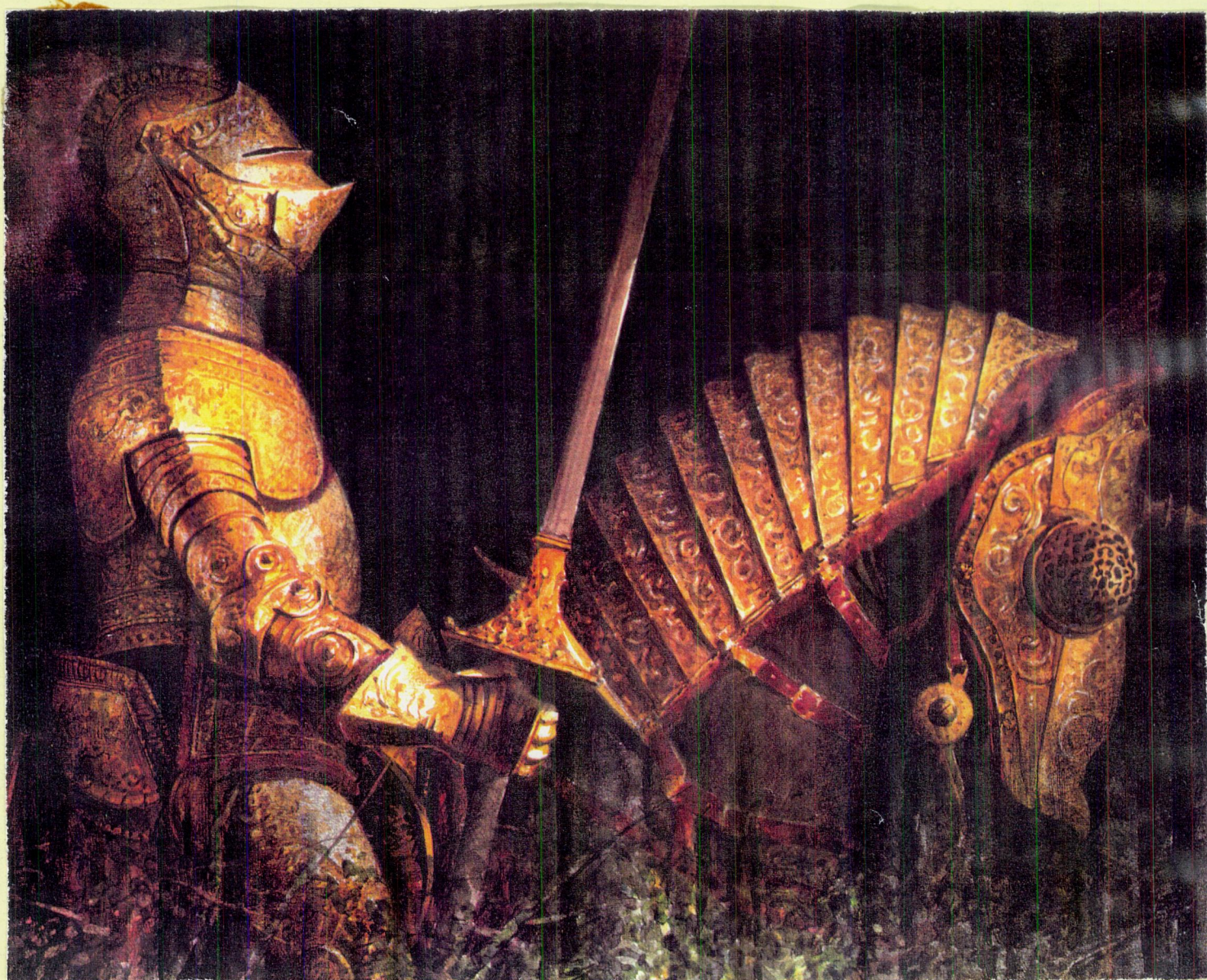
"THE KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOUR"

Fairytales direct the child toward his identity which can become an all too confusing choice for him. The private internal dilemmas of the child are brought out for him in a manner to which the child understands. It is a place where he can learn by the mistakes of others without having to endure the pain of the experience himself. Fairytales, unlike religion, myths and fables, do not attempt to make their message realistic or gallantly convey a similar problem in a particular fairytale that relates to him and resolve it in his own way with his own experiences. That is why some children prefer some tales to others, it is an understanding of the problems of one or more tales that he can identify with. The child needs magic because rational answers to who he is, where he came from or why he is here would be uncomprehensible to him. The child needs to find out for himself the answers to these questions and they are within the fairytale.

