# *PLACE AND ROLE OF THE FAIRY TALE IN ALTERNATIVE PEDAGOGY*

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***Abstract.*** *The role and the importance of the fairy tales in children's education have been well-known for a long time. They bring their very important contribution for children to help them develop their interest for the process of knowledge, also develop their affective processes, form their will and character, namely, develop the children's personality. By their content, the fairy tales and the stories provide children with the necessary knowledge for the most different aspects of life and fields of activity, they also accustom them with the environment (the animals, the plants, the physical phenomena). On the other hand, by the example of their heroes, the fairy tale educates its auditors (and his readers as well) to grow their fundamental moral virtues such as love for truth, good and beauty, honour, courage and dignity.*

***Keywords***: *fairy tales, training, personality*

Fairy tales, stories, and narratives have always represented an efficient instructional-educational means both in kindergartens and in schools. They contribute to broaden the children's sphere of knowledge, to develop their psychic processes (such as thinking, memory, imagination, and attention), to enrich their language in all its aspects, and the children's moral and aesthetic education (Androiu Ioan, 1986: 234).

Throughout practicing the pre-school education (and of the primary one), the activities called stories are grouped into: the nursery teacher's story (and the primary teacher's) and the retelling of the story (*Ibidem*, 235). Although the fairy tale "maintains" a monotypic structure (Vrabie Gheorghe, 1975: 167), it succeeds to find the method and to give life and reliability as well to the events within each variant. The instructional-educational valences of the fairy tale are highlighted through the variety of themes approached by the fairy tales, both by the popular and the cult ones. Among the most frequent themes from the fairy tales we mention: the fight between the good and evil, the cult of truth, the cult of justice, the cult of lie, the ambition to broaden the sphere of knowledge regarding the world (real and imaginary), its aspiration to immortality, to happiness, to the accomplishment of the world harmony, to the coexistence of people, to the cult of dignity and of the human greatness, etc., sufficient intelligence in comparison with elder brothers, enough to find rescue solutions in the exceptional situations they seldom have to face[1](Călinescu G, 1969:5) .

The fairy tale, as work which specifically reflects the conception of a community, firstly had an educational purpose, following essentially to point „how life on earth must be disposed" (Propp V. I., 1970: 306).

Through their content, the narratives provide children with knowledge related to the most different aspects of life and fields of activity, making them become aware of

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[1] „Prâslea chooses a place to hide by the tree, beat two spikes in the ground and stood between them, so that one in front of him and the other behind him, so that whenever he was sleepy and might doze, to strike with his beard in the hub in front of him and if he leans his head at the back, to hit his back head in the spike at his back" (Petre Ispirescu, *Mighty Prâslea and the Golden Apples*, Grammar Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005).



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the surrounding nature (of the animal world, the vegetal world, the world of the physical phenomena) (Andrei Al, 1973: 47). Without being conscious, the child under the school age and the young school child remake, generation after generation, the way of this hero from the fairy tale and suddenly joins the ranks of grown ups. His story has a happy ending, but, through the serious reality of the deeds which lead him to ignorance and immaturity, he evolves to the superior age of the grown up. Sole and helpless, nevertheless dreaming to grow up and to become stout quickly, he *„understands"* and learns without realizing, by continuing the development of the fairy tale, that he himself shall have to face proofs which shall test his wisdom, courage, audacity, power not to reveal a secret, to impose himself a laws of behaviour, to obey the commands of the grown ups, not to judge from appearances and not to deceive himself (Andrei Al, *op. cit*: 48).

Through the variety, richness and novelty of the ideas comprised in fairy tales, these contribute to the more profound knowledge of life. The child's whole psychic activity is exercised throughout the listening process of a narrative. The child comes out of passivity and carefully follows the tales, memorizes, compares and analyses the supplied material, makes certain casual links, settles some connections between facts and characters. „Thus, the child's way of thinking is vividly stimulated and makes possible for him to understand the significance of the heroes' deeds" (Stoica Cornelia, Vasilescu Eugenia, 1994: 56). Children accept with equal pleasure both Perrault's narratives or of Grimm's brothers, and the Romanian fairy tales, with specific equivalents, dominated by Prince Charming and Ileana-Cosânzeana.

Taking advantage of the fairy tales in the instructional-educational process from the first stages of education has registered a long and fruitful learning experience as proof of the fact that this literary genre is the children's favourite.

From a methodological point of view, the most frequent methods to take advantage of fairy tales are grouped – at kindergarten and in the first primary classes – based on the story method, respectively in the nursery teacher's (primary teacher's) stories and in the children's as well in which there are involved also methods of creativity starting from the basic text of a fairy tale or another.

