

Fairy Tales as a Tool, Means, and Container in Child Therapy

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Abstract

In this article, I will address fairy tales and their relevance to the emotional world of children. Various theorists attribute significant importance to the use of fairy tales. I will present examples from research conducted on children's reactions to different fairy tales from a psychodynamic perspective. Additionally, I will provide a therapeutic example that illustrates the advantages of using fairy tales, stemming from their unique structure and their distance from everyday life. I will emphasize the use of fairy tales as a means, a container, which can also serve as a transitional object.

Keywords: Fairy Tales, Children, Imagination, Container, Transitional Space

1. Introduction

The relationship between the magical world of fairy tales and the human psyche has engaged writers from various fields. In his book "The Uses of Enchantment", Bettelheim argues for the substantial importance of fairy tales in the emotional development of children [1]. This is because fairy tales address, with profound understanding, the deep conflicts of children, such as anxiety, punishment, Oedipal wishes, separation anxieties, and more. According to Bettelheim, the element of enjoyment and comfort found in fairy tales is important, but their main significance lies in the fact that they allow children to engage with the disturbing fantasies that trouble them, so they can recognize and process them. Hartmann also asserts that fantasies have an adaptive value, as they allow for a synthesis between wishes and their validation against reality, thereby contributing to the formation and functioning of the ego [2].

Klein and her students share similar views. Isaacs sees fantasies as the mechanism that links the id's drives to thought processes and defense mechanisms, which is why they are significant [3,4]. Friedlander, Cath, and Briehl write similarly regarding the use of fairy tales in children's inner lives [5-7]. However, the engagement with deep and threatening conflicts occurs in fairy tales at a distant time, place, and situation, with the contents presented symbolically. Therefore, some emphasize the aspects of pleasure and wish fulfillment through regression, while others stress the defensive component in the use of the distance found in fairy tales [8,9].

2. The Schema of Fairy Tales

Bettelheim argues that the schema in which the fairy tale is presented plays a central role in its ability to meet the child's needs. The fairy tale schema presents a dichotomy between positive heroes (beautiful, just winners) and negative ones (evil, ugly, and losers). This schema depicts flat and simplistic characters (Shapiro & Katz, 1978) (Gardner, 1977) [10,11]. Bettelheim argued that such a structure appeals to the emotional development stage of the child, where the struggle between absolute good and absolute evil occurs, combined with an optimistic and magical ending regarding the weak hero. This allows the child to organize and feel magical power and control, which are so lacking in reality. The optimistic ending also serves as a calming factor regarding the child's anxieties, as well as regarding their drives in general, particularly their aggressive drives. These manifest symbolically in the characters of the evil objects (such as the predatory wolf in "Little Red Riding Hood"). Cath and Cath write that the magical ending aligns with the magical defenses and omnipotence that the child needs in their early developmental stages [6]. Such an ending, they argue, facilitates coping with conflictual situations of love and hate toward the object, which arise, for example, during separation from parents before bedtime.

From a psychodynamic perspective, the prevalent dichotomy in fairy tales suggests the use of the splitting mechanism, which serves as an early defense mechanism [12]. This mechanism creates a separation between different emotional states due to the difficulty of experiencing an object with all its ambivalence (good

and evil coexisting within it.

It is also worth noting that studies concerning preschool-aged children support the use of simple and uncomplicated story schemas, as the child's way of understanding the world in a dichotomous manner is early in their attempts to feel a continuum between their understanding and what happens in the real world [13]. With development, the child will be able to differentiate between different situations and even 'mature' toward a more ambivalent and mature perception. However, despite this being the general developmental line, from an experiential perspective, one cannot always speak of a stable ambivalent perception, even in the adult world. Raviere speaks of the tendency of adults to express emotions as 'good' or 'bad' without the ability to integrate them [14].