Many feminists have outlawed fairytales on the grounds of sexist connotations towards the female characters. Questions of sexism with respect to young girls being revered by their parents by princes have come into question. Oedipal conflicts arise in many children from the age of approximately five to eight or nine. In the case of the young girl, she is jealous of her mother because she has such affection for her father. Rather than being sexist, it is perfectly normal for a young girl to be rescued by her oedipal "handsome prince". In my opinion it does not promote an embedded notion of marriage in a child. When she reached the age of marriage, she will not marry because of an oedipal conflict. A child can be told (boys and girls alike) that they too will someday marry like their fathers and mothers. To no avail, again, the parental logic is unbelievable to the child, yet the fairytale suggests fantasies that a child could never concoct alone. The child's vision of the hero or heroine which he puts himself in, rectifies these problems in a simple gentle manner. It is important for a child to experience the confusing oedipal stage for him to develop as a conscious mature individual and that children are not hidden away from this lesson which could cause problems for them in later growing up.

Leading on from the child's misunderstanding of adult issues through adult explanation, the fairytale explains through the use of opposites and simplification. The good characters often times are treated simpler so that the child chooses them because they have a better knowledge of this character in relation to themselves, which is more amicable.

Even though the fairytale ends "happily every after", the evil in the fairytale is ever present. A child becomes a "monster in his own eyes" if what he believes contradicts what his parents say. So if they teach him all men are good and the child believes otherwise, this could be damaging to his personality. This is somewhat similar to Elkinds cognitive concept.

Let us take to example one fairytale. "Snow White" is an obvious choice due to it's overwhelming popularity probably due to the Walt Disney presentation of 1937. It is however somewhat difficult to trace the changing variations of the story. Before the brothers Grimm version, Snow White's own mother was jealous of her and constantly persecuted her. It was due to the religious beliefs of the time that it was changed to fit in with the moral codes of the day. So in 1819 the evil stepmother was introduced so as to protect the mother figure. In the original story the mother pursues the daughter to murder her being insanely jealous, she is unsuccessful and dies of fright when the moon tells her, her daughter is alive and more beautiful than her.

We have discussed earlier that fairytales deal with the post-oedipal age as we are not told anything of the child before seven, a possible explanation in this case could be that the oedipal conflict occurs in Snow White when she reaches the age of independence as a person. The Queen's vanity is somewhat like Narcissus, who had an obsessional love for himself. So much so that he became swallowed up in his own reflection, his vanity, that it lead to his ruin. The tale subtly shows the child the oedipal conflict as it shows how Snow White gives in to the Queen's bid to make herself more beautiful and shows the difference between the outcome of the two characters.

VANITY IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.
"THE OLD PROCESS AT THE TOILET TABLE"
— JEREMIAS FALAK

Bruno Bettelhiem has the theory that if in an oedipal conflict the child is not given love by the same sexed parent, then the child will become jealous. If the child will not allow this jealousy because it is an unfavourable feeling, then he will reverse it to believe that mother is jealous of him, changing it from inferiority to superiority, again, similar to the cognitive conceit. Also, a normal human reaction to the situation would be for her to reject the mother. In the story, this could have dangerous implications for the reader, instead she continues on allowing the reader to be free of guilt.

The oedipal conflict is elaborated by the use of the huntsman whose mission is to kill Snow White. The hunter is an unconscious representation of the father. Fathers are quite hard done by in fairytales. Why did Snow White's father not send armies out to find her or why did he do nothing to stop his beloved daughter being antagonised by his wife? Fathers remain silent in many fairytales. "Beauty and the Beast" and the Grimm's "The Maiden without Hands", a story of a father who sells his daughter to the devil and she must cut off her hands to save herself. Marina Warner has told a story of Saint Barbara from "The Book of The City of Ladies" by Christina de Pizan;

"Because of her beauty, her father had shut her up in a tower .... (he) sought a noble marriage for her but she refused all others for a long time. Finally she declared herself a Christian and dedicated her virginity to God. For this reason her father tried to kill her, but she was able to escape and flee. And when her father pursued her to death, he finally found her and brought her before the prefect who ordered her to be executed with excruciating tortures ......"

