THE PLACE OF FANTASY AND REALITY IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

A Thesis

By

Suraiya Rahman

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the
Education Department of the American University
of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon

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PREFACE

This study was undertaken on the basis of a fundamental belief in realities which are beyond the obvious perceptions of daily life, beyond routine social decorum, beyond manners and etiquette; realities which, while invisible and intangible, nevertheless constitute a fundamental aspect of human life, influencing men's thoughts, words and deeds from the most insignificant to the most sacred. The awareness of this reality adds a new dimension to existence. It is an awareness which I believe may be attained by the creative and speculative spirit of man; by his intuition--and which can enhance human life significantly. Fanciful literature is one of the means of developing this awareness, which is closely related to the spirit of wonder and speculation of childhood.

The purpose of this study is to examine modern concepts of reality as understood by the psychologists and mental hygieneists, and to compare them with the concept, suggested above, which extends reality to include important intangibles. And a related purpose is to determine the place of Fancy in children's literature, according to each of the two concepts of reality.

I wish to thank Professor Frederick R. Korf for the interest and enthusiasm he has shown throughout. I wish to thank Professor Elizabeth Scott for her critical comments and the many valuable suggestions she made for the improvement of the text. Thanks are also due to Professor Faizeh Antippa for her kind cooperation, and her willingness to help whenever help was needed.

A list of sources of fantasy and fairy-tales has been appended to the thesis as a reference for interested readers.

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CHAPTER I

A GENERAL SURVEY OF THE CHANGING CONCEPT OF CHILDHOOD

"Know you what it is to be a child? It is to believe in love, to believe in loveliness, to believe in belief--it is to be so little that the elves can reach to whisper in your ears; it is to turn pumpkins into coaches, and mice into horses, lowness into loftiness and nothing into everything, for each child has its fairy-godmother in its own soul; it is to live in a nut-shell and count yourself the king of infinite space. It is --

"To see a world in a grain of sand
And Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour ."[1]

Literature for children no longer interprets this concept of childhood--it was lost somewhere with the turning of the century. The child of the modern world does not have enough time at his disposal to listen to the fairy-songs and the whispers of the elves, or to ride the wind across the sky and catch a falling star, and to return with star-dust in his eyes. Moreover according to modern child psychologists and mental hygienists--"nut-shell" has certain unhealthy overtones with reference to childhood.

This change in the approach to childhood in no way implies that the nature of childhood has undergone any changes. The essence of childhood remains the same from one age to another, but the society's views and concepts of childhood are constantly changing--greatly influenced by prevailing socio-economic conditions and the intellectual temper of each successive generation. These factors determine the society's

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[1] Francis Thompson, Shelley, (New York, Charles Scribners' Sons, 1910), pp. 28-29. In the last four lines Thompson quotes from William Blakes's opening lines of his "Augeries of Innocence".

expectations of the child, which in turn affect the attitudes maintained at home and at school, towards the child, and the sort of literature--or the lack of it--presented for the child's perusal. In general, society has not been imaginative in its approach to childhood. Its inability to comprehend fully the elusive nature and needs of childhood is amply manifested in the contradictions amongst the various interpretations given at different periods. The child's nature calls for severe suppression and discipline, claims one school of thought; while another pleads for unrestrained liberty. Childhood has been accused of innate sinfulness, as well as defended as being the essence of innocence and goodness. The "moderns" take a neutral stand and claim that the child is amoral.

The Renaissance freed mankind from the bond of ignorance; the printing press provided mankind with the means to discover new horizons of knowledge. But it did little for the child audience. All that children were given were books about piety and manners. But not so long afterwards came the interlude of acceptance of the extraordinary world of wonder and fantasy brought to light by Charles Perrault. It was around the year 1697 that the mother goose tales were first published, capturing young hearts and filling them with pleasure and delight. "Little Red Riding Hood", "Hop O' My Thumb" and"Puss in Boots" were written in a spirit which was novel, and very different from anything given to children before. But this interlude was brief, soon to be overtaken by the age of Reason. As Hazard said--the fairies had taken advantage of an interval of recreation between "a majestic century that was losing its authority, and a critical century that had not yet found its own."[1]

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[1] Paul Hazard, Books Children and Men. Translated by Marguerite Mitchell, (Boston, The Horn Book, Inc. 1947), p. 10.

Before turning to the age of Reason, a reference will be made to a prominent theory of childhood, widely held, well into the nineteenth century. It also exerted much influence on the nature of pedagogy and also on child-rearing practices. It is a theory which claims that the child is merely a miniature adult, having adult interests, as well as adult physical, mental and moral characteristics. Children were required to dress in adult clothing and to adopt mature manners and habits, long before they even entered school.

This view of the miniature adult was partly based on erroneous biological theories which held that in the process of mating the male transmitted to the female a fully formed but very minute human being or "homunculus". Sharp speaks of this theory in some detail:

> (according to some early biologists) the mother's function was that of housing and feeding the miniature individual until it was sufficiently developed to survive the birth event. It was supposed that after birth the child merely continued to grow larger and stronger until his full physical development had been reached."[1]

Such theories have been exploded by later biologists.[2]

The miniature adult concept was also responsible for the prevalence of the belief that children are born with an innate moral sense. The moral principles were not learnt according to this school of thought, but were written in the "moral faculty" of the child. The child's verbal ability was believed to be a manifestation of the beginning of his moral faculty--and from then onwards he was responsible for all his activities.