3. The Importance of Repetition in the Story

Bettelheim emphasizes the importance of repetition in the fairy tale. In this way, he argues, the toddler learns unconsciously to recognize their own fantasies and even to feel some control over them, as they repeatedly observe that they do not occur in reality. Repeatedly recounting the same story allows the child not to flee from the story in fear, as happens when they do not yet have a separation between the fantasies that occur in the story and reality. The fairy tale and its repetition may allow the child a kind of 'transitional space,' as described by Winnicott [15]. The repeated examination of the transitional space, the fantasy world, and the real world enables the child to also move beyond verbalization and to name their emerging feelings [15-17].

One can parallel the experiential processes of the human toddler with the object that cares for them, as Klein describes, to the process of children's experiences with fairy tales [3]. Initially, the child is very much influenced by the experience; when the experience is very threatening or frustrating, the fairy tale is perceived as entirely threatening. Gradually, the ability to distance oneself from the immediate experience intensifies [18]. Simultaneously, the ability to enjoy and anticipate pleasurable experiences that occur with the fulfillment of conscious and unconscious wishes increases, just as in the joyful conclusions of fairy tales. The process of repeated experiences enhances the child's ability to contain and preserve their experiences from the story and even increases their ability to draw on good (and internalized) experiences when needed. A similar idea is found in the writings of Horton [18].

The theories presented above have faced considerable criticism related to the schematic representation of the world and its extreme and aggressive characters. Generally, most criticism relates to the resistance to engaging with an imaginary world that is far from everyday life and encourages omnipotent thinking, in which violent and cruel events occur.

4. Critique of the Structure and Content of Fairy Tales

Critics raise concerns that the violent content in fairy tales may teach expressions of violence in many children. Already in the 18th century, Herder criticized "the nonsense of Mother Goose

stories." He argued against the frightening phenomena of distorted characters and the considerable cruelty present in these stories. In the early 19th century, the criticisms were aimed by educators who feared the portrayal of the wicked stepmother as an evil and frightening figure. It seems that the tales of the Brothers Grimm have been at the center of controversy even in the 20th century [19].

Even today, Paget expresses reservations. He argues that the unrealistic dimension present in fairy tales strengthens children's fears of witches, monsters, and the like, as they still lack the capacity for sufficient separation between reality and imagination. Shapiro argues that Bettelheim's approach is overly optimistic and holistic, and that fairy tales that propose the use of the splitting mechanism actually educate dichotomous thinking unless an additional layer is added that contributes to the recognition of a complex and ambivalent reality [10]. Some claim that fairy tales have a harmful educational effect because they teach dichotomous thinking [11]. Shapiro, in contrast to Bettelheim, argues that the schema in which good is strong and victorious does not legitimize the aggression that children feel, whether it is directed toward the frustrating parent in reality or whether it is a projection of aggression onto them. She also claims that such a schema causes the internalization of prohibitions on aggression and the formation of a rigid superego, with a lack of differentiation between different and diverse situations. The splitting mechanism, in her understanding, may ease the guilt that a child feels due to their aggression, but in fact, it exacts a price, which is a distortion of reality that allows for the intensification of hatred toward the evil object or a certain representation of this object.

Another claim is that the legitimization of the perpetual victory of the weak complicates the relinquishment of the child's omnipotent fantasy [10,11].

Educational approaches such as that of Gardner attempt to present the child with a pre-prepared integrative picture, in which splitting and the extremism of emotions are absent [11]. Gardner transforms omnipotent fantasies distant from reality into logical and integrative characters, intending to help the child solve an Oedipal problem. For example, by turning the frightening giant into a father who occasionally gets angry, justly, and then the child understands this with their logic.

5. The Question of the Subjectivity of Experience

Can generalizations be made from children's reactions to stories based on their developmental stages? Or should we emphasize the subjectivity of experience and the unique use each child makes of the story? This issue was examined in a study that investigated children's responses from different age groups (ages 3.5 to 9.5) to familiar fairy tales alongside unfamiliar stories. The children were asked to invent their own endings to several stories, and subsequently, an integrative interview was conducted with them.

