



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

Are Fairy Tales Only Children's Stories?

A discussion of the use of fairy tales as a literary genre.

Ritgerð til B.A.-prófs

Ditte Rysgård Kronborg

Janúar 2009

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Enskuskor

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Abstract.

Fairy tales as a literary genre is well known and it is a one which many people have encountered at some point in their life. Even though this genre is well liked by many, it tends to be viewed as simple entertainment for children. When fairy tales are put in the category of children's literature the full use of them is not acknowledge. This thesis discusses what fairy tales are and what the use of them is, along with the nature of children and what they seek in literature, in order to establish that fairy tales are more than children's stories. To show what fairy tales are and what their use is I have focused on one of our times greatest Fantasy writers J.R.R. Tolkien's ideas about fairy tales from his essay "On Fairy-Stories". These views are then illustrated in traditional fairy tales such as "Hansel and Grethel", "Snow White" and "Cinderella". The results of this show that there are elements in fairy tales which fit with the categorization as children's stories and some, which do not. Fairy tales should not only be seen as children's literature, but rather a literature that can be shared by people of all ages.

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1 Introduction.

As a literary genre today fairy tales are very well known and most people have either read them or have had them told at some point in their life. In our time they are viewed as children's stories and there are several reasons for this. Fairy tales take place in a sub-world and they are often full of magical elements. Imagination and unreal worlds are often connected with children and fairy tales are therefore often seen as entertaining stories with moral lessons for children. Along this, the structure of fairy tales is fairly simple and is often quite easy for children to follow and understand. But the lessons most fairy tales teach are in many cases also relevant for adults. Journeys and problem solving is a major part of story lines in fairy tales and they are often metaphorical and reflect real life situations dealing with themes most people can recognize. In fairy tales the reader gets to experience the resources fairy tales hold such as recovery, escape and consolation depending on the readers need. The Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen said: "Every man's life is a fairy tale written by God's finger." Each person's life is a story and each fairy tale reflects that. Fairy tales are children's stories, but they are certainly also adult's stories.

Today most people see fairy tales as children's literature, but this has not always been the case. Once fairy tales were an art shared by people of all ages and social classes. There was a relationship between the teller and listener, and each had an important part in carrying the art on. Around the early nineteenth hundred the Brothers Grimm collected and published fairy tales in Germany. It is believed they heard these stories from peasants and servants and that when told they were often adapted because the brothers were Christian. Some of the stories they collected have become world famous and include some of the most popular fairy-tales (Brothers Grimm). Some say

that the brothers themselves made alterations and adaptations to the fairy tales they wrote down. Taking out sexual elements, adding Christian references and emphasizing role models (The Brothers Grimm, page 14). This does not mean all the adaptations were made so the fairy tales would be more suitable for children, it simply meant they would be more proper for a protestant audience.

Around their time fairy tales were slightly forgotten. The stories became, as Tolkien put it, like old used furniture put away in the attic. This change happened around the same time fairy tales started to be thought of as children's literature (Tatar, page 23). Fairy tales have different names, different styles and different purposes. Some of their purposes are to entertain, teach a moral, help you escape certain problems and things in life, gain recovery or give you consolation. People of all ages read literature and fairy tales are no exception. Fairy tales are not only for children and they are certainly not only read by children.

Some writers have recognized the importance of fairy tales and used some of the elements from this genre to create a new one. Fantasy novels are similar to fairy tales and they give adults an opportunity to read fantasy stories, but because they are long and more complex than original fairy tales, adults find them more appropriate. Tolkien is known as the "father" of modern fantasy. His fantasy novels "The Hobbit" and "The Lord of the Rings" are amongst the most popular works of the 20th century and remain so in the 21st. Tolkien was not the first to write fantasy novels, but he achieved a success few other fantasy writers have. Fantasy as a literary genre is viewed as literature for adults and young adults. It is a genre closely connected to fairy tales. Tolkien managed to develop the basic fairy tale and magic behind it into a full epic work, mixing elements from fairy tales, folk tales, mythology and religion. Turning a genre

normally viewed as children's literature into something for adults. Though fantasy is seen as a genre for adults and it is a longer version of fairy tales, it does not mean fairy tales are then the easy version meant for children.