- "From the Beast to the Blonde"
- Marina Warner p. 343

The huntsman also serves another purpose in Snow White. The inter-connectivness of fairytales brings us back to the "Three Little Pigs" and "Little Red Riding Hood" and their encounter

with "The Big Bad Wolf". It is here we realize the protective
nature of the hunter. Although it may be remarked upon here of
the unrealistic nature of the fairytale, we look to Angela
Yannicopolou who has written;

> "fairytale creates an overtly idealized picture of life.
> The world described in fairytales is not the world we know,
> but the world we might wish to live in".
>
> - "Fables and Children" p.28

The idealized King and Queen and their ostentatious royalty
serves to parallel the absolute power of the child's own parents.
The huntsman exaggerating this by the oedipal nature and the
hierarchal values of a hunter in the time the fairytale was
written. Indeed the hunter was an aristocratic figure, as
hunting was a pastime of the rich.

I have said that the King and Queen are the parallel to our
parents of absolute power, but we have already seen how the
father seems to be the weaker of the marriage. This is where I
must include the importance of fairytales for parents as well as
for children. A meek parent is detrimental for a child as sub-
consciously this leads to a disrespect for the parent on the
child's part.

In some versions the beginning of "Snow White" reads;

> "A Count and Countess drove by three mounds of white snow
> which made the Count say "I wish I had a girl as white a
> snow". A short while later they came to three holes full
> of red blood at which he said "I wish I had a girl with
> cheeks as red as blood". Finally three black ravens passed
> by. As they drove on they encountered a girl as white as
> snow, as red as blood and with hair as black as the raven,
> and she was Snow White."

Here again we can see the interest and importance of the
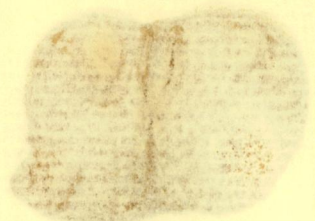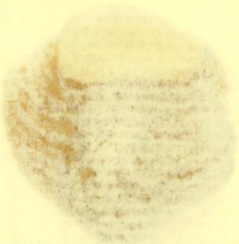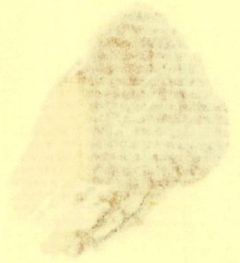fairytale for adults. The whiteness of Snow White signifies

DISNEY'S REPRESENTATION OF "SNOW WHITE"

sexual innocence and the blood red of her cheeks represents sexual desire. In the sub-conscious according to Bruno Betlelheim, the number three is the number most significant with sex. Yet the number three is also a pre-conceived message or warning of the events to come. The three drops (as some versions begin with) or holes of blood are each a message or warning in themselves. Firstly the initial drop signifies menstruation. The second drop is the symbol for the breaking of the hymen during sexual intercourse. The final drop of blood indicated the blood spilt during childbirth - the three essential drops of blood in the journey to childbirth.

In addition to this, the number significance of the seven dwarfs, who look after Snow White, have deeper historical meanings. According to pre-christian theories, the seven widely known metals were each related to the seven little dwarfed miners which in turn were related to the seven planets which circle the sun. There were also different phallic connotations of the dwarfs, these sexless little men who burrow dark holes into the centre of the earth.

The child learns further about the morals of narcissus as Snow White, through her own vanity, invites the Queen in her many guises, after repeated warnings by the dwarfs to let nobody into the cottage. She gives into the Queen dressed as a beggarwomen and she offers her laces to make her more pretty and a comb to make her hair more beautiful. Each time she gives in to her temptation. She finally collapses leading to her temporary downfall when she eats the red half of a poisonous apple, as did Adam and Eve and Helen of Troy (who began the trojan war after chaste gave her an apple). Incidentally the apple in religious iconography symbolizes the breast.

Snow White is encased in a glass coffin and visited by three birds, the owl which symbolizes wisdom, the raven representing nature consciousness and the dove symbolizing love. In all fairytales the period of sleep signifies the clarifying of problems or of heavy psychological burdens, much like reality

where sleep cleans the mind. Snow White's name is interesting
in this respect as when the snow covers the ground everything
under it sleeps. She reaches maturity and emotional awareness
and possibly sleeps through adolescent traumas while she is
encased in her coffin and as in all fairytales, true love brings
happiness as a handsome prince carries her away causing her to
cough up the piece of apple lodged in her throat and become
revived.

The abundance of juicy language, interesting facts and
imaginative quality attached to the fairytale incorporating
talking pigs, good and bad fairies, coaches turning in to
pumpkins, sea monsters, storks, handsome princes, beautiful
castles, mischievous children, edible confectionary houses,
plants that reach to the sky opening doors to other worlds , are
timeless wonders that will educate children and adults who are
not afraid to enter the kaleidoscope of their imagination.