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[1] Louis P. Thorpe, Child Psychology and Development. (New York, The Ronald Press Company, 1946), p. 9.

[2] Winfred Rand, et. al., Growth and Development of the Young Child. (Philadelphia, W.B. Saunders Co., 1940), p. 28.

The doctrine of the innate depravity of the child was a corollary of the belief in the concept of the miniature adult.[1] Back in the fifth century A.D. St. Augustine had made a charge against childhood, namely that it was stained with evil; inheriting the evil nature transmitted to Adam when he sinned against God. This concept had tremendous influence, for it was not only handed down the centuries, during the Middle Ages, but it also managed to survive the Renaissance, which was essentially a broad statement of the fundamental possibilities for goodness of human nature, the human form, and the human capacities.

The idea of the innate depravity of child-nature also stated that the child's nature would become increasingly sinful unless suppressed through rigid disciplinary measures. It is evident from the fact that such rigidity and formality is still practiced in many elementary and secondary schools, that belief in this theory of innate depravity persists. In fact the theory has received a re-interpretation in stronger terms, by some of the modern psychologists, which will be discussed in connection with Freud's views on childhood.

The following passage from an Eighteenth Century church publication will illustrate the attitude described above:

> ... we prohibit <u>play</u> in the strongest terms. The student should rise at 5 o'clock summer and winter.... Their recreation shall be gardening, walking, riding and bathing without doors.... A master shall always be present at the time of bathing. Only one shall bathe at a time, and no student shall be allowed to bathe in the river....The students shall be indulged with nothing which the world calls play--for those who play when they are young will play when they are old.[2]

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[1] Drawn from Louis P. Thorpe, <u>Child Psychology and Development</u>, p. 10.

[2] Quoted in Clarence E. Ragsdale, <u>Modern Psychologies and Education</u>, (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1932), pp. 5-6. Cited by Thorpe, <u>Child Psychology and Development</u>, p. 11.

A society which so thoroughly proscribed childhood, and held such an unfavorable opinion about the spirit of play, could hardly conceive producing any type of fantasy literature for children.

John Locke was born into the age which saw the birth of the tremendously significant literary works--"Pilgrim's Progress", "Robinson Crusoe" and "Gulliver's Travels"--written for an adult audience, but later heartily embraced by children. Locke was very much against the practice of rough handling of children, carried on by his predecessors; and suggested an entirely different manner of dealing with the child's mind. He was in favour of cherishing and nourishing the mind, for he believed that the child was born with a mind that was similar to a blank slate, and it was the responsibility of the external agents to fill it in efficiently.

He asked that the children be treated as rational creatures, that they be permitted to enjoy the freedom and liberty suitable to their age, and that they be allowed to act as they pleased--except when they might do harm. His main emphasis was on granting liberty to children; he recognised the value of children's intense curiosity, which he said was the instrument of nature to remove ignorance. The reading material which he suggested for the child's entertainment consisted of two books -- "Aesop's Fables" and "Reynard the Fox"-- in accordance with his recognition of the child's natural interest in animals.

When, in the Age of Reason, a literal interpretation caused the telescope to be focussed on the skies in search of God, and the microscope to explore the body in search of a soul--it was time for

the fairies to "retreat"[1]; fairies who emerged from the world of Perrault, and roamed the earth by starlight, would now have to go into hiding and await better days.

The prominent note of the literature for children of this period was didactic. The general mode was to use pleasure for the purposes of instruction, until there came a point when the element of pleasure was completely usurped by the instructional process. A tongue-in-cheeck quotation from Hazard expresses the spirit of this age:

> ...Let's pretend to build the castles they [the children] are so crazy about, but build them with our superior wisdom. We'll have a few classrooms concealed in their palaces, and we'll plant vegetables in their gardens, which they will take for flowers. We'll have reason and order and wisdom and natural history and physics and chemistry turn up by chance along the winding paths. While we seem to be telling them familiar nursery tales, they will really be listening to stories full of knowledge. They are so innocent they will never notice...[2]

The title of a magazine published by Madam Lepruice de Beaumont, in 1757, further reveals the attitude of the writers of this period toward childhood: "The Children's Magazine, or Conversation of a wise Governess with her most distinguished pupils, in which young people are made to think, speak and act according to the talent, temperament and inclinations of each one. The faults of their age are set forth, a way is shown to correct them; as much attention is paid to molding the heart as to guiding the spirit. Included is a summary of Sacred History, of Fables, of Geography, etc., the whole filled with useful

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[1]Paul Hazard, Books Children and Men, p. 10.
[2]Ibid., p. 4.

reflections and moral tales to entertain them pleasantly, and written in a simple style suitable to the tenderness of their souls, by Madame Lepruice de Beaumont."