In 1938 John Ronald Reuel Tolkien wrote the original version of the essay called "On Fairy-Stories"(Anthony Kelly). Going through his essay you get to understand some of Tolkien's thoughts on fairy tales and what he deemed as essential for the success of such stories. As Tolkien says (On Fairy Stories, page 9) fairy tales as a subject is quite large and certainly not easy, it is dangerous to ask too many questions, because you might become overconfident and start to talk about things you cannot answer. He concentrated the essay around three questions, which he considers central when talking about fairy tales. The questions he asks are: What are fairy-stories? What is their origin? And: What is the use of them? In his discussion of these questions his thoughts on subjects concerning fairy tales are shared with the reader. Tolkien was a writer who cared for the whole of the story and knew the importance of it.

Today most academics who read fairy tales do it in search of facts rather than to enjoy the stories. They become more interested in trying to find evidence or information about things that interest them than the actual story, in result they pick the stories to pieces to find what they are looking for and by doing so they have lost the nature of the story (On Fairy-Stories, page 21). Fairy tales are developed out of many little pieces and they have roots that grow deep in our history and society. The outcome is the essential purpose of the story and the story is what the reader should take in. Tolkien uses the process of cooking a soup as a metaphor for how fairy tales come to be and how they should be enjoyed. For as when you eat a soup you enjoy the flavour of all the

ingredients that have been cooked and boiled together. It is the result you consume and enjoy.

As is it with fairy-stories, the magic and art you enjoy comes from the final result, the story. Tolkien says, “We must be satisfied with the soup that is set before us, and not desire to see the bones of the ox out of which it has been boiled.” (On Fairy-Stories, page 22) This does not mean the bones are not important only that they are a part of the soup and the soup is what you are meant to enjoy. All the ingredients give flavour to the soup and all are important. It is important to look at what fairy tales are in order to establish their use. By looking at what fairy tales are as a whole and what they have to offer you will see why so many people think of them as literature for children and why they are so much more.

The setting is a sub-creation, a world out of our time consisting of nature and magic. It is described in brief and simple terms, as are the characters. The characters are stereotypical and often establish simple contrasts. These contrasts are repeated in several things in fairy tales and along with the simplicity it makes the stories easy to follow. In fairy tales man is often the protagonist and you often follow them in a time when they are set up with a problem they must solve. The story lines are simple and often emphasized by repetitions, some are journeys where they travel out, and others are quests or problems the main character has to overcome at a stationary place. As a first glance of fairy tales shows, simplicity and contrast are key elements and they make it easy for children to follow and understand the stories. But when you look a little closer you will see that the world of fairy tales can hold much more.

2 Imagination and the world of Faërie.

Fairy tales do not take place in our time or world, they take place in a sub-creation. The setting is a made-up world and the characters are persons and magical creatures we do not know from our world. The fictional world is set in its own time and that time seems to be forever standing still. Most people remember the memorable beginnings that most fairy tales start with whether it is “Once upon a time”, “There once was” or any other version of this line. These beginnings indicate that the stories are placed outside our reality, outside our world. It shows the stories are fictional and part of a different mental place (Pietre Lafforgue). Reading different fairy tales you see there is no historical time line. The reader does not feel that the story of Snow White happens 50 years before Cinderella, all the fairy tales are in an undefined time. This world, which is separate from ours, this sub creation is what Tolkien calls Faërie. It is the land of fairies; it is a world or realm mixing elements from our world with elements of magic and fiction.

A major part of fairy tales and the land of Faërie is fantasy. Fantasy is often thought of as being able to imagine things that are not present. This is an ability both children and adults have, but often adults think that there is a connection between children and imagination. That it is something only children are able to do. As if imagination is a part of children and that when they grow up they grow away from imagination. But as Tolkien writes, fantasy is linked with generalization and abstraction “The human mind, endowed with the powers of generalization and abstraction, sees not only *green-grass*, discriminating it from other things (and finding it fair to look upon), but sees it is *green* as well as being *grass*.” (On Fairy-Stories, page 24). Because we are able to separate colours, shapes and figures from the way we know them and mix them up and apply them to other things we are able to create and imagine. So it is clear that it

is not true that this is something children have more of or a greater ability to do than adults. But in childhood you have time to interact with other children, play and run freely around. A traditional adult life is set with hours of doing what your job requires of you, provide for yourself and/or family. There is very little time to play, to imagine and to make up new things and though adults imagine, children tend to speak more openly about their imagination. Being able to imagine, to have ideas of new things, create and improvise out of your thoughts is something precious and it should be cherished through life.