Although the contents of this discussion of the importance of
fairytales is only the tip of the iceberg, we can let our minds
wonder at the extent of knowledge and learning the fairytale
houses. I will leave you with an end thought;

> "Fairytales flicker between the real and magical world and
> the gulf between reality and dream almost ceases to exist.
> In their world the gulf between animals and men has not
> been opened, the distinctions are not so sharp and magical
> as everywhere. A whole man, fairies, spirits, pixies,
> elves and other supernatural beings, people, the world of
> fairytales. Even when ordinary men and women appear in
> those stories, they deserve admirable abilities of
> transformation, miraculous happenings, inconceivable
> experiences."
>
> - "Fables and Children"
> - Angela Yannicopolou p. 29

CHAPTER THREE

In recent years, video games have become the most commonplace objects in the bedrooms of young boys and girls and indeed are the tools most frequently used for entertainment and enjoyment in children's spare time. There is an increasing fear among many who share the opinion that these games may encourage negative qualities such as aggressiveness among children. Yet despite this, the continued use and development of these games is inevitable.

Although computer games here have many qualities which prove valuable to the child's learning abilities and enjoyment, the balance seems in many ways to be against enhancing creative development and encouragement to excessive computation. A quote from a leading magazine "Nintendo" reads;

"The art of fighting (which is what the game is about really) is a highly spiritual concept - or so the programmers would have you believe. To illustrate this, each character has two energy bars. One of these is a regular physical energy bar. Every time your character executes one of his special moves he loses power from his latter bar. However, keeping the X button held down causes your character to meditate regaining lost energy. By the same token, hold the A button induces your chap to taunt the opposition, an ego deflating exercise which saps their spiritual strength. This battle is fought on two levels - the physical (i.e. battering their head in) and war of the soul - maintaining enough energy to use your own special moves whilst endeavouring to keep your toes too low for them to do the same"

- Nintendo Magazine

Television it would seem leads young children to the attraction of the video game, as they would appear to be an extension of programmes due to the ability of the player to interact or

1

control the contents of the screen. Television programmes possess the exciting visual imagery, yet the lack of control disables the child, who is so entranced by the presence of a goal which the computer game possesses. it is just this that could be a damaging factor for a young child. The goal inherent in every computer game is to win, the morals of this are quite important, yet the repetitiveness of it could have a self-centred aggressive and somewhat anti-social theme. The nature of this game is an ambitious battle toward a higher level either by obtaining more coins or slaying ones opponent. The speed of the movements are increased as the game proceeds requiring more concentration, so that the player becomes only aware of the screen and the objective. Therefore the morals of the game, it would appear become an important predominant in the child's mind. As the sub-conscious works, in a dream sequence jumbling up ideas which are constantly appearing, these morals could become a part of the child's reality.

It is at this point that we must discuss the violent tendencies the video games project. Popular games including "Street Fighter", "Mortal Combat", and "King of the Fighters" are a few of the games that obviously the object of the game is to bash your opponent to death. It's quite incredible how blatant the violence is projected in these games. An extract from a popular video game magazine reads;

> "So you've had your ass well and truly kicked, your energy is depleted and there's a big bloke shouting something about "showing no mercy". It seems that death is truly your only friend - or is it. "Rare" have incorporated a feature whereby wily players on their last legs can input a special move and regain one precious pixel of energy. Not much admittedly but while in this state they are able to inject double damage on their opponent. Hooraaarrgghh!"
>
> - Nintendo Magazine
> - July '94 p. 95

Patricia Marks Greenfield in her book "Mind and Media", has quoted Daniel Anderson saying that video games have violent content, T.V. has violent content and comic books have violent content. He says that there has long been the belief that the violent content in these pastimes may teach violent behaviour. He says that our society has found a new medium where there is violent content and again he say that the demand for these violent mediums is insatiable.

This is, in my opinion, side stepping the problem or question. Popularity may be predicting the use of violence within the video game, yet this does not condone it. The majority of video game users are aged between eight and thirteen. We can not let young people choose the morals os such an impressionable media just as we cannot let them choose suitable programmes for children's viewing times. Also, television, films and comic books are no comparison to video games. Each media in itself promotes different ideas and are used by different people. Also, strict guidelines have been made for the content for children's viewing in both films and television. The lack of movement and interaction and television special effects in comic books could not be seen as harmful as a full colour moving depiction of a violent scene. Also the lack of the child's control over the situation coupled with this renders the violent comic books somewhat powerless in comparison to the television or film and so too could be said of these in comparison to the video game.