The first sustained attack on the theory of innate sinfulness of the child was made by Rousseau, in the middle of the eighteenth century. In his brilliant but radical treatise on education, "Emile", he stated that children were not basically evil--on the contrary they were naturally good; and that the innocence and righteousness of childhood were spoilt only by being contaminated by the customs and conventions of the adult community. According to Rousseau the child has a natural capacity for a harmonious and socialized living, provided that his growth and development is unhampered by external forces. Rousseau's views differ from Locke's on many points in connection with education; nevertheless from an overall point of view it is apparent that their ideas supplement each other. Locke said that children ought to be guided and intrigued, not forced into learning, by taking advantage of their natural curiosity of mind. Rousseau further declared that not only must they be led, but accompanied as well by a wise preceptor and friend, always at hand to supply information when it is asked for. Like Locke he did immense service by recognising the differences that exist between the child's mind and that of the adult. Rousseau prescribed only one book as being suitable for children's reading--"Robinson Crusoe" which shows man reduced to a state of nature, and the gradual development of a scheme of living, completely derived from his own spirit and ingenuity.

Since not everyone could produce works with the same level of excellence as "Robinson Crusoe", the followers of Rousseau invented

rather wooden stock characters--parents, friends, or teachers--who knew everything and were always at hand to make profitable lessons out of everything, to endow every experience with educational value. Thus began the Age of Admonition, and the works of Thomas Day, Richard Edgeworth, Madame de Genlis, etc. are the veritable records of this boring age for children. "Juvenile literature had gone astray. People had taken a few ideas from Locke and Rousseau, mixed them up with more or less of puritan sentiment, a little rationalism, and from this strange leaven sprouted a quantity of works... [which] were inspired by the idea that there was not a single hour in the child's life but must be consecrated to usefulness."[1] Fairy tales were still in disfavour, for according to the writers of this period, fairy tales contained few or no morals; and what few there were, were overlooked by children who, after reading the tales, remembered only the descriptions of the "enchanted gardens and diamond palaces..."[2] This, it was believed, gave the child false expectations and false values.

Early in the nineteenth century there was an important cultural movement, known in literature as the Romantic Movement, which marks a fundamental change in values. It recognised feelings and emotions, fun and fantasy, and the play spirit of childhood; and it paved the way for the emergence of a new form of literature for children, based primarily on pleasure. The reality which was to be portrayed in this literature was a reality of deeper feeling and wider vision. The changing conception of the child (considered now no longer as an adult in miniature,

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[1] Paul Hazard, Books Children and Men, p. 34.
[2] Ibid., p. 18.

but as an individual who changed from year to year)--and the changing conception of children's literature, was partly dependent on a recognition of the intrinsic value of folk literature throughout Europe, and partly on the specific literary movement mentioned above, with its accent on emotions, spontaniety, wonder and mystery. The Grimm Brothers, Hans Christien Andersen, etc., were the liberators of children's literature, and gave it wings once again.

This movement also gave an impetus to the growing interest in childhood, which culminated in the twentieth century. Today an intense concern about the child's welfare is evident, together with an ever-growing concern for the development of a wholesome personality in the child. New methods are being used in education and child-rearing in order to guide children along lines advantageous to them and approved by society. Information based on controlled observation and measurement is being increasingly accepted by teachers and the parents. Books and journals on child development are widely distributed. Moreover, G. Stanley Hall's two-volume Adolescence along with other genetic studies of child development, including notably Freud's declarations about the causes and symptoms of personality maladjustment contributed greatly towards turning the focus of the age upon the nature and needs of childhood.

The new psychological insights into childhood, and the psychoanalytical interpretations of the child's fancies and dreams, are directly responsible for a renewed shift of emphasis in children's literature once again away from wonderland.

Freud has presented a picture of childhood which is remarkably similar to the one given by St. Augustine. According to Freud the child is an asocial and immoral being;Erich Fromm summarizes Freud's view of childhood in the following quotation:

> The young child has intense sadistic and masochistic strivings. It is an exhibitionist, and also a little "peeping Tom". It is not capable of loving anyone but is narcissistic, loving only itself to the exclusion of anyone else. It is intensely jealous and filled with destructive impulses against its rivals. The sexual life of the little boy and the little girl is dominated by incestuous strivings.[1]

Fromm gives a few possible reasons as to why Freud had emphasised only the "evil" aspect of childhood, to the exclusion of other positive aspects. First, Freud was committed to attack the Victorian concept of childhood which had idealised it to a complete state of innocence devoid of any evil impulses, etc. Freud held such a belief to be founded on a complete misconception, so he took his stand at the opposite extreme, thereby risking truth that may be in his theory. Secondly, Freud believed that one of the important functions of society was to make man repress his immoral and asocial strivings; and according to him this process of repression also leads to the formation of socially valuable traits--processes which Freud calls "reaction formation" and "sublimation". An evil impulse, such as sadism, may lead to the formation of an opposite trait such as benevolence, which prevents the evil impulse from expressing itself in thought, word or deed. Therefore according to him all constructive and good actions of man have their roots in evil impules! Culture itself is believed to be a result and a by-product of this process of repression and sublimation.

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[1]Erich Fromm, Forgotten Language, (New York, Grove Press Inc., 1951), p. 54.

The above concept of the child underlines the belief that the child remains essentially immoral until he is controlled by social demands; much of the immorality persists in spite of these demands, and continues to exist on a subterranean level of consciousness, expressing itself in dreams and fantasies, disguised in symbolic forms to escape the immediate comprehension of the dreamer.

