



THE PSYCHOANALYTIC PRISM OF THE FAIRY TALE “THE THREE LITTLE PIGS”

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the story “The Three Little Pigs” from a psychoanalytic perspective. The study will recognize which psychoanalytical elements are present in the story. The method used was a literature review, based on texts by Freud, Bettelheim and Corso and Corso. The article made it possible to gather a lot of information about how the story “The Three Little Pigs” reflects on the child’s emotions and personality.

Keywords: *Psychoanalysis; reading; emotion*

1 INTRODUCTION

Children’s stories are inserted into the child’s formative years at different times, such as in the school environment, voluntary storytelling by guardians or carers, reading clubs and intervention mechanisms in clinical practice. Conforme ponderado por Corso e Corso (2006) e Bettelheim (2009), são análogas ao amadurecimento psíquico e emocional dos ouvintes.

This research is based on Bettelheim (2009), who published the work “A psicanálise dos contos de fadas (The Psychoanalysis of Fairy Tales)”, which analyzed various tales from the perspective of psychoanalysis, including “The Three Little Pigs”. In addition to this, the work “Fadas no Divã” (Corso; Corso, 2006) will be used, which also does this investigation. Freud (1919, 1996a) was used to reaffirm these ideas and describe the psychic apparatus.

The article is divided into five chapters. In the introduction, the topic is presented. The second deals with the historical aspects of fairy tales and briefly lists some of the philosophers/writers who used this textual modality. The subtitle of this chapter describes the characteristics of fairy tales and some aspects of the psychoanalysis of fairy tales. The third deals with emotion in psychoanalysis. In the



fourth, three versions of the tale “The Three Little Pigs” are presented and the psychoanalytical aspects of this tale are also reflected upon. Finally, the conclusion.

Considering the importance of this topic, this paper will highlight/identify which psychoanalytic elements are present in the tale “The Three Little Pigs”. The selection of this work is justified because it is a story that has entertained children for generations, in different versions, and also because it reflects on their emotional development and personality.

2 HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF FAIRY TALES

Fairy tales were initially spread orally and passed down from one generation to the next. There are many studies of this literary genre, but there is no exact date when it began to be published. (Schneider; Torossian, 2009). We will briefly present the main historical evidence of this textual modality.

According to Hisada (1998), some of Plato’s records, from around II BC, already had the characteristics of tales. In addition to these, Apuleius (philosopher), around 2 AD, also expressed similarities in his writings, such as messages talking about values and life lessons. In Egypt, the brothers Anubis and Bata alluded to this literary format by narrating everyday moral issues.

Moving forward in history, Charles Perrault stands out in the 17th century, when he created the first work in France that brought together various tales. It was organized based on information from the European oral tradition. (Schneider; Torossian, 2009).

Other important names in this area are the Brothers Grimm (Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm). In Germany in the 19th century, storybooks were published for children and adults. Also at this time, the Englishman James Orchard Halliwell published “The Three Little Pigs”, which is the subject of this analysis. (Schneider; Torossian, 2009).

2.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF FAIRY TALES

The Fairy Tale textual genre is usually made up of short stories, full of objects that reflect on the imagination and come close to reality. Other elements that are present are: the existence of magic, fascination, an emotional impasse linked to

some personal achievement, the presence of a hero/heroine, who is in search of some consummation, hope, moral guidelines and overcoming obstacles. These aspects have repercussions on the child's psychological development (Schneider; Torossian, 2009).

Other elements of the tales are: magical, fabulous content, which gives the reader surprise, curiosity and involvement, because their imagination is connected (Corso; Corso, 2006).

Analyzing the work "The Three Little Pigs", Ariés' (1981) reflection became pertinent because he points out that the child/infancy was not considered as such, and there were times when the tales were intended for any audience. As a result, the topics were covered with descriptions of violence and even subjects aimed at adults. In other words, there was no consideration for the issue,

This aspect exists today through the division of audiences: children, children and adolescents, young people and adults, or they can be separated by theme. In addition, there are the recommendations of the Ministry of Education (MEC), which guide what can be worked on with each audience in the school environment, in other words, childhood has come to be perceived and respected mainly in the school environment. As a result, short stories began to be adapted to suit this audience (Corso; Corso, 2006).

Martins and Reis (2015) also point out that some authors re-read these traditional tales in order to adapt them to the moment in which they were published, taking into account the social and cultural issues and principles of the time. Nowadays, there are versions in which the main objective is commercial, and they end up depreciating the meaning and objective of the original work, for example, they don't address: overcoming, courage, strength, the figure of heroes, elements that act directly on the child's imagination/emotion.

2.2 PSYCHOANALYSIS OF FAIRY TALES

From childhood to adulthood, individuals go through various stages of development. As a child, some adversities arise, such as: parental disputes, moral issues, Oedipal obstacles and self-esteem. Faced with these situations, unconscious concerns arise. This is when fairy tales become a support and guide for fantasies,

emotions and imagination. They also shed light on the children themselves and reflect on personality development (Bettelheim, 2009).