The examples I will present aim to illustrate two main points:

- The problem of generalization.
- The distance from everyday life.

6. The Problem of Generalization

The Overt and Covert Aspects of the Wolf in "Little Red Riding Hood"

One of the prominent findings from the research conducted was that children utilize the fairy tale according to their unique needs, referring to their developmental and gender needs. The research also found that caution should be exercised against making sweeping generalizations regarding the threatening and 'wolfish' aspects for each child. I will provide examples from the study that indicate expressions of identification with the wolf, which are not always conscious, despite the wolf always being considered evil. Here is a response from a child aged 4.5 to 5.5 that aligns with the psychoanalytic perspective of the phallic-Oedipal stage: "Why do the parents want to kill the wolf? Because they want their son to die too?" This response hints that killing the wolf means also killing the child and their forbidden wishes.

Another example: the ending of a story composed by a child from the same age group for the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears: "The story would be better if there was a wolf. He would protect Goldilocks." This ending indicates that the 'evil' wolf, against which they usually fight, may also project a sense of power and potency, which is so necessary for the child.

7. The Character of the Wolf

The character of the wolf in children's stories is not necessarily connected to the Oedipal struggle. The wolf helps Goldilocks in her wanderings and saves her from the bear family. He even returns Thumbelina from her wanderings to her parents because he was eager for the food in the pantry at her home.

These examples may illustrate against the detractors that such content engages the child in this manner, and perhaps witches and wolves allow the child to name or organize the intensity of their experiences, which are primarily related to the internal conflicts they are dealing with at that time [11]. It is clear that children can utilize the story according to their understanding, and this understanding is not determined by the dichotomy presented to them.

Another example from the research is of a 9-year-old child who refers to the hunter in "Little Red Riding Hood" as 'curious,' as opposed to the single-dimensional reference: good, strong, or rescuer. This child claimed that the hunter resembled the wolf, as when he shoots the wolf, he is actually preying on the wolf. Here, one can see that attributing intentions is not concrete but symbolic. It is also not dichotomous: between the evil wolf and the good and rescuing hunter. Thus, the story evokes much less anxiety for this child.

8. The Distance from Everyday Life

Bettelheim speaks of one of the advantages of children's fairy tales being that they address the conflicts children encounter in their everyday lives, yet distance them in time and space. Consequently, he believes that a clear separation is created between the world of imagination and real-world functioning, alongside possible engagement in fantasy [20]. In the study I mentioned, it was found

that the more the matters were connected to everyday life through the interview conducted at the end, the greater the rejection of the aspects perceived negatively and the conflict-evoking characters like the wolf and the witch. Differences were also found between the wolf and the witch, with the latter being perceived as a more human-like character, even closer to familiar characters from the child's life, yet still different enough from them.

Regarding the children's responses, a significant difference was found between the overt references when the matters were asked and discussed with them directly, as opposed to responses given through the stories, which were received without the mediated interview. It was found that in the responses given through the stories, there was less need or ability to distance the matters.

In other instances, examined in the study, children rejected any resemblance between the behavior of the characters in the story and that of characters in their lives. However, such resemblance did appear in spontaneous completion stories told by the children. For instance, in the ending of "Hansel and Gretel," the witch indeed imprisoned the children but allowed them, sometimes, to go out and take walks.

This reference indicates some integration between various aspects of personality and expresses less anxiety concerning threatening or punitive aspects, as appeared in responses showing existential fear of the witch. There is a recognition of the prohibition, but also permission to air it sometimes, by going outside occasionally. It seems that the children's ability was significantly influenced by the distance from everyday life, alongside awareness. The examples presented demonstrate the advantage of distance in the story, especially during the 'latent' phase. However, some argue that it is precisely in this core that children should be given stories that deal with reality, rather than an imaginary world so far removed from their lived experiences [11]. Here, the question also arises regarding how to harness cognitive ability for the organization of the emotional world, and how to harness emotional understanding so that it is expressed in the judgment of each child.