Being able to create an image of something, which is believed not to exist in our world, is an art. Tolkien thinks this to be “not a lower but a higher form of art, indeed nearly the most pure form, and so (when achieved) the most potent.”(On Fairy-Stories, page 45). To create a world of fantasy is perhaps more difficult than one would think. In the process of creating this world you have to keep in mind that it has to seem believable to others than yourself and therefore it has to be consistent and coherent. This is perhaps one of the reasons why “The Lord of the Rings” achieved so much success. Tolkien created a world with a history that went beyond the boundaries of the story itself. He treated it as an actual world and therefore made it easy for others to see it as such.

When creating a universe of fantasy you have to use it as an art and take the fantasy seriously. Fantasy is not to be made fun of, in doing so it loses its power. Fairy tales are meant to be believed in, perhaps not in a way where the reader or listener actually believed the story to have taken place. But while hearing the story the reader is committed to it and becomes a part of the Faërie world. That is why fairy tales must be presented as true. This means it is not made fun of or set in between any frames. If a

fairy tale is presented as a dream or as a made up story the point of the story is lost. Thus if a fairy story is framed it will ruin the credibility and you cannot fully be absorbed into the world of magic because you have been told it is not real (On Fairy Stories, page 18). Fairy tales have different things to offer the reader, for the story to be able to give you these things it is important that you believe in it. To make this sub world seem real the magic is presented along side a setting based on nature.

Faërie is a place where magic and nature live side by side. These two elements, as different as they might seem, together create a double effect of making magic seem real/believable and making nature seem magical. By taking the setting of these stories back into nature the magic used will seem more realistic than it would in a world of machines. Nature is all around us and we depend on it for our existence, we are familiar with it but still it brings us wonders. In fairy tales nature sets a scene of credibility but also of wonder and amazement. Nature makes us wonder because it has always existed and it is beyond our control, it is the true form of our world. Technology is advancing so quickly that a setting of technical things is not so unbelievable anymore. But it is not a pure form of the world, it is not magic because it is completely controlled and made by man. As nature brings out the powers in magic, magic brings out the powers of non-magical things and beings.

There is both nature and magic in fairy tales and there are also both creatures of fiction and creatures from our world. In fairy tales you can find creatures of magic such as elves, dwarfs, dragons, trolls and many more that we do not know from our world and only encounter in fiction. Creatures you can only experience if you imagine them. But there are also some of those we are most familiar with. Horses, birds, cats, dogs and all other animals from our world including man occur side by side with the fictional

creatures and in Faërie they are all equally real. Man plays a vital role in fairy tales. Though there are all these fantastic creatures and the name might imply that fairy tales are stories about fairies, man is often the protagonist of fairy tales.

3 Themes, metaphors and reflections of life in fairy tales.

In most fairy tales man is the key figure. It is he or she whom you follow in the story. The protagonist/protagonists are often set up with a problem they have to solve or overcome. In the progress they will often either learn a lesson and/or prove a point of moral value, if they are good at heart and do the right thing they will be rewarded. We see this in some of the most famous fairy tales such as Hansel and Grethel who have to find their way home from the dark forest and on that journey have to overcome the witch. In the end they are rewarded with treasures and the happy reunion with their father. Snow White has to escape her evil stepmother, during her stay with the dwarfs she has to be a good housemaid for the dwarfs and she has to deal with the temptation from the old woman. As we see in these examples protagonists often take on a journey, either by choice or by necessity. Most often these journeys are actual journeys where the main character travels somewhere, but in some stories they are mental journeys where the main character has to overcome a problem in the place they are at.

Cinderella, as opposed to many other protagonists in fairy tales, is not sent out on a quest or journey. She has to overcome her problems at home, her quest is to follow the right path, which in this case is to be good and do the right things at home. She has to overcome the tyranny from her stepmother and two stepsisters and because she does this she is rewarded. Though she does not travel anywhere she is still set up with a

problem she has to solve. The mental journey in this case represents her problems growing up with envious women who try to make little of her and make her life difficult. This is a situation many children and adults can recall and so is it with many situations in fairy tales. These quests or journeys in fairy tales reflect situations, which often occur in life and this is one of the reasons why they appeal to so many people. But as these often are situations, which people can recognise from real life, some of the themes addressed in fairy tales are quite unpleasant and brutal as life sometimes is.