A survey in "Understanding Childrens Development" by P.K. Smith and Helen Connie quotes;

"that watching violent television leads to aggression, rather than vice versa"

- p. 112

In their surveys they have found that in America the average child by the age of 16 will have spent more time watching television than being in school and will have seen 13.000 killings. Two two year old children were tested in a research

"FRAME FROM "STREETS OF RAGE 3" TAKEN FROM "1995 VIDEO GAME BUYER'S GUIDE".

laboratory in an apartment type setting where they were exposed to two actors beginning a friendly conversation then acting aggressively towards each other and then reconciling. It was shown that while this was going on the children showed signs of distress and aggressiveness toward each other. Also in later months the same test was taken and they showed excess amounts of aggressiveness towards each other, proving that the older the learning child, the more effect the violence has. So that a child between the ages of seven to eleven would be highly effected by the violence. This is where the connection can be made between the video game and television. Surely if the child is effected so much by the violence on the screen, he could be effected by the violence on another screen. Even though the video game's depiction is not realistic (and it is only a matter of time before it is) the interaction of the player balances this out, making it just as influencing.

Here is it important to discuss what effects the violent nature of the video game has on the children. It is particularly evident that boys are a larger audience than girls with regard to the video game. I have put the question to four video shops in Dublin and in each, the assistant has informed me that boys outnumber girls most definitely in rental statistics. This has many implications. Does this mean that video games could bring about a separation of the sexes? For if boys play with video games, surely the congregation of them together over a period of time without the disinterested girls could create a situation where little is in common with the two, creating a larger gap than there already is between young boys and girls.

Again Patricia Marks Greenfield says;

> "This sex difference has important social implications. In crowds around game machines, boys far outnumber girls. This may be a serious problem because it appears that games are the entry point into the world of computers for children. If the child's interest in computers beings with games, then the fact that the most common computer games

are aggressive and violent fantasy.. Themes may have the
effect of turning many girls away from computers."

- "Mind and Media" p. 94

Although video games could have an adverse effect on childrens
moralistic minds, computers play an important part in our life
and without them, life today could prove quite different. So
this point is quite valid as the separation of the sexes through
video games could bring about the separation of the sexes in the
work place. Social conditions of adults could be changed in the
next few generations as many more men will socialise with men
which cannot be a positive thing, as men and women must interact
for there to be a balance within a personality.

Video games have many positive qualities also and it is unfair
to rule them out completely without considering the beneficial
skills they provide. For example to play a video game it is
vital to be able to take in many kinds of information at one
time. The brain must be alert for the hand/eye co-ordination to
work which plays the same part as many of the elementary material
problems given to us in early schooling. This kind of "parallel
processing" deters the lazy mind. Other learning skills a video
game provide are spatial integration, orientation skills and
flexibility.

Video games also have been proven to help the learning ability
of children, so too could be said of television programmes like
"Sesame Street" have taught children important morals of
equality, learning from others, doors to other languages etc.
Also very young children could be enticed to learn difficult or
uninteresting projects with the help of video games, television
and audio equipment. Most good montessori schools provide
childrens programmes such as "Bosco" or "Play School" in pre-
school years. Although here we must make the distinction between
computer games and television evident. Even though they are
completely different things they are connected in some ways. The
attraction of the video game comes from the popularity of
television as we have said earlier and the lack of physical

involvement with television in which the video game provides. The moving imagery and skills of the games are taken from television. Therefore television, through computer games has a direct effect on the playtime of children. A quote from "Mind and Media";

> "Thomas Malone analyzed the appeal of the computer games, starting with a survey of the preferences of children who were familar with a wide variety of computer games in computer classes at a private elementary school in Palo Alto, California. The children ranged in age from about five to thirteen, and the games spanned the range from arcade games, to simulations to adventure games to learning games visual elements were important in the game's popularity: graphic games such as petball (computer pinball) and Snake 2 (two players controlling the motion and shooting of snakes) were more popular than world word games such as Eliza or Goldilocks".
>
> p. 88

Now that we have realized that television is the main influence of video games, we must assess the stereotyping of sex roles within the video game through television. Kevin Durkin in "the Social world of the Child" has commented on the fact that the more television children watch the more stereotypical their views become.