**The nursery teacher's narratives** are activities for oral presentation of certain narratives, stories, and fairy tales. These are organized either with all the children during the mandatory activities or outside them during the time allotted for games and funny activities, or with the entire group, or with less numerous groups of children.

The nursery teacher must choose and plan the accessible stories, with moral content, with narrative elements to maintain the interest and the children's attention vivid. Taking into account that listening and the perception of a story supposes an intensive effort for children, it is recommended that the respective activity to take place before the other activities, so that they can follow the ideas in their logical concatenation with attention. Another important task which belongs to the teacher is to carefully study the text of the story before presenting it to children, eventually to arrange it, to adjust it to the children's possibilities of understanding and of learning.

**The children's narratives.** The types and the narrative character of the narratives in accordance with the material based on which the degree of the children's creative participation is also accomplished, are the following (Stoica Cornelia, Vasilescu Eugenia, *op.cit*: 59):

a) narrative based on the nursery teacher's model;
b) narrative based on a given beginning;
c) narrative based on a plan (drawn up with the help of the images or verbally);



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d) narrative based on a given theme (suggested by a picture or by a toy).

**a) The narratives based on the nursery teacher's model**

The most efficient model, for the work at the beginning, is constituted by the narratives based on the nursery teacher's model. Offering as model the narratives with events from personal life, with events from home or from kindergarten, the nursery teacher updates similar impressions from children's life, specific events they lived and awakens them the desire to narrate them. The model provided by the nursery teacher serves the children as an example, having, as it is known, a beginning, a plot and a conclusion. Therefore, the nursery teacher intuitively teaches the children to conceive a narrative.

**b) The children's narratives based on a given beginning**

Thus, the beginning provided by the nursery teacher must be conceived so that it can awaken the children a vivid interest, to stimulate their imagination. The main condition they must meet at the beginning of the narrative is that to suggest the subject, to mark the perspective of its development. The nursery teacher must draw up a certain frame of the work development: the conflict (broadly) and the main character (the characters) with its characteristic features.

c) **The children's narratives based on a given plan**

The children's stories based o a plan communicated with the help of the pictures are known under the name of picture based narratives. It is made with the help of the pictures, in which the children reproduce the contents of a story they know. The children find themselves in the situation to imagine, to create short stories based on the already presented plan. This plan is given through a number of 3 – 5 (or more) pictures which are unknown to the children, which represent successive moments of a narrative. These reveal to children main characters and main characters of the action. The story activities following a verbal drawn up plan represent a superior form in comparison with the picture based stories. They mark the transition to the free stories of the children and constitute a preliminary exercise for the composition lessons from school. The narratives based on a verbal plan are more difficult and request more independence and imagination from children.

**d) The children's narratives based on a given theme**

This type of narratives for children are organised both for the upper preschool group and for the preparatory class based on the syllabus. The theme of the narratives can be suggested by scenes or toys – which by their real content offers the children the possibility to take advantage of the mentions, impressions and of their own experience and stimulates their creation. Based on the nature of the scene, the children's narratives can limit strictly to its contents or to exceed it. Other methodical methods in which the practical application of the fairy tale is engaged in instructional-educational activities, in didactical games, in additional activities and in extra didactic activities are represented by:

- the image based reading,
- the conversation or dialogue (about the plot and the characters),
- the conversation or debate regarding the content and the expression form of the narrative/fairy tale,
- games-exercise,
- literary meetings (meetings with the characters, etc.),
- literary contests (recognise the character, etc.), and so on., which implicitly are assessment forms, assessment of the fairy tale characteristic. Despite a rich experience in the kindergarten and in the primary school regarding the practical application and the



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attribute of the fairy tale by children, at present, due to its real-imaginary content which include a perennial universe, but superseded, the fairy tale tends to be considered an obsolete literary genre; that is why, approaching the cult fairy tale, certain modern writers renew it approaching it by the science-fiction literature, by adventures and other genres. Despite all this, in the syllabus and in the current (alternative) textbooks, the place and the role of the fairy tale, as well as of the literature was generally restricted in the stage of the non-literary texts extension which are connected to the programmatic needs, to the adjustment to the specific reality. Promoting the realistic–scientific spirit lead to diminish the attention for the role of the imaginary in education. Revealing this present characteristic of the contents which must be learnt in school, the Romanian researcher Ştefan Popenici expresses his opinion that ignoring the child's need for imaginary throws him in a cruel reality for which he does not have the „key defence" for the necessary defence. It should be noted that, in comparison with a reality of which complexity cannot be comprised, the child assures imaginary answers to the problems he has and he raises, also behavioural solutions based on the appropriation of the human values promoted in the fictional literary texts.