Though fairy tales often remind people of love and happy themes as such, the more brutal and harsh situations of life are often portrayed. Sheldon Cashdan points out that fairy tales were never meant just for children. Cashdan illustrates that a fairy tale such as “Donkeyskin” deals with a father lusting for his daughter (Cashdan, page 6) and this is not a theme most parents would read about to entertain their children. But this is not the only case of themes like this. Fairy tales often contain themes of abuse, abandonment, incest, violence, rape, cannibalism and so on. There is no limit to who can do evil things (Tatar, page 5) both men and women, young and old, can be evil. Though the stories are short and simple with a clear perspective of what is good there is still lots of violence and it is arguable whether this is suitable for children.

“Aschenputtel” and “Hansel and Grethel” are two very well known and popular fairy tales. These are stories often read for or by children, they are good examples of stories that are seen as children’s stories but contain many harsh themes. Aschenputtel, also known as Cinderella, is a fairy tale about a young girl who after her mother dies is forced to live as the kitchen maid for her stepmother and two stepsisters. “Hansel and Grethel” is about a brother and a sister abandoned in a forest by their father and wicked stepmother who has convinced the father of doing this. In both stories the stepmother is

the evil and the father is a bystander who is not seen as evil but neither as good, he is simply doing as his wife commands. You are told that the stepsisters are pretty but “at heart were black and ugly.” (Grimm’s Fairy Tales, page 119). The Stepmother and the two stepsisters are cruel to Aschenputtel but she remains good and does the right thing. In the end she gets the prince and they live happily ever after. The main message in the story is that if you are good, good things will happen to you. If you are wicked you will be punished. This is the main moral of the story and that is probably what most children would get out of the story. The lesson saying if you behave well you will be rewarded and if you behave badly you will be punished is one that people of all ages can understand, but the punishment the two sisters receive is of such a bloody violence that if it were to be depicted on film would not be allowed for children to watch. Parents do not find it proper to show their children a scene where two women get their eyes picked out because they have done something bad. But though the stories are harsh they are dealing with situations which can occur in our world.

As fairy tales portray situations from our world they can be seen as metaphors reflecting several issues, which people, both children and adults have to go through in life. In fairy tales you can find fear, joy and everything in between. Some stories deal with abandonment, the fear of being left alone or having to leave someone. Hansel and Grethel are left in the forest and Cinderella is left with the mean stepmother and stepsisters when her mother dies. Other fairy tales deal with feelings of greed, envy, lust, love or any other emotion causing feelings and situations most people can relate to. Because fairy tales can represent or symbolise real feelings and situations they are sometimes used to deal with mental problems.

In fact there are several psychologists and therapists who use fairy tales in treatment session for both children and adults. Fairy tales then represent the issue the person needs to address. Pietre Lafforgue writes about fairy tales as a tool in therapeutic matters. He writes, "What is addressed in these stories are the existential problems common to children and adults. These stories can be easily memorized and passed on thanks to their richness in images and powerful poetical appeal." (Pietre Lafforgue). He states that fairy tales are clear and understandable for children because of their simple structure and characters that are easy to understand. The simplicity in the characters and structure of the stories is often made by contrasts and binary opposites.

Binary opposites are very common in fairy tales and fairy tales are often built on them (Pietre Lafforgue). They are often seen in the characters and their actions and they help create a clear picture that is easy to understand and recognise. The characters are built on contrasts in order to emphasize each side of the binary pairs, when there is one side the other often follows. Because of this characters in fairy tales often become stereotypical types of ordinary people. They are one-dimensional flat characters described shortly as the young boy, the princess, the old wicked witch, the wise woman and so on. Their description is very simple because their purpose is to represent one piece that fits in the whole picture. These flat characters often display a battle between contrasting themes, such as good vs. evil or clever vs. stupid. Along with the problems addressed in fairy tales this is one of the reasons why adults find fairy tales suitable for children and one of the main reasons why children understand these stories. But simplicity in literature is not only something children can benefit from, it is something both adults and children can enjoy if it is used in the right way.