In any case, it is important to consider that it is unclear what each child projects onto the story, what threatens them, and how they are influenced by or utilize it.

The messages and values of the educational environment are of great importance. Darnton argues, for example, that the stories of the Brothers Grimm, in the Huguenot villages of 18th-century France, and other motifs found in folk tales are, in fact, dependent on environment and period [21]. Zipes effectively shows how different versions of "Little Red Riding Hood" have developed within historical social contexts. Even in modern versions, there are changes and omissions of certain contents. In some, Little Red Riding Hood is not eaten at all, and the hunter saves her beforehand [22].

10. Using Fairy Tales to Create a Sense of Continuity

Among some advocates for the use of fairy tales, there is a

reservation regarding the schematic analysis of the roles of the characters and the excessive focus on the Oedipal conflict. Eifermann and Hawes argue that it is essential to concentrate on earlier developmental stages than the Oedipal stage [23,24]. The oral and anal stages are also expressed in fairy tales. These suggest a distance from the Oedipal stage. Another possible approach is to view fairy tales as a transitional phenomenon. Another possibility is that their repetition greatly assists the child in adapting and adjusting to reality, as well as allowing them an experience of continuity and stability, linking their inner world to its expression in the environment. Additionally, the experience of storytelling allows the child a kind of concrete 'togetherness' with the storyteller, alongside moments of separation from them, playing in imagination and in reality just like playing with a transitional object. By using a transitional object, the acquisition of object constancy may also occur, which is itself vital.

In light of all the above, I will emphasize that fairy tales can be used as a tool appropriate for early developmental stages and serve the processes of separation and individuation in children.

11. Therapy with a Three-Year-Old Girl

Talia comes to me after the birth of her brother. Talia is an intelligent and very anxious girl. She speaks to herself and to others in the third person. Her speech is very unclear, and she invents words of her own. The usage Talia makes of me and others is functional without any reference to the object as a separate entity. Talia repeatedly recites different texts, and any change or frustration causes her great anger, detachment, and resistance to discussing this anger.

In play, Talia is very focused on the materials that go into her body, trying to sort poisons as opposed to milk in a bottle that is good and beneficial. She repeatedly checks whether I or her mother are giving her harmful or good substances, as well as the materials that come out of her.

Talia is filled with suspicion towards the world, and she lacks any experience of a supportive emotional world. At her birth, her father went through a crisis and was physically and mentally absent from the home. The mother oscillates between concern and severe anxieties for the child, which complicate her ability to provide Talia with more freedom and independence. On the other hand, every prolonged crying of Talia is perceived as anger, and then the mother tends to ignore and disappear, feeling frustrated and powerless.

Talia learns, within the magic circle of her relationship with her mother, to manipulate in order to evoke and maintain her mother's attention. The more the mother tires, the more Talia amplifies her strange behaviors. In this situation, the two arrive at therapy.

In therapy, I intended to help the mother with tools for direct interaction with Talia, in which she is accompanied and does not have to cope alone when she is overwhelmed by helplessness.

Talia has learned within the magic circle of her relationship with her mother to manipulate in order to evoke and maintain her mother's attention, so that she does not leave or ignore her. The mother tires, and Talia only continues to amplify her manipulative behaviors. Thus, they fall into a magic circle with no possibility of resolution.

In therapy, I met both of them. It should be noted that during the first year of therapy, the mother developed experiences much more suited to Talia's needs. She learned to address her frustrations, feelings, pains, and sadness. As a result, Talia significantly reduced her checks on the world around her; she stopped speaking in the third person and increasingly expressed her needs and feelings directly. However, the mother's tendency to disconnect from her whenever the little one expresses sadness or anger still stands out. The mother does this by closing her eyes.