We have noted earlier that children enjoy to play alone, yet the video game is a little extreme in this regard. As the child is transfixed by the screen and has little attention for anything else around him, he has little time for interaction at all. Some video games are two-player games, but the child is not playing with the other child. He is playing alone with a more challenging opponent - one who is not programmed with the same predictable moves, which have a certain code than can be cracked with time. So this pastime is a solitary one. The solitariness of the video game could be attributed to many things. Firstly the addictive qualities of the game as we have mentioned before

lead the child to keep striving toward the goal that is given in the initial stages of the game. The constant playing of the game for hours on end would alienate the child from other children playing even due to the time-consuming length of time these games take up (some go on for ten hours or more) and this is only if the child can play straight through from beginning to end - which of course he can't at the initial stages of playing he must learn the rules and strategies of it. Therefore the child is taken away from other childrens pastimes or children playing. We also have to take into account that most video game users have more than one game, therefore even more time is spent at the screen.

CHAPTER FOUR

Let us now assimilate all the facts before us and make an attempt to distinguish which - the fairytale or the video game is more beneficial for a learning child and why. How does a child relate to each of these pastimes? Firstly, in considering the message of both, we can figure out in what context they are presented. The message of the fairytale is that a struggle against difficulties on everyday life is unavoidable and an essential part of human existence. The message of the computer game generally speaking is to strive to win and beat the opponent, to gather as much material possessions to do so - or to stay alive. The similarities are that, within human nature it is imperative to have the survival instinct. Although both are exaggerated they follow opposite directions. The fairytale is a clever well-thought out, sometimes violent method of reaching an emotional goal, yet the computer game is a purely violent and anti-social method of achieving one's aims.

So how does the child relate to both of these? As we have made a detailed analysis in chapter two of oedipal conflicts, separation of the characters, polarisation and many other moral strategies of the fairytale, we note that it is designed to teach the child morals whilst he is enjoying a story about someone possibly his own age. He in fact becomes the character and reader and therefore because of the similarities of his own problems, can relate to the story and morals. The video game however, if it does deal with real people, they tend to be older either gangsters, warriors, boxers or other violent characters. I don't see how a young child can relate to any of these characters, especially with the morals attached to the games. The games do not seem to be on the child's level of understanding, for how can he separate the idea that it is only a game but you must mutilate your opponent in order to be the best!

We have examined in Chapter one the importance of fantasy for a child within play. How does the child imagine with both

pastimes? The abundance of material within the fairytale for the child to fantasise with is overwhelming yet the video game has little potential for the imagination to work to it's full extent. As we have discussed Winnicotts theory that through dream the child understands himself through his imagination. Although the child's imagination is limitless and he can take information within his surroundings and cultivate an outer world, the fairytale lends itself to this perfectly. The stories hold the childrens attention, they entertain and make him curious to see what is to happen next. No child who reads the fairytale is made to feel small or helpless. In comparison, the video game also holds the attention of the child, for different reasons - again the goal at the end and the will to beat the opposition. However, a child whose game playing skills are inadequate could feel belittled by the sheer extent of the game and leave it for more experienced players, therefore not gaining any knowledge at all from it. Little is left to the imagination with the video game. All that is visual is in front of the player and due to the fast actions and the need to keep playing, the imagination is tinted due to lack of time given for it to work.

So how does print in terms of Fairytales compare against Video Games as an audio-visual pastime of young children? One would imagine that learning to read and write affects the process of thinking, the way people clarify, understand, make reason and remember. Sylvia Schiner and Michael Cole (researching conditions of Literacy) have found in Liberia, that English schooling led to the development of verbal explanation. Arabic and Vai literacy did not. In this they found that formal education not print is superior in creating more intellectual standard. But I would have thought that print is an essential part of formal education. Also Patricia Marks Greenfield states in "Mind and Media" that print alienates some cultures from interacting socially with others and she finds that television and computer orientated skills (I will use these as a comparison as we have proved earlier that play is an important part of learning) alienate people due to their very nature to a greater extent.

We must take into account here do children remember audio or visual information more easily than the printed word? Research done by Diane Jennings in England shows that not until the age of seven does the audio affect the memory of a young child. Also exposure to audio-visual information within play or education could influence children to prefer visually orientated information promoting laziness toward the literal.