Tolkien writes that he finds importance and interest in simple words such as wood, stone, fire, water all of which describe things we often see in our world “And actually fairy-stories deal largely, or (the better ones) mainly, with simple or fundamental things, untouched by Fantasy, but these simplicities are made all the more luminous by their setting. For the story-maker who allows himself to be ‘free with’ Nature, can be her lover not her slave.” (On Fairy-Stories, page 55). This quote tells us of the power simple, fundamental things can have, but also that the way these simple things are presented should make you see them in a new way. Making you able to see and appreciate simple things in the same way as the first time you came upon them, is an art that good fairy-story writers poses.

4 Recovery and escape.

Recovery is regaining a clear view (On Fairy-Stories page 53). It involves freeing your mind from a locked narrow-minded view and it is an important feature of fairy tales. Going through life, many people spend most of their time performing habitual routines. The daily routines of seeing and using the same things have caused these habits and familiarities to lose their original feel or glow. For Tolkien, Recovery is the process of regaining the ability to see these things as we were meant to see them. Breaking the everyday familiar feel and being able to see the fantastic in these things are parts of what fairy-tales offer. “Creative fantasy, because it is mainly trying to do something else (make something new), may open your hoard and let all the locked things fly away like cage-birds.” (On fairy-stories, page 54). But many people are so caught up with searching for new things that they do not notice things right in front of them. Tolkien

writes in his essay “Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics” an allegory to describe this mistake many people make.

He tells a story about a man who inherits a field full of old stones, some were a part of an old hall, and some used to build the house he lived in. He used the rest of the stones to build a tower. His friends saw that the tower was built of old stones from an ancient building so they tore the tower down to examine the old stones for historical evidence. The friends then started looking for stones in the mud and forgot about the stones from the tower. They thought the man was strange for building a tower instead of using the stones to repair his house. “But from the top of that tower the man had been able to look out upon the sea” (The Monsters and the Critics, page 55).

This story is a way of describing what Tolkien thought most critics did with stories such as “Beowulf” and other myths and fairy tales. They look for historical evidence and in the process forget the actual story, a piece of art meant to be enjoyed as it is. They do not see what the story can give them as a whole. The man who built the tower had created a place where he could look beyond his boundaries, he found a way to see more than he normally was able to. The men picking the tower to pieces found and learned nothing, the man who took the pieces he had and put them together to create a whole was therefore able to broaden his horizon. As with the stones and tower, fairy tales are put together by little pieces, and you are not meant to only look at each little piece individually, you are meant to take in the whole picture and thereby be uplifted and see things in a new light.

Tolkien argues (On Fairy-Stories, page 55) that there are two other uses which fairy-stories serve: escape and consolation. Some critics categorize fairy-stories as escapist literature. Tolkien finds this proper as he claims that escape is one of the

main functions of fairy-stories (On Fairy-Stories, page 55). Some people think of escape in literature as a negative concept, something you do if you are afraid or cannot handle the 'real' world. Tolkien views the matter in the opposite way; he sees the escape as a positive tool to get out of the 'prison' you are in. A way of lifting oneself up and for a time perhaps forgetting the things that trouble you.

Fairy tales can help you escape several things. Tolkien says that the modern aspect of the escape in fairy-stories deals with the escape of the situation created by ourselves, the modern society and what it has brought with it. "It is in an age of 'improved means to deteriorated ends'. It is part of the essential malady of such days-producing the desire to escape, not indeed from life, but from our present time and self-made misery- that we are acutely conscious both of the ugliness of our works, and of their evil." (On Fairy-Stories, page 59). What humans have achieved and created is for most people seen as an improvement of our society and living conditions. However along with this development we have enhanced the ability to ruin our world. We have created a society dependent on technology and machines, we are leaving nature to build giant cities and industrial areas to be able to expand, getting more profit by doing less. The society we are creating is often forgetting nature and the more simple human values. In many fairy tales you can find escape from this loss.

The setting, when brought back to a natural environment free of technology, offers a world that deals with more real human complications and values. In fantasy novels you can find the same escape. Fantasy novels often offer the escape from the wrongs we have created. Not only do they offer escape, they have developed the theme and made the battle between good and evil into a fight between nature and machines. We see this in Tolkien's fantasy novel "The Lord of the Rings."