This view has led to two important trends in connection with the child's welfare: an intense concern for the "socialization" of the child; and a growing suspicion of the shy and quiet child who loves to dream and speculate, by himself. The society today is so intent on socialization and conformity, and on developing the average child that it tends to forget that each child is special and unique.

Freud's views on the pathological significance of dreams and fantasies of childhood, and the consequent movement towards socialization, and reality orientation, has given rise to a form of "realism" which is strongly reflected in the children's literature today. Realism or reality being that aspect of the environment which can be manipulated and conquered, in general based on the notions of comformity to natural laws. This new "realistic" literature is very conscientious about what children <u>ought to feel</u> in terms of the criteria of mental healthe--but it fails to take into account what they <u>are</u>. The themes of these stories are centred around practical down-to-earth facts, not extending beyond "John's Visit to the Grocery Shop", or "What Mary Learnt at the Post Office".

Moreover these neat little stories taken from everyday life are faithfully wirtten in accordance with some of the basic modern psychological concepts. Age-levels, vocabulary norms, I.Q. ranges, remedial readings, and the concept of "Readiness" in general play important roles in the composition of children's stories today.

One child psychologist gives his opinion about the sort of vocabulary which should be used in children's stories:

> Frequently in reading a book to a child it is necessary to substitute simple words for one used by the author. This is especially true of books written a number of years ago, such as the classic fairy-tales. Authors of the past were not as word conscious as they are today.[1]

Clifton Fadiman gives his opinion about the matter:

> ... Our juvenile writers sail too close to the coast; they refuse to let themselves go... are too full of age level and vocabulary norms...[2]

In conclusion Fadiman further points out some of the consequences of such a tendency in children's literature today:

> Unless our writers for young people can re-possess the sense of wonder that the nineteenth century was habitually familiar with, the books they fashion may become more and more competent, skillful, morally sanitary and ideologically blameless, but within their pages the miracle will not be wrought, and if it ceases to be wrought, the sense of wonder will begin to die away in our children, and if that happens, there is not much sense in their being children at all. They might as well be born adults and have done with it.[3]

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[1] Hurlock, Child Growth and Development, p. 266-267.

[2] Clifton Fadiman speaks on the subject in Holiday magazine in the context of giving his reactions to fifty-one recent books for children. (The date of issue of the magazine not given.) Quoted by Priscilla Lantz, in an article "Fun and Fancy vs. Facts" which appeared in the Library Journal, Vol. 78, pp. 97-103, January 15, 1953.

[3] Ibid.

The above quotation represents one point of view in this fantasy-reality dilemma with regard to children's literature, which is facing writers, educators and parents today. The opposite stand on the issue is taken by the psychologists and mental hygienists who advocate realistic adaptation for children, and severe restrictions on the quality of reading material given to them. They are definitely against tales which may encourage fanciful thinking in children. The roots of this controversy appear to be in their interpretation of the concept of"reality". Both sides are pleading for "reality" on two completely different levels of meaning.

In the following chapters a survey will be made of some of the modern points of view in favour of realistic adaptation, along with a critical consideration of modern concepts of "reality". Finally the values of fanciful tales for the child will be discussed, and a higher concept of reality put forward in opposition to the "realism" endorsed by the mental hygienists.

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF MODERN VIEWS ON REALISTIC VS. UNREALISTIC ADAPTATION AND THEIR CAUSES

A brief survey of Western European history will disclose four distinct personality types, each of which was held high in esteem, in each successive period of history, with the changing temper of each age. During the middle ages it was the concept of the Religious Man that was idealised. The fulfillment of his spiritual duties was the highest value of this earthly life, which was considered to be merely a preparation for the real life, after death. Next came the Renaissance Man of Science, with his intense intellectual curiosity, enquiring into every field of knowledge. Third in line is the Economic Man, whose ideas and activities were motivated exclusively by the desire to achieve his economic ends. The forth concept of the ideal man is the "Superman"--the superior being, first conceived by Nietzsche as the product of human evolution.

Each of these concepts, given above, symbolise the fundamental beliefs of the respective ages. The twentieth century concept of the ideal man is also significant in this respect. The ideal man of the modern world is considered to be the mentally healthy man--the person with an "integrated" personality, who is also oriented towards "reality", and is capable of solving his personal and social problems efficiently.

The mentally healthy man is becoming a rare phenomenon in the complexity of the modern era--crowded with the ever-increasing number of neurotic personalities of our times.[1]

Mental hygienists and psychologists have not agreed on any adequate and precise definition of mental health, partly because of the inherent vagueness and ambiguity of the concept itself, and partly because of the loose usage of the term in the mental hygiene literature, and the consequent misinterpretations by sociologists and educators, and other interested parties. Nevertheless a definition must be given at this point in order to consider what exactly is the ideal to which modern man is expected to measure up. The following definition drawn from an important source, is representative yet it contains the element of vagueness mentioned above:

> ... A mentally healthy person is one who has problems and meets them with confidence and skill. His interpersonal relations are conducted with generosity and dignity. He has the ability to respond with feelings appropriate to his stage of development. He has the facility to integrate his group experience with his own unique individual capacities so that he may be creative and productive in his living.[2]

This new ideal of the mentally healthy man, and the intense preoccupation with psychology and psychiatry, etc. have led to a significant movement for the achievement of mental health. This movement

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[1] The idea of the modern concept of the ideal man is taken from Marie Jahoda, Current Concepts of Positive Mental Health, Joint Commission on Mental Illness and Health, Monograph Series No. 1, (New York, 1958), p. 4.