Another change I now identify is that Talia is much less anxious about separation situations, and in conversations with me, she imagines continuity in the existing and present connections in her life. She is able to relinquish concrete satisfactions, despite the accompanying anger. I notice an increase in her frustration threshold and the beginning of symbolic play in Talia.

It should also be noted that I began using fairy tales as a tool at a stage when Talia was much more capable of separating herself from the object, as well as from the characters in the fairy tales.

Winnicott formulates the concept of 'existential continuity [15].' In Talia's case, a situation was created in which she struggles significantly to internalize the 'good' and beneficial part of the object so that she can also accept frustrations in a way that is not immediately associated with punishments like separation and disconnection from her mother. Thus, Talia is often engaged in a battle and a struggle to maintain the concrete attention of her mother and adults in general, and she is not available for symbolic play or play in general.

In other terms, one could speak of a problem with the mother's availability, or that Talia has not yet acquired 'object constancy.' This comes alongside a severe impairment in the processes of separation and individuation.

The variability in Talia's mother's responses aroused in Talia expectations but also confusion, alongside much misunderstanding and insecurity regarding continuity. In therapy, Talia clung to shared play with her mother because it provided her with a sense of continuity with her. The shared play alongside her mother allowed Talia to examine feelings directly, something that her mother had struggled to do with her until now. It is also important to note that the distance from the reality present in the play and fairy tales allowed the mother to address feelings such as: suffering, sorrow, anger, desires and wishes, hunger, or longing.

12. The Story of Little Red Riding Hood

At a time when Talia began playing a more symbolic game, she

briefly mentioned the name of Little Red Riding Hood. I tried to encourage her to tell me about Little Red Riding Hood—what happened to her, how she felt, and even to connect that to her own feelings. Talia recounted the story as she was familiar with it, while frequently seeking approval from her mother. This was the first time Talia brought forth a thought or a story in a stream. It seemed that because the story was familiar to everyone, and as such did not require direct discussion of her feelings, she even enjoyed it and was relatively calm.

After we returned to the story several times, Talia recalled my suggestion to play it out. She assigned roles and led the course of the play, checking each version she adopted for approval from her mother and me. After receiving approval, she moved on to the next version and even developed it. Talia tended to change the story's version only after she had already played it freely, in partnership and enjoyment.

I will provide several examples where one can see the transformations of Little Red Riding Hood, the wolf, and others in Talia's experiences. Initially, the story was told in its familiar version, where Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother are eaten by the wolf and saved by the hunter. In this version, Talia chose to be Little Red Riding Hood, and the wolf was a puppet in the form of a predatory animal. The mother took on the role of the mother. Talia, in the role of Little Red Riding Hood, who is being eaten, was very frightened, running away and clinging to her mother. After several experiences and learning that there is a difference between the story and her real life, she would say: 'But that's not really true.' Later, we tried to understand the predatory wolf as well, and Talia began to change her perception of the wolf. She started to relate to him with less anxiety. At this stage, Talia assigns me the role of the mother—who remains to wander in the woods, but also one who abandons her exposed to the wolf's terror. At this point, Talia assigns the role of the consumed grandmother to her mother.

Now Talia happily runs to her friend, the wolf in the woods, and as commanded, she undresses and enters his bed. In subsequent meetings, Talia sometimes implemented the jealous wolf part: the mother was appointed as the hunter who would save Little Red Riding Hood but not the grandmother. So Little Red Riding Hood remains with the hunter, and he becomes 'only hers.' However, following the fulfillment of this wish, a barrage of punishments for the wolf who 'did bad deeds' by the archaic 'superego' began. The wolf was killed and injured again and again, crying like a baby, wanting to eat again and again. After we understood together the predatory wolf, for instance, the 'hungry wolf' yearning for what is in the basket, Talia initially began to care for him, but inconsistently punished him, feeding him bad food. Eventually, she put him for a while in a baby pen found in the zoo. Later, the mother, in the role of the hunter, helped Talia heal the injured wolf, and after Talia felt that the wolf could be cared for and treated by the mother as well, she sometimes also took on the role of the predatory injured wolf directly. Occasionally, Talia would give her mother the role of the consumed grandmother and then almost concretely attacked the

mother's breast. She devoured and swallowed her, then brought a hunter—puppet—whose role was to revive the mother—the grandmother. When Talia took on the role of the wolf, her mother would disconnect, close her eyes, and Talia would work very hard to revive her.