In the “The Lord of the Rings” the main battle between good and evil can be seen as a battle between nature and machines/man made things. It offers the reader to escape from our world into a world where the good side will fight for nature. In the Fellowship of the Ring, the protagonists are on a quest where the goal is to destroy the ring of power and thereby be rid of the dark lord Sauron. Sauron wants to rule middle earth and in his battle to obtain this he will lay waste to everything in his way. He uses the wizard Saruman as a tool to build giant armies by mass producing orcs and weapons. He has no respect for nature; he uses its resources and ruins the land in order to build his armies. What Sauron is creating is something similar to industrialisation and in the universe Tolkien has created the heroes fight against it and win. This escape is an example of returning to nature as the real thing, what is considered good and is supposed to be there, whereas factories and machines should be fought and destroyed.

In fairy tales you can escape into a world, which is untouched by machines and factories or as in The Lord of the Rings where it is the evil force. You get to experience a world without these things. Though this is one of the main escapisms today, there are several others, which have always appeared in fairy-stories, such as escaping a hard life, illness, war, poverty, hunger and death. These escapes are not about returning to what is real or seeing things clearly, they represent the desire to avoid these things. For people also have a need to get away from things that are a part of life and nature. Things that are natural parts of life you have to deal with. Illness, poverty, hunger, death and so on are things which happens often in life but you do not fully understand them or why they happen and this is a frightening aspect of life one sometimes has a need to escape. One factor that has been present in human lives forever and always will be is death. It is a

part of the circle of life and you cannot escape it, that is perhaps why the escape from death is so deeply desired by many people.

One of the main escapisms is the escape of death. As Tolkien describes it (On Fairy-Stories, page 61) the desire of escaping death is the oldest and deepest desire. Tolkien writes: “Fairy-stories are made by men not by fairies. The human stories of the elves are doubtless full of the Escape from Deathlessness.” (On Fairy-Stories, page 61). Death has always been a mystery to man, and it is one which can never be solved or answered. Death can come suddenly and take you away or take those close to you, it is unforgiving and not controllable by anyone. This fear of not existing anymore, of not knowing what is going to happen and to have no control over it is one of the greatest fears men have and therefore one that many people seek consolation for. To comfort people from this fear, creatures have been created with eternal life and the stories have endings that are happy and everlasting. For as with the battle between nature and machines in “The Lord of the Rings” where the nature and the good wins, you need an ending telling you they live happily ever after.

5 Happy endings and consolation.

Many people have a need for consolation. Mostly this is something both children and adults need, perhaps for different reasons, but both parts none the less. “And even when men are not facing hard things such as these, there are ancient limitations from which fairy-stories offer a sort of escape, and old ambitions and desires (touching the very roots of fantasy) to which they offer a kind of satisfaction and consolation.” (On Fairy-Stories, page 60). Consolation gives you comfort and shows you a way out of your

troubles. It is not an escapism or a way of gaining recovery but it represents possibility. It represents the possibility and hope of something good to come (On Fairy-Stories, page 62). In the fairy tales “Hansel and Gretel” you see an example of consolation.

It has been suggested that the original story of Hansel and Grethel might be reflecting the situation during the middle ages, a time of war, famine and other harsh complications, where parents sometimes had to abandon their children in order to be able to survive (Hansel and Gretel). The story might be a way of giving consolation and offering a way to escape, it plays on perhaps real situations families were in but in the Grimm’s version the blame is not on the real parents, it is on the stepmother and the witch. The story offers a happy ending to the sad story. In this way the story gives consolation to both parents and children. Though you go through sorrow and failure there can be a happy ending. All things can turn for the better and in fairy tales they will.

When everything seems to be failing and the excitement reaches its peak the turn of the story will come. The ‘joyous turn’ in the story is a part of the art of fairy-stories. A good fairy-story will build up tension until the moment of the ‘turn’ comes, at which point all the tension will be released and you feel the joy filling your heart. The joyous turn might be a shift in power as in Hansel and Grethel when they kill the witch and find her treasures or as simple as a kiss from a prince as in Sleeping Beauty. What ever the action of the turn is it represents hope and from there on things will get better. The main character will be rewarded, happiness will fill their lives and it will last till the end. The happy endings of fairy-stories are very important; Tolkien even goes as far as to say, that all complete fairy-stories must have it (On Fairy-Stories, page 62).