The tales reflect directly on our emotions. The child, through reading or listening, assimilates with their suffering or dilemma and understands that they are not alone. That your sadness or pain has a solution. This feeling produces hope and joy. In other words, the tales portray feelings through symbolic language. Something that drives this release is the narrator opening up space for the listener/child to describe what they thought or felt while listening to the story (Caldin, 2004).

3 EMOTION FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS

Emotion can be represented as a physical or emotional expression coming from some external incitement or recovered in affective memory. According to Zimerman (2001, p.113): “emotion seeks a form of expression and a symbolic representation in order to be thought about”.

Despite being extremely important in clinical practice, emotions are linked to affect and there is no exclusive line of study. However, Freud, in his studies, already considered that the two (affection/emotion) are in the same dimension, since memories through emotions allow us to relive affection. In addition to him, other scholars such as Ferenczi and Fromm believed that emotions improve the relationship with the therapist and make it possible to revisit the past (Pires, 2016). During clinical practice, it is important to observe the speech together with the emotion that can be shown through facial expressions, looks, gestures, posture, tone of voice and articulations, which can arise when listening to a song, reading a text or having a therapeutic conversation (Pires, 2016).

We therefore agree with Sigmund Freud (1856-1939): “Unexpressed emotions never die. They are buried alive and will come back later, uglier” (apud Viereck, 2020). That’s why it’s important to encourage children to express themselves and find emotional comfort, whether through reading a book, therapy or play.

4 VERSIONS OF THE TALE “THE THREE LITTLE PIGS”

The story “The Three Little Pigs” was first published in around 1853 by the Englishman Joseph Jacobs. In this version there were three little pigs, “Fifer pig,

Fiddler pig and Practical Pig”, who lived with their mother, but decided to live on their own. Before they leave home, she advises them to be careful and build safe houses. The first didn’t want to get tired and built a straw house. The second, made a wooden house, but without reinforcements. The third, on the other hand, decides to do something safer and more comfortable. It therefore uses bricks. Practical Pig spent more time on this, while Fifer Pig and Fiddler Pig played, as their houses had been finished more quickly.

However, one day they were surprised by a hungry Wolf who decided to attack their homes. After devouring the first and second pigs, he soon moves on to the third one. He doesn’t succeed in knocking it down and tries to enter it through the chimney, but Practical Pig has already come up with a strategy: he puts a boiling cauldron on it, the Wolf falls in and ends up becoming food.

The Disney version, on the other hand, was released in 1933, in animated format and set to music (who’s afraid of the big bad wolf, big bad wolf). In this one, the three little pigs are called Fifer Pig, Fiddler Pig and Practical Pig. Each of them builds its own house, the first of which is made of straw, the second of wood and the third of brick. But at the time of the attacks, they take refuge in the house of Prático, the eldest brother. The wolf tries to enter through the fireplace, but falls into the cauldron of soup. When he felt burned, he ran off into the forest and never came back, and the little pigs lived happily ever after.

In addition to these, the version produced by the Ministry of Education (MEC) stands out. In this one, the brothers, who lived with their mother and thought they were grown up, decide to live on their own. Before they leave, the matriarch advises them that they need to build sturdy and safe houses because of the big bad wolf. Joãozinho, the youngest, decided to live near the lake and his house would be made of straw. As for Luizinho, the middle son, his home would be made of wood and near the mountains. By doing this, I would have more time off and be able to admire the sunset. And finally, Zezinho, the oldest, who built near the trees and his house was made of stones.

After the work, the brothers went out to play in the forest and met the wolf, who wanted to devour them with beans. The three fled to their homes. The wolf tries to knock down the first two houses, and the brothers flee to their older brother’s house. Seeing that he couldn’t destroy the house, the wolf enters through the fireplace, but the brothers have already put a boiling cauldron underneath, so the wolf’s tail is

burned. The wolf ran away and never came back. As he celebrates, Zezinho recalls that following his mother's advice is very important.

It is worth noting that there are other reinterpretations of the work, but this paper is limited to the three described.

4.1 PSYCHOANALYTICAL ASPECTS OF THE SHORT STORY

Freud (1919) states that the human mind is segmented into three levels, with different tasks and together they make up the individual's personality structure. The first is the Id, which is the principle of personality development. It has instincts and impulses that are inherited from the parents, and the child is born with them, which can be amplified or modified. The second, the Ego, is established after birth, when the baby begins to relate to the environment in which it lives and, consequently, the ego appropriates the pleasure of this reality. It also manages the impulses received by the Id, controls tension and intensifies pleasure. The Superego, on the other hand, is linked to the subject's moral issues and progresses according to the values and social rules that are taught. This part of the personality is conceived from the Ego, and has the important role of signaling to it what is prudent or not.