[2] Bernice M. Moore and Robert L. Sutherland, Texas Trends in Mental Health, (Austin, Texas, Hogg Foundation for Mental Hygiene, 1954). Quoted by Charles E. Skinner, Editor, Essentials of Educational Psychology, (U.S.A. Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1958), p. 406.

has two important aspects: the negative aspect which is concerned with improving the treatment and care of the mentally ill; the positive aspect is the vigilance to discover early symptoms of any mental or emotional troubles, and the prevention of serious illness and disorder. This positive aspect, which is concerned with the detection of symptoms, and prevention, has made the term "mental hygiene" very popular. The Mental Hygienists, because they are specially trained to detect the troubled child, apparently believe that they possess profound understandings of which the layman is entirely ignorant.

Klein has something to say about these "detectives", who watch avidly for symptoms of mental ill-health:

> A stock slogan of the veteran Mental Hygienist is "adjustment to Reality". He urges teachers and parents to make such adjustment the goal of mental health. He warns them to be on the alert for signs of failure to adjust to reality...as the mental hygienist employs the term, <u>reality</u> refers to problems to be solved, difficulties to be overcome, intentions to be executed and goals to be reached...Whatever interferes with honest appraisal of all the factors relevant to the handling of a conflict situation, interferes with adjustment to reality.[1]

Therefore we notice that the mental hygienists are greatly preoccupied with the immediate, social reality, surrounding the individual; and they also share the opinion that mental health is entirely dependent upon the quality and quantity of the individual's interaction with what they assume to be reality. These views and concepts of mental health have considerably influenced the educative process, and also

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[1] D.B. Klein, <u>Mental Hygiene</u>, (New York, Henry Holt and Co., 1944), pp. 331-32.

the child-rearing habits of modern parents. The need and importance of socialization of the child has received much emphasis; and the ill-effects of isolation, or any form of "unrealistic" adaptation--through indulgence in day-dreams and reading of fanciful literature--are magnified. Even experiments have been carried on to study the effects of isolation upon the individual, the conclusions of which have contributed to the belief that prolonged isolation is conducive to disorders in behaviour as well as emotional abnormalities.[1]

Mental hygienists further claim that the future psychotic can be recognised early by tracing the "symptoms" in childhood. Kanner's advice to those who are responsible for the training of the child is given as follows:

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[1] See for example, Woodburn Heron, "The Pathology of Boredom", Scientific American, January, 1957, pp. 52-56. Cited by George A. Lundberg et. al, Sociology, (New York, Harper & Bros. 1958), p. 223.

It is important to point out here that this experiment was carried out under what can only be considered highly unusual, even spectacular conditions. Not only was the subject isolated from the company of other individuals for the purposes of studying his reactions, but he was also placed in an air-conditioned and sound-proof room, and for further minimizing the sensory perception, plastic visors were placed over the eyes, foam rubber pillows were placed over the ears, and cotton gloves and card-board cuffs were made to extend beyond the fingertips of each subject.

> The child is to be taught to make friends and to get on with others instead of being permitted to retreat to the solitary refuge of an inner world of asocial, dreamy, ineffectual contemplation.[1]

Kanner further divides the future psychotic into four categories in accordance with their varying symptoms. They are given in the following order:[2]

1. Quiet, shy, retiring child, inclined to live solitary life of his own.

2. Irritable, sensitive, excitable, nervous, stubborn child, especially girls given to religious preoccupation.

3. Lazy, inactive, unstable, mischievous child, mostly boys, who sometimes become tramps and delinquents.

4. Managable, good-natured, anxiously over-conscientious, industrious model children, mainly boys.

Mental hygienists are keenly devoted to their cause, particularly in their belief that if the future generation is to be saved, mental hygiene principles ought to be taught to parents and teachers on a larger scale. This point of view is very neatly summarized in the following quotation cited by Klein:[3]

> ...only aggressive behaviour is regarded by the teacher as serious. Those displaying recessive, unsocial, imaginative--lying, dreaminess, etc., are rarely reported as problems. Yet from the mental hygiene standpoint the non-interfering, timid and withdrawing child is perhaps a graver problem than the overtly socially aggressive. The former type is apt to be left alone, to construct fantastic day-dreams which take him away from the business of facing and adjusting to life as it is rather than as he imagines or wishes it to be. Left

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[1] L. Kanner, Child Psychiatry, (Baltimore Charles C. Thomas, 1935), p. 490. Quoted by D.B. Klein, Mental Hygiene, p.

[2] Ibid.