Most fairy tales end with a happy ending often “they lived happily ever after” or “they lived happily till the end of their days”. The reader is assured that the main characters are over their trouble and for the rest of their lives only good days are to come. And they are not alone, they get married or get back to their family, get reunited or find a lost love. The happy endings of fairy-stories are very important for they spark hope. They state that this is how it ends in the Faërie world and the reader can then hope it will be so in their world too. The importance of the happy ending in fairy tales is a part of the consolation many people seek and find in fairy tales. Happy endings represent several things most people want and desire. Happiness is one of the things many people, both children and adults long for.

Knowing you will be rewarded if you do good and that all the bad things that happen to you in life is not all for nothing, that there is a hope for a good ending, a happy ending is what drives many people through life, not only through childhood. Happy endings give hope for reunion with lost friends or family, or that you will find love. Though you go through hard times, you can overcome them and find happiness. If you are a good person who follows ethics and morals, then there is something good waiting for you, it does not matter how difficult life seems, it can always turn and you get everything you ever wanted. It is perhaps not always realistic but the hope is important for people of all ages. The happy ending represents the hope for happiness, the consolation saying to you that if you just do the right thing good things can happen to you. This message of hope and a solution the happy ending gives is just as important for adults as children but it is also a part of why adults think fairy tales are for children. In the happy ending the problem in the story is solved and the reader is never left wondering what might happen to the protagonist of the story. There is an answer and

solution (Breaking the Magic Spell, page 184). Though fairy tales often end well it does not mean the rest of the story is suitable for children.

6 Children and their connection to fairy tales.

It is not hard to understand why so many people think there is a connection between fairy tales and children. Children often play and make up their own stories, they use their imagination and fantasy is a part of their daily life. The way fairy tales are built up appeals to children because it gives them an opportunity to learn and understand.

Children need guidance. One of the ways fairy tales can teach children things and entertain them is by guiding them through the stories. The clear story line and the main characters show the way through the story, they guide the reader to the answer at the end. Children can understand the main plot because it is cut out in simple words. The contrasts are easy to remember and actions in the story is often repeated, this makes it understandable and memorable for a child. Fairy tales are understandable for children and in this sense there is a connection.

Children are eager to learn and fairy tales is a form of literature they can understand and therefore learn from. In fairy tales children find answers to what is right and wrong, good or bad. They learn to distinguish between these actions and want to follow the main characters and see what will happen to them as the story goes on. Of course this does not mean that if children hear fairy tales they will always behave well and be as pure of heart as the main characters in fairy tales often are. But it might give them understanding of certain issues and situations. As Tolkien says “ children as a class- except in a common lack of experience they are not one- neither like fairy-stories

more, nor understand them better than adults do; and no more than they like many other things. They are young and growing, and normally have keen appetites, so the fairy-stories as a rule go down well enough.”(On Fairy-Stories, page 34). Children have ideas of the world and know it is so full of mysterious places, animals and people that they yet have to encounter or hear about, they just want to learn about these things. This does not mean they prefer fairy-stories to other genres of literature it just means they try to take in what is given to them. If they are hungry they will eat the soup even if they do not like it.

Not all children like fairy-stories, but they want to learn so they listen to the stories they are told. Fairy-stories, as with any other genre of literature, is not for everybody. Some like fairy-stories and others do not, this counts for children as well as adults. Some people find joy in fantasy and tales of magic, an interest, which sometimes is sparked in childhood and sometimes is discovered later in life. But if it is there from your early years it is not likely it will go away, on the contrary it will probably grow a long with your age (On Fairy-Stories page 35). The problem with fairy-stories now is that because of this view of them being for children many of them have been adapted so they would be suitable for children to hear.