It seems that through play, Talia expressed her wishes and needs from her mother. However, it took some time for the mother to be able to relate to Talia as a wolf and even to show empathy towards the hungry wolf. When the mother played the role of the hunter, and Talia asked her to heal the injured wolf, Talia taught the mother how to soothe the wolf, treat his wounds, and respond to his needs. When the mother responded to her and began to care for the wolf, Talia promised to be a good Little Red Riding Hood who does not go alone in the woods and listens to her mother. When she played the role of the child, Talia became a good and obedient child. Later, Talia missed the wolf. In advanced stages of play, Talia asked her mother to talk to the wolf's mother and warn him that from now on he should only prey on animals in the woods and not on children, but to allow him to play. Only if the wolf behaves better, the hunter would not need to kill him. Even Talia, being the wolf, promised to behave well. During this period, Talia became much more compliant in her behaviors at home as well. She became less angry and rebellious. Sometime later, when they repeatedly assumed different roles, and it seemed that the mother was aided in therapy to legitimize the wolf and even the 'wolfish' parts within herself, Talia consciously chose another version. This time, she assigned her mother the role of Little Red Riding Hood. At this stage, with Talia in the role of the wolf and her mother in the role of Little Red Riding Hood, the encounter between them became much more direct. Talia frequently devoured her mother and swallowed her inside. In addition to the contents of swallowing the mother and keeping her inside, she also emphasized the role exchanges with her mother and began playing a wolf that had Little Red Riding Hood in its belly, and the hunter, the doctor, extracts the baby she has inside 'because he is a wolf.' In this play, Talia recalls Melanie Klein's remarks about greed and envy in the infant's fantasy of all that the mother contains within her [25]. When the infant feels that this power is not in their hands. This topic is, of course, also related to the birth of Talia's brother.

Much material was expressed and processed through the fairy tale, and Talia continues her examinations as her mother increasingly cooperates. At this time, it was possible to assist the mother in entering the different roles in a way that Talia needed. Now Talia agreed to give her mother the role of the wolf as well, and the mother agreed, albeit with hesitation, to extract something from her wolfishness and to devour Little Red Riding Hood back to her, to be more assertive and more protective.

Gradually, the mother began to enjoy this tool in her hands more, and Talia and her mother began to play even independently. Talia repeatedly emphasized every time they entered the therapy room, "Today we continue the game."

In the following meetings, different variations appeared in

Talia's conduct. Even if the characters remained constant, their significance changed according to the circumstances. It is also important to note that if at the beginning of the process things were erratic, devoid of any organization, and almost without separation between imagination and reality, after examining and experiencing each of the different roles, Talia begins to distinguish well between good and evil, as well as between imagination and reality. Now a distinction also emerged between intentions for action, between good and evil, and between imagination and reality. Talia is beginning to treat the different characters as 'roles,' and things no longer seem to be processes of projection and internalization of everything that triggers her uncontrolled anxiety and awareness. It can be said that this represents a process of crystallization after the wolfish, hurtful, frightening, and frightened part was addressed.

Talia is now free to focus on other matters and occasionally moves on to the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears.' Initially, Goldilocks is presented by Talia as a poor and neglected girl. Only after we talked about things did Talia allow herself to take on the role of Goldilocks. This is despite the fact that Goldilocks was in the role of the evil and punished one. Now the wolfish role was much less distant than in the first story. This part was now projected onto the child and not onto any animal. Also, the use of the characters and their roles was now much clearer. For example, close to the summer vacation, Talia began to talk about her feelings related to the vacation and about the hunger and anger that arise in her regarding the separation. It should be noted that alongside her ability to process the frustrations of separation between us, the manipulations and demands for immediate and concrete satisfactions from Talia towards her mother also significantly decreased.