Given the information in the story "The Three Little Pigs", it is clear that there is an application of the "pleasure principle", which aims for pleasure, but without suffering, versus the "reality principle", which materializes pleasure/satisfaction in the real scenario.

In certain contexts they can even oppose each other, the desire to be different from reality. Applying it to the story, the first pig built his house out of straw and was looking for instant pleasure, which is why he built it quickly, because play/leisure was the priority at that moment, i.e. Id. A wooden house was also built (the second piggy house), which was a little more secure and sophisticated than the first, but again the pleasure and enjoyment of having fun was the determining factor, and this piggy didn't invest much time in securing his home. The stone dwelling (the third little pig), on the other hand, showed prudence and recognition of reality (the wolf), so it gave up fun/leisure and invested more time in building its house. He showed maturity and control of Id. (Corso; Corso, 2006).

Another issue highlighted by the book is morality, suggesting that playing cannot be a determining factor in life, and making it clear that working zealously and

responsibly is rewarding (Corso; Corso, 2006). Complementing this idea, Bettelheim (2009) describes that the child assimilates that doing a good job through planning, in this case building the house, brings positive results and makes the child feel optimistic in the face of possible dangers/enemies that may arise.

It also has a direct impact on children's emotions when they assimilate the story with the game of "hide and seek", which can take place under covers, curtains or behind doors, because in the Disney and MEC version of the story, the three little pigs run to the third house in search of a hiding place. (Corso; Corso, 2006).

Corso and Corso (2006) point out that another reflex provoked in the child is the idea that he will have to learn to live without his mother all the time, that he is a unique individual, endowed with thoughts and reactions. Furthermore, he will understand the need to create defense and self-protection mechanisms, just like the three little pigs, who banded together and had the reaction to run and hide from the Wolf (Corso; Corso, 2006).

Still on this subject, Bettelheim (2009) reports that young people understand that maturity/growth comes with time. Just like in the story, the third little pig took more care and attention when structuring his house. They will gradually become independent and wiser beings.

The image of the mother in the story is highlighted by her gaze and the use of her mouth. The first is used to calm the child, to signal something or for him to understand that, depending on the movement, it signals that the mother is going to be away, such as opening the gate. The second (mouth) recalls the idea of a source of pleasure. The wolf uses its mouth to feed and destroy houses. So are children, initially when they are breastfed and then when they are introduced to food (Corso; Corso, 2006).

Another point that resonates with children is the ability to overcome. Even though the little pigs had a hard time being chased, with the help of their older brother and their courage, they managed to triumph (Bettelheim, 2009).

Bettelheim (2009) points out that children's tales always bear some resemblance to the child's life story, be it Oedipal, emotional, personality, etc. In addition, they bring solutions, overcoming and the endings are usually happy, aspects that make the reader/listener soften their own anguish and emotions.

In view of this, we agree with Corso and Corso (2006, p. 15): short stories act as a resolving psychoanalysis, because they help in the constitution of identity and are “creators of psychic spaces as real and powerful as the so-called reality of life”.

5 CONCLUSION

The tales originate from oral tradition and continue to pass down through the generations. Around the 17th century, they were a leisure attraction for both adults and children. Throughout history, various authors and reinterpretations have emerged and children’s audiences have gained notoriety. As a result, some works were adapted to their peculiarities.

Tales can be altered, adapted, taking into account the historical, cultural, religious context and even the purpose. However, there are elements that are usually present, such as: an enchanting, surprising plot, characters with existential, Oedipal questions, anguish and endings with overcoming, conquests and resolutions.

In the story “The Three Little Pigs”, when observed from a psychoanalytic perspective, several aspects are identified. The main ones listed in the work are: the pleasure principle, which is understood in different ways for each pig. For the first and second, it was linked to playing, while for the third, maturity and the recognition of danger were decisive for him to build a safer house.

In this context, the Id, ego and superego can be identified. The work also brings a moral reflection to the child, that playing should not be a priority, but that the work should be carried out with zeal. Another aspect is the idea of the ability to overcome and triumph in the face of diversity. Assimilation of the mouth as a source of pleasure, both during breastfeeding and when the wolf wants to devour them.

This text has been present in human history since the 19th century and, to this day, has been gaining notoriety in various environments, such as schools, book clubs and clinical practice. In addition, it was published in several versions, most notably those referenced in this article (Joseph Jacobs, Disney and MEC).

Therefore, by having contact with the story, children develop parallels with their own lives. Something that favors this assimilation is the symbolic language used in these texts, which acts directly on the unconscious. In view of this, based on the notes in this text, it is indisputable that the texts/stories alleviate some of the children’s anguish or shed light on emotional issues. It should be noted that this work

represents an initial reflection, which will be improved and will lead to further studies/research.

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