Children are new humans, adults are older ones, but they are of one and the same kind. People who believe in this connection between children and fairy tales tend to view children as special creatures, as a different race than adults (On Fairy-Stories, page 34). Children and adults are not two separate species, one is just the older version and the other is the younger version of the same thing. So basically one is more developed than the other. Adults have more experience in life, they have more knowledge and more capability to see things in a larger perspective and understand

things said between the lines. They understand the metaphors used to describe incidents and feelings in life. Children are in the growing and learning process so they do not have this ability fully developed yet. So from fairy tales children might understand and learn from the distinction between good or bad actions, whereas adults might see what these good and bad actions represent. Children might not have as much experience and knowledge of the world and are therefore not quite capable of distinguishing fact from fiction (On Fairy-Stories page 36). But children want to learn the facts.

Children are meant to grow up, they are meant to have an adult life and take responsibility. As Tolkien points out, this does not mean that adults should lose the ability to wonder upon life, they should still hope for good things to come. Tolkien wrote: "Children are meant to grow up, and not become Peter Pans. Not to lose innocence and wonder, but to proceed on the appointed journey: that journey upon which it is certainly not better to travel hopefully than to arrive, though we must travel hopefully if we are to arrive." (On Fairy-Stories, page 43). Everybody has to grow up, but growing up does not and should not necessarily mean that you lose your ability to wonder upon things. Innocence is in this case that you are not guilty of having the need to deny something just because it has fantasy and imagination as a part of it. The innocence means that you are willing and your mind is open to new ideas and new ways of looking at things you are otherwise so familiar with.

7 Summary and discussion.

In our society literature for children is often seen as something less important than literature for adults. It is seen as perhaps something not to be taken serious and

something which serves only the purpose of entertainment. As fairy tales have been put in this category it seems they have lost some of their original power. For fairy tales need to be recognized as a serious genre. People think that something children can enjoy is too simple and too easy for adults to get anything out of. They do not realise that fairy tales, simple as they might seem, can be understood and read in different ways. There are often different layers of interpretation and they have several things to offer both children and adults. There are some parts children will find interesting and exciting, other parts adults will and often they will get the same basic thing out of them, adults might just get a little deeper. For fairy tales have many things to offer their reader/listener whether it is a child or an adult.

The values and functions of fairy tales are many and surely also some adults can get something out of. The escape and consolation is probably more recognized and needed by adults than children. Adults knowing so many facts, knowing what is real and what is not can find comfort in these fictional stories telling you things can get good in the end. The older you get the more you look towards the end, this gives you a greater need for the feeling of escaping death. This is definitely something most children are less concerned with for they cannot grasp the idea of death, of not existing anymore. Recovery is also a function fairy tales serve, which adults need. Adults are the ones stuck in routines and familiar things. Children play new games, wonder about things and try to figure things out so they are always searching.

Fairy tales are memorable stories, often short but still full of action and excitement, there is often a deeper understanding if you look under the surface. The stories are very accessible and easy to follow. Because of their flat characters and simple story lines children are able to understand the stories and remember them. They

get a chance to think about the actions in the stories, to learn about different situations. This is why many children enjoy them, because they want to learn and hear about new things and fairy tales give them that opportunity.

But if you can call this a connection between fairy tales and children, then there is also a connection between adults and fairy tales.

8 Conclusion.

Most people assume that children are the appropriate audience for fairy tales. Like there is a connection between children and fairy-stories. This assumption is wrong. Children might be able to understand fairy tales and enjoy them but this does not equal that fairy tales are just for children. For fairy tales have several things to offer a reader whether the reader is old or young. Escape, consolation and fantasy are all things adults and children can use or benefit from. Recovery is perhaps the only thing children do not need so often because children are new in life and things are not old and familiar for them. But fairy tales teach both adults and children something. Children need and want to learn. Fairy tales present them to situations, feelings and actions caused by these feelings. Adults also need to learn, but they need to learn to see things as they first saw them. Adults need recovery, which is a way of learning things again. Children might be learning things in fairy tales for the first time whereas adults get to have this experience again.

The view of children being the proper audience for fairy-stories has grown into our minds because of the way we have used them. Adults find fairy-stories suitable for children and nowadays many people use these stories as nursery stories. As we have

seen fairy tales contain cruel themes and harsh reality, this is because they are meant for people, adults as well as children, not one or the other. But the way these themes and problems are presented let children be able to understand and enjoy them too. Fairy tales are for everyone. They are stories of the people, their roots grow deep into our society and history. Though we have changed their original purpose and associated them with children's stories, fairy tales are not less meaningful and if you are willing to join the world of Faërie they will give you all they have to offer.

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