Reading is an important ingredient for the imagination. Reading creates a voice in one's own head making us create a mental image of the words we think or hear. Because what we see in our imagination is a gathering of our own life experiences and preferences. The images we create are personal and therefore the messages we take will have more impact on our personal and moral development. Personal interpretation puts us more in tune with one's own mind enabling us to understand ourselves better and further us away from stereotypical personality norms which would be vital in adolescence. (1)

A survey done by Dorothy and Jerome Singer found that less children happened to, after watching television, have an imaginary playmate. We have seen how David Cohen and Stephen A. MacKeith have underlined the importance of imaginary worlds and how wrong it is to prevent this in a child's playtime. A further study in Canada shows that the ability of eight year olds to think of multiple uses for one object was less it they watched much television. So we can see from this that visual computer games play in relation to television does effect the development of the imagination.

Literature, it was found in these surveys stimulates more variety of imagination in childrens drawings, so it was said of the radio in relation to these. We have seen in Chapter one how reading and dramatising help develop imagination and personality. Childrens drawings were said to be more accurate after watching television. This I would imagine is bad for the creativity of a child because he is being told what to create, leaving little

(1) Reference p. 80 - "Mind and Media" - P.M. Greenfield.

to his imagination. Patricia Marks Greenfield states that children misinterpret much information through literature but surely this is an important part of the child's learning and creativity, as personal interpretation especially with drawing provides more original work allowing for an artistic licence. An important part of art college (where one learns to be creative) is to learn how to put behind stereotypical interpretations and cultivate more personal ones. As Dr. Winnicott also says that creativity is a tending away from stereotypical attitudes or norms. If television or video games help to put straight is misinterpretation surely this goes against creativity and the development of the imagination. Another point I must make here is that many children, as we have seen in Greenfield's book, have misunderstood "The Incredible Hulk", seeing the two characters as completely different people, not realising them to be the one David Banner, much like they do in "Hansel and Gretal", although this is purposely done, I quote Greenfield;

> "In both reading and listening, when children lack requisite background experience, they may misinterpret the material". - "Mind and Media" p. 81

If children read a book that goes beyond their experience with sex or violence, they simply imagine it wrong, but if they see it on a screen, then they see it for what it really is, she continues to say. In my opinion this is much worse as children will become less and less like children, if they are shown everything in a realistic way they cannot understand. We have already discussed that children have only become children in the last century. It should not be taken away from them again. Children learn soon enough what life "really is". I see no rush to teach them.

Video games in comparison to fairytales are rapidly taken in and do not allow time for the child to reflect. Yet when a child reads a fairytale he can take in as much information at his own leisure and therefore relate this to his own experiences. Also some programmes go beyond a childs emotional maturity and in fact

provide many facts that are incorrect in the outside world. At least the fairytale, from the very beginning, tells us that we are not in the real world although there are similarities. In addition to this "Sonic the Hedgehog" and some other video games can cause a reasonable increase in epileptic fits in children who already have epilepsy.

A programme screened on BBC2 on Monday, December 5th, 1994, called "The End of Childhood" looked at children in the late twentieth century, examining the realities of childhood and the fear that the previous nature of being a child are being eroded by images of sex and violence. The projection of the world as physical combat being important for living was discussed with the conclusion that this was wrong. Also the idea that children were aware of being treated like children, so they watch adults programmes which were inappropriate for them, at least with inappropriate literature young children are incapable of understanding it. Also I was horrified to find that toy manufacturers finance most childrens programmes in the United States. So at Christmas time the advertising campaigners use the lowest stab at children who are open to all kinds of influence, so they will want all the lovely toys they advertise which puts unnecessary pressure on the parents of these children. The fairytale is one million miles away from these realities and evokes a completely different message.