These cases illustrate the use of splitting present in fairy tales. Despite the dichotomous presentation of the roles in the story, the mere possibility of examining each role greatly reduced the fear that the situations evoked in Talia: small and weak, against strong and punishing. This also allowed for the definition of different emotional states and their separation from each other. A more integrative experience was built between different object parts.

It was evident that Talia worked hard in her attempts to help her mother understand her various feelings without frightening her. In Talia, there is revealed not only the need to inspect the bedroom of the bears—parents but also the need to understand everything happening in the adult world: such as separations, disconnections, their feelings versus hers, which they struggled to discuss with her. Here, of course, a caveat must be added. These matters arose not only due to the fairy tales, nor were they resolved solely because of them. However, the fairy tales served as a tool in their double meaning: both means and container. Both Talia and her mother utilized them in their way toward better and more direct communication.

13. Fairy Tales as a Tool Allowing for an Experience of Existential Continuity

Fairy tales are adapted to the child's inner world—they allow the child to engage in themselves through different object parts. This is of great importance when it comes to a childlike Talia

who still lacks integration between different object perceptions. Additionally, this world is unique in that it provides a transition and connection between the child's inner world and the objects in their environment.

14. The Fairy Tale as a Transitional Object

Until Talia's parents presented her with additional fairy tales, the story remained fixed and stable, and it could be continued even beyond the boundaries of the therapy room and the therapy hour. This fact greatly eased Talia's separations. It was as if she took with her, inside her imagination, something to hold onto, since it was done in collaboration with her mother. Therefore, another aspect can be emphasized here: the aspect of repetition of the story, which symbolizes the permanence and sense of continuity that Talia struggled to achieve from her mother and parents. Thus, fairy tales became a kind of transitional object, allowing for expression of her inner world. Alongside containing and shared experiences in the relationship, they helped Talia and her mother stay connected despite the threatening emotions.

Talia learned to bring in more and more new ideas through the fairy tales until she learned and began to express her feelings directly. When Talia encountered any issue she struggled to discuss directly, she would say: 'Let's do it like we did with Little Red Riding Hood.'

15. Additional Points Regarding the Use of Fairy Tales in Therapy

Talia's repeated play of the story and its dichotomous structure allowed her to examine roles and various aspects arising in diverse emotional situations. She examined herself as a mother or the predatory wolf, and even played the role of the consumed child. The wolfish parts of the mother were recognized by her. Talia even expressed her fantasies as they were projected directly onto her mother.

16. The Use of Splitting

There is a need, in my understanding, for further attention to the existing connection between the dichotomous structure of the story and the use of the splitting mechanism. In Talia's case, the use of splitting between the different characters greatly assisted her in recognizing and defining her feelings. Talia also turned certain object parts into roles that could be played. The type of splitting reflected in her play was dependent on her developmental stage at that time. At a later stage, the splitting and separation between the different roles reflected a choice: through expression and examination of certain feelings within herself or her mother. At this stage, significant flexibility in the division of roles that Talia made also appeared.

The division and dichotomous description present in the characters of the story eased Talia's experience by presenting it as prepared and legitimate. Talia utilized this division, but each time she added her current perception of the object to the characters.

From this, one can conclude that the fairy tale does not necessarily

create a split in the child's psyche; in the case described, it can be said that it allowed her to approach and touch the intensity of feelings, especially those which are less acceptable and legitimate to express openly and directly.

17. Conclusion

It can be seen that the fairy tale can serve as a tool, a container, and even a transitional object. It allows and helps the child to undergo developmental processes at their own pace. In contrast, educational pressure and educational stories may lead to 'false' reactions, thereby leaving the child alone in their inner world flooded with monsters, demons, and other products of internal fantasies.

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