The application of the imaginary in the literature –Ştefan Popenici suggests - equates with the configuration of the universe from the archaic chaos (Popenici Ştefan, 2001: 176). By conceiving the universe, man offered himself an essential frame of the reality that he explained to himself based on which he built his natural environment with the world and the habits, as well; by adopting, inside the solutions offered by the fairy tale the solving of the problems with which man faces even imaginarily, by the application the fight and the victory of good over evil – essential dimension of the fairy tale – the child morally structures his existence in accordance with the most important values of the world (the Good, the Beautiful, the Truth, the Justice, the Compassion) and builds himself as a constructive optimistic personality. In this way, by the contribution of the artistic image from literature in general, from the fairy tale in particular where the child is formed as future grown up adjusted and integrated in nature and society and can be a good citizen. Ştefan Popenici sees in the fairy tale a real „ didactic support" for the civic and moral education so necessary to the democratic society in continuous change (Popenici Ştefan, *op.cit*.: 178).

The fairy tale can continuously fulfil its primordial function, that to represent the reality not only for the dimension „as it is", but also on the dimension of „how it must be", the function of narrative model of the human behaviour in relation to the nature and society.

We continue to present **Ştefan Popenici** reasoning concerning the actualization of the fairy tale (of the imaginary) in education generally in the civic and moral education in particular. The civic education is an integrated field in the curriculum of the political education as necessary segment, imposed following the profound changes of the society. The informational era provoked the training of certain new realities in the economic, social and politic plan and in the plan of the cultural structures. The necessity of the nation's rewriting which defines the citizen of the new socio-politic reality is given by the difference instituted among the characteristics of the contemporaneous society and the anomic cultural structures. In this new context, the education has the purpose to attune its paradigms to the new requests and conditions the individual must fulfil, especially in the field of ethics and civism. We approach here one of the main themes of the hereby research: in order to recompose the story of education of the new millennium, we must have something to tell. Which are the stories, the narratives which can create a new narrative context for the public education in which the fundamental



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values of the civic culture must be found? The civic education refers to the acquirement and practicing of the civic virtues, of a desirable behaviour from a moral point of view. The moral dimension is focused on the civic education, the philosophers of the Greek classicism being those who set up a direct connection between the public life and the ethic dimension of the social existence and between the political area and the field of ethics. The previous definition can be completed: The civic education also supposes the introduction and the training of the young in the ethic, politic and legal universe of the public life. The civic education offers to the pupils the necessary knowledge, values and aptitudes for an active presence in society. It is a field of the public education found in connection with the spiritual, ethic, social and cultural development of the pupils, being the segment responsible to the greatest possible extent for the formation of the social capital and by its dynamic. What type of educative narrative does the fairy tale provide? Which are the models and the traces which can be used in this field? As we mention, the fairy tales has an original educational-initiatic functionality, being narrative forms of dynamic presentation of the universal values which exceed the immediate context. The texts can be used in the civic education in the five ways of presentation, in the sense of rewriting the narrative capital or the stories to which the human individual relates to its actions. The fairy tale represents a productive and dynamic model to draw up the educational supports from the field of the ethic-civic education.

The civic education supposes, in the present context of the social and dynamic development, the support, and the transmission of certain fundamental values which can be translated in a desirable ethic code at the level of the contemporary imaginary of education. The narratives of the fairy tales offer the model of a natural educative trace, which practically applies the necessity of the man to relate to or to imitate the models, the examples which offer him the landmarks of desirable behaviours. The imitation of the documents granted to the model constitute, nevertheless, a model of experimentation of the exceptional events lived by the character which exercise the attraction on the reader. The exemplary model can be structured and conceived lying on narratives which can contrive and send the desirable ethic code to which the pupils shall relate to. These values being part of the ethic code follows to be transposed in behaviours or behavioural models which are initially presented in an attractive non-coercive form, in a game in which the individual's imagination is actively engaged (Popenici Ştefan, *op.cit.:*179).

School cannot miss the values, but can be situated outside the social dynamic by building certain parallel models which address to certain inexistent realities or can register failures which can be more serious than the ones from the past. The fairy tale offers the possibility to the teachers to highlight the fact that, throughout life, man faces certain challenges which impose choices.

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