[3] D.B. Klein, Mental Hygiene, p. 188.

to himself such a child often fails to become happily socialized. If the process of abnormal introversion goes unchecked, we see developing the recluse, the queer, the odd, the incongruous and the pre-schizophrenic.... It is obvious that many teachers fail--to keep them in good contact with reality and to cause them to be happily socialized.[1]

Mental hygienists have set up a number of norms or criteria to evaluate the mental health of individuals. In this context only those aspects which are relevant to the issue of realistic versus unrealistic adaptation will briefly be surveyed.[2] Some of the criteria are:

1. Correct Perception of Reality.
2. Integrated and balanced Personality.
3. Adequacy in Interpersonal Relationships.
4. Social Proficiency, Leadership and Action .
5. Orientation to the present, real world--and efficiency in problem solving.

The very first criterion--"Correct Perception of Reality" is the most controversial one, and is directly relevant to the central issue of the present study. Jahoda further defines this "Correct Perception of Reality" as being "perception free from need distortion...the perception of reality is called mentally healthy when what the individual sees corresponds to what is really there..."[3] Thus the mentally healthy individual is "realistic" in this special way--he responds to the world as it is rather than as he would wish it to be, he is objective in his attitude and does not react to situations through his feelings, but only through his reason. And this criterion rules out day-

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[1] F.E. Howard and F.L. Patry, Mental Hygiene (New York, Harper and Bros. 1935), pp. 298-300.
[2] The criteria are drawn from various sources.
[3] Marie Jahoda, Current Concepts of Positive Mental Health, p. 49.

dreaming, fancy and indulgence in activity pertaining to it. The shy, quiet and imaginative child, whose greatest source of joy is the world of fairies which he weaves out of his creative fancy--is to be regarded with suspicion, according to this criterion.

Shaffer is moderate in his criticism of "withdrawals from reality". According to him:

> Seclusiveness is a maladjustment only in proportion to the degree of its employment, being normal when it does not seriously interfere with an individual's social effectiveness, pathological when he withdraws to such an extent as to affect his perception of reality..... The existence of day-dreams does not in itself constitute a maladjustment, but is a symptom and a contributing factor found in many maladjusted persons.[1]

L.C. Crow and Alice Crow are definitely opposed to any indulgence in fanciful thoughts and day-dreaming. They are of the opinion that if the child is allowed to indulge in such unrealistic pastimes, or permitted to read fairy-tales etc. in childhood, it might lead to a confusion between fact and fantasy, which will be carried over to adult life from the nursery. To put it in the authors' words:

> Fairy stories are told to the average child for the purpose of developing his imagination--his imagination needs education, training and direction based upon established information. The child's early life is one of imagination. He lacks experience for much factual thinking, and he needs therefore, more knowledge of the real world rather than more information of the world of make-believe lest the latter become his real world.[2]

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[1] L.F. Shaffer, Psychology of Adjustment (U.S.A. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1936), pp. 173-188.
[2] L.C. Crow and Alice Crow, Mental Hygiene, (U.S.A., McGraw-Hill Book Co. Inc., 1951), p. 63.

According to them the danger is not in the mental wandering in itself, but in the possibility of its being unable to return to problems of daily life.

They further suggest that the literature for children be rewritten in order to give them more experiences of actual life, "so that if they wish to exercise their imagination they may do so on the basis of better understood facts rather than on the basis of fantasy."[1] Emotions, they feel, ought to be stimulated by powerful and vitalizing factual stimuli, rather than those based upon imagination.

One tendency noticed in the mental hygiene literature, surveyed for the present study, was a general disinclination towards a firm commitment to either side of the issue of fantasy vs. "reality" for children. A majority of the writers have something to say on both sides of the issue and in the final analysis contribute little towards a solution. Wallin's view on the subject is an excellent illustration of this fence-straddling method of approaching the issue. He at first points out some of the positive aspects of day-dreaming with particular reference to the artist and the genius, yet not without exploring the "evils" of fantasy--which is a synonym for wishful, day-dreaming activitiy. About the positive effects of day-dreaming his eloquence may best be quoted:

> Creative thinking is essentially an act of imagination; and the visionary day-dreams of today often become the practical accomplishments of tomorrow. Fantasy is at the base not only of literature, but also of music, painting and scientific hypothesing. Therefore, the indiscriminate attempt to suppress the phantasy life of the child would close an outlet that affords him tension-relieving recreation and

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[1] Ibid., p. 64.

> some of his most delightful experiences; it would tend to stifle his spontaneous, imaginative vivacity, creativeness, romantic insight, poetic fertility and scientific inventiveness, and thereby would produce dissatisfaction, lack of interest, inattention and dullness.[1]

As mentioned earlier, Wallin conforms to the views of the majority on this topic, and turns next to give a detailed account of the ill-effects of fantasy as well. The pathological effects of fantasy mentioned by Wallin are listed below:

1. Lapses of attention or periods of absent-mindedness, etc.[2]

2. Hallucinatory experiences (i.e. perceptions that have no external reality; the projection of centrally aroused ideas into space without any relevant external stimulus).

3. Delusions.

4. Somnambulism and double personality--the secondary states of consciousness arising due to day-dreaming detachment from the everyday life.