We also must compare where each of these take place. The fairytale is usually read at bedtime or in the childs spare time at home. The computer game is either played at home or in game arcades. The same arcades are unhealthy places for young children where they can pick up many other bad habits. Also as I have mentioned before, few girls play in video game arcades which is bad for the development of a full personality.
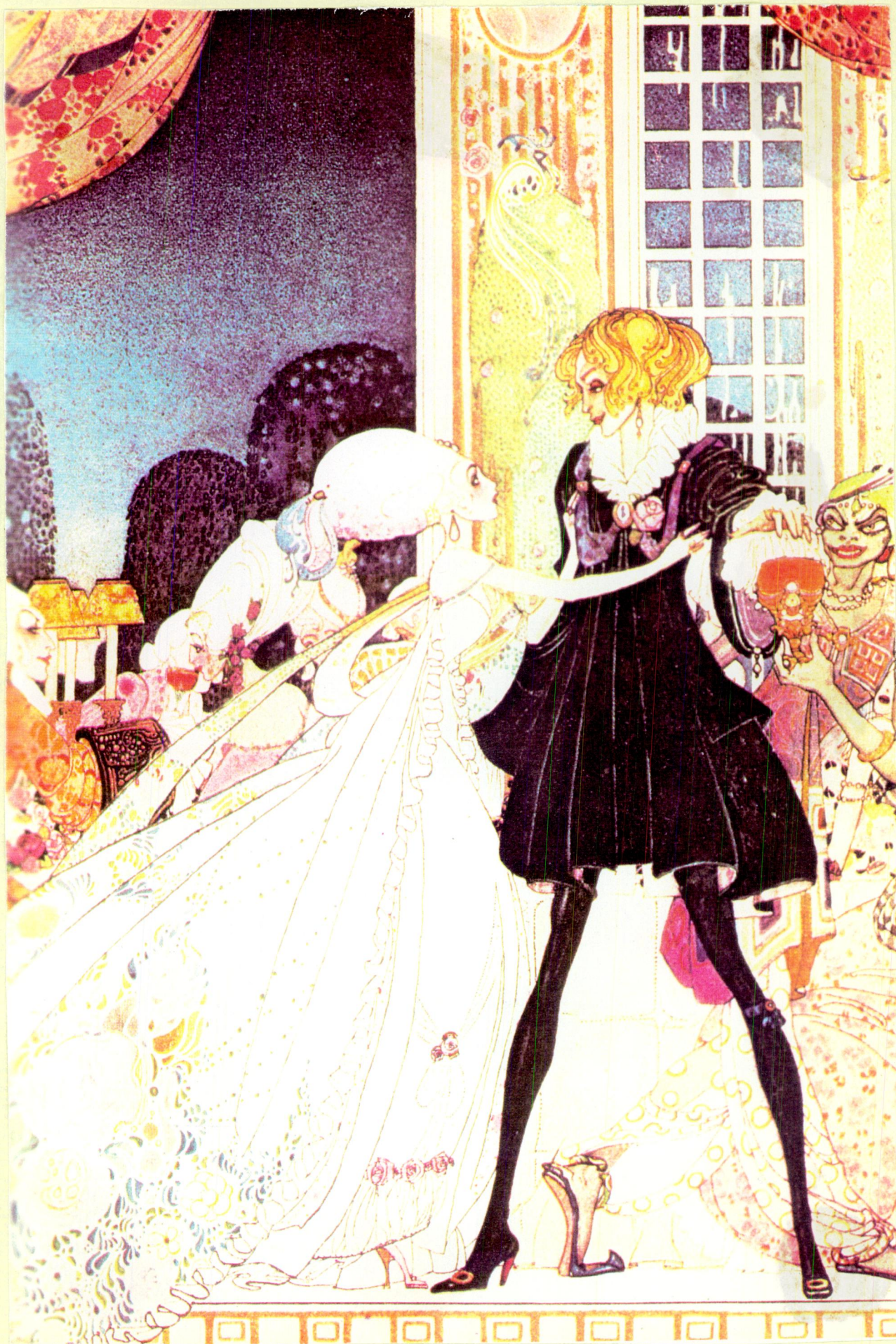
"THE DANCING PRINCESSES" BY KAY NIELSEN.

CONCLUSION

Concluding this thesis, I have made an attempt to clarify how and when a child learns and understands concepts and most importantly, how they do so through play. In doing this I searched for a connection with concept formation learned through play and the development of creativity and the imagination. From this I have investigated video games as a modern and most widespread current childrens toy in comparison to fairytale, an obvious old age pastime. This thesis attempts to find out how we, as adults, can teach a child to use his imagination as an important part of learning and growing up. It is in my opinion that a healthy imagination in early years of growing up leads to a positive adult life. Adult life can all too easily become mundane, yet using imagination outside the career environment can be a reward for responsibilities that can prove tiresome. So that our purpose will not become overshadowed by what we have to do to live. The video game is a modern evil. I have attempted to examine positive qualities of this pastime in order to give a fair analysis of both and conclude that video games lead only to an anti-social, aggressive child whose social development is severely stunted. There are in fact very few positive points about video games. They seem to me to act as an electronic babysitter to enable adults to get on with their own lives. Fairytales on the other hand enable a child to develop imagination (although cultural circumstances and individuality create different interpretations for each child) which in turn promotes creativity, which is not only in the hands but in the mind. We should not look to the future to teach our children but to the past, where a myriad of fantasies are dreamt in the supernatural lapse of time of visits to fairyland.

"JOYOUS GARDE" A CASTLE SOUTH
WEST OF CAMELOT.

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