5. Demention Praecox.[3]

The suggestions for remedy further reveals the author's disinclination toward committing himself to any definite point of view. His advice is given as follows:

> Avoid inveterate indulgence in myth, story and novel reading. Unless we subscribe to the doctrine of the realists, that the only thing a child should be taught are real facts or truths, and not idle fancies or mythological falsehood, there probably exists some place for the judicious employment of fairy-tales, myths, legends in early life.[4]

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[1] J.E.W. Wallin, Personality Maladjustments and Mental Hygiene, (U.S.A., McGraw-Hill Book Co. 1935), pp. 363-64.
[2] Ibid., p. 340.
[3] Ibid., p. 371.
[4] Ibid., p. 375.

He further adds in concluding:

> ...The child's imagination is also in need of disciplining ....excessive reading of fairy-stories [etc.] may develop an inordinate fondness for the unreal and may stimulate frequent resort to compensation in day-dream for short-comings and to regression to infantile and primitive modes of wish-fulfillment.[1]

Symonds elaborates the pathological implications of fantasy, on the grounds of its similarity to a state of neurosis. He claims that both fantasy and neurosis have the same source, and that the same factors--frustration, repression and an inability to master these--are the cause of both these mental maladies. And he claims that where fantasies are in abundance and quite powerful, the individual is likely to display other neurotic characteristics. Symonds criticism is levelled from a psycho-analytical point of view. He makes a study of fantasy at all levels of its manifestation, with particular emphasis on "unconscious fantasy", which, according to him, tends to express itself in neurotic symptoms. He also lists a number of neurotic and psychotic disorders, which are both "caused" and characterized by fantasy, e.g. hysteria, phobia, obsessional neurosis, paranoia, schizophrenia, etc.[2]

Mental hygienists and psycho-analysts have also severely attacked the particular form of children's literature which manifest the element of fantasy and wishful dreams--referred to as the "ready-made" fantasy. One of the severest criticisms comes from A.A. Brill, who devotes an entire chapter on this topic discussing the undesirability

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Percival M. Symonds discusses these ideas in his work The Dynamics of Human Adjustment, (New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1946), pp. 510-11.

of fairy-tales for children from the psycho-analytical point of view, in his book "The Basic Principles of Psycho-analysis".

Brill claims that the majority of his patients, attacked with neuroses or psychoses, have a past history of fantasy life nourished by fairy-tales, which was conducive to their later condition of delusions and hallucinations. Most of them were either the only child in the family in need of companionship; or a dominated and bullied younger member of a large family, or a sensitive and shy child--and the only way these children could "adjust" themselves to their situation in life, was through fancies and dreams. And according to Brill "such processes of adjustment have given rise to a literature widely known as the fairy-tales.[1]

He claims that fairy-tales are expressions of the "wish-motive", having their origin in an attempt at adjustment; and because they represent an essentially unhealthy and abnormal gratification of an individual's inner strivings and wishes, they are the products of queer introverts, who do not or cannot maintain a healthy contact with other normal individuals. And according to Brill, these odd personalities usually lead an abnormal existence, and that they resort to fairy-tales as "a mode of emotional gratification".[2] Here the author illustrates his point with a reference to the life of Hans Christian Anderson, who is supposed to have been a similar recluse. But fairy-tales are not only the products of unhealthy, unsocial and frustrated individuals; they are also supposed to exert a pernicious influence in the later

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[1] A.A. Brill, Basic Principles of Psycho-Analysis, (New York, Washingrow Square Press, 1960), p. 269.
[2] Ibid., p. 272.

life of individuals who read and enjoyed them in their childhood. One "pernicious result of fairy stories is that they lay foundations for compulsive systems of obsession".[1] He refers to recurrence of particular numbers, e.g. three or nine, in myths and fairy-tales, which influences the mind of the child in an adverse way, and he asserts that some people carry this "superstition" throughout their lives.

Brill levels his attack on other aspects of the fairy-tales as well:

> Fairy tales are also harmful to the normal psychic development because they are primitive and archaic modes of expression; and catering to the primitive impulse, they encourage primitive modes of thought and action in the individual... They present a state of the most primitive type: the individual either kills or is killed; he actually takes delight in producing horror. They thus have the most pernicious effect upon the child, for they unfit him for reality, by feeding his imagination on modes of reaction that are distinctly out of harmony with a healthy civilization.[2]

Brill, thus thoroughly disapproves of this form of literature, because according to him it so imbues the minds of children with wonder and magic, that later they find it difficult to become plain, reality-oriented citizens, instead they remain very much shadows of the fairy book heroes, "struggling for existence".[3] Such individuals, according to him, are "constantly wishing for the unattainable that could be gotten only through some charms of fairy-land-magic boots..."[4] etc., and such an attitude "militates against success".[5] He pleads for the maintenance of an attitude of objectivity, as opposed to subjectivity, in life; to learn how to cope with facts as opposed to fancy,--"to meet reality face to face."[6] And he maintains that children ought to be

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[1] Ibid., p. 275.
[2] Ibid., p. 276.
[3] Ibid., p. 276.
[4] Ibid., p. 278.
[5] Ibid., p. 279.
[6] Ibid.

freed from the evil influence of fairy-tales as early as possible. His argument follows thus:

> As for the fear expressed by some people that abolishing fairy-tales will stifle and impoverish the imagination, let us remember that there is plenty of material for the imagination in nature and life with which the child can actually come in contact and from which he can derive wholesome pleasure and instruction at the same time.[1]

From points of view considered in the discussion above, it may be concluded that there is a general concensus of views, maintained by the mental hygienists and psycho-analysts, against unrealistic forms of adaptation. In the remaining part of this chapter some of the causes, responsible for the development of this attitude, will be analysed.

The Twentieth Century ethos gives a significant insight into the predominant cause, which is responsible for the formulation of the above view in favour of realistic adaptation: <u>The Scientific temper of the age</u>. Modern man demands a rational and scientific explanation for every phenomenon, and is willing to trust only that which is thus apprehensible, or that which is directly perceivable through the senses. The world has moved away from the supernatural to the natural dimension, and Brubacher gives an interesting interpretation of this phenomenon:

> He [modern man] omits the eternal the limitless from his space-time frame of reference. Man does this because he feels at home in nature. He may not have a complete list of answers to all his problems, but he takes comfort and gains confidence in thinking that none of them is hidden in mysterious riddles of a superhuman or supernatural character. God is immanent in Nature, and nature is His temple of worship.[2]

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 279.

[2] John S. Brubacher, <u>Modern Philosophies of Education</u>, (New York, Mc-Graw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1950), p. 316.

The above quotation gives us a glimpse of the modern man's consciousness, and his attitude toward himself and the universe. Modern man is arrogant and proud of his triumphant series of scientific endeavours; the moon, which down the ages has been a poetic symbol of the remote and the unattainable, is brought within reach today by science. Man, today, floats weightlessly in outer space to perceive what no human eyes have ever perceived before. Yet inextricably blended with this arrogance is an element of doubt and powerlessness, a strange feeling of insignificane camouflaged in his desire to turn away from the "mysterious riddles" of existence, and to associate only with the familiar and the perceivable humdrum of the tangible world around him. Man is afraid today of what he does not understand--and this fear takes a variety of forms in his everyday life. This is the "age of anxiety".[1]

And the significance of this title, with reference to life in the modern world is excellently summarized in the following quotation:

> It speaks of big city towers in which life is lived in compartments and cubicles. It speaks of the century's increasingly complex machines that no one man can control...It speaks of man's dreaded loss of identity, of a desperate need to make contact with his fellow man, with the world. Above all it speaks of God grown silent.---anxiety seems to be the dominant fact of modern life...as the earth-moving machines have bull-dozed the landscape, so have the technologists bull-dozed the manscape. Human nature, says Dr. May, has been made the object of control measures, just like any other part of nature. 'Keeping busy' for its own sake has become a neurotic anxiety, while it may allay superficial anxiety, Dr. May holds that it exacerbates the deeper and more pervasive existential anxiety, about being and non-being.[2]

This fear is gripping at the very centre of their consciousness. As MacMurray[3] states, modern man is afraid of the future, of doing anything unless everyone else does it as well, afraid of other nations,

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[1] "The Anatomy of Angst", Time, The Weekly Magazine, Vol. LXXVII, No. 14 (March 31, 1961), p. 40.
[2] Ibid., pp. 40, 42.
[3] John MacMurray, Freedom in the Modern World, (London, Faber and

or even of making mistakes--they want others to agree with them because only then do they feel secure in their beliefs. From this point of view the modern "individualism" appears to be a fiction. This idea is further strengthened by Fromm:

> The "self" in the interest of which modern man acts is the social self, a self which is essentially constituted by the role the individual is supposed to play and which in reality is merely the subjective disguise for the objective social function of man in society. While modern man seems to be characterized by the utmost assertion of the self, actually his self has been weakened and reduced to a segment of the total self.[1]

As Fromm mentions elsewhere "socialization" activities are merely a means to cover the rising panic and fear--"It is covered over by the daily routine of his activities, by the assurance and approval [of] his private or social relations, by success in business, by distraction, by 'having fun', 'making contacts','going places' . But whistling in the dark does not bring light."[2]

In the light of the above statement it may be concluded that one of the important causes of the consensus of views in favour of "realism" for children, as opposed to any form of detachment from it, is inherent in the pseudo-scientific temper of the age.

The <u>second</u> important cause of the consensus of views in favour of realistic adaptation may be traced to the <u>negative modern views on myths, legens, rituals</u>, etc. The scientific temper of the age and the detachment of modern man's emotional life from his intellectual conclusions, contribute greatly towards the development of the negative attitude towards myths, etc.

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[1] Erich Fromm, <u>Escape from Freedom</u>, (New York, Rinehart and Co., 1941), p. 117.
[2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 134.

The origins of myths and legends have been considered by almost every important branch of knowledge--history, sociology, literature, metaphysics, epistemology, anthropology--and each of them have their own theory as regards the subject; the psycho-analyst being the latest addition, and particularly relevent to issue under discussion--negative views on myths. Malinowski speaks disparagingly about the psycho-analytical view on myth:

> Finally we have the psycho-analyst who has come at last to teach us that the myth is a day-dream of the race, and that we can explain it by turning our back upon nature, history, and culture, and diving deep into the dark pools of the subconsious, where at the bottom there lie the usual paraphernelia and symbols of the psycho-analytic exegis.[1]

There is another view which considers myth as having its source, not in a positive power of creation, but in form of mental defect--a pathological influence of language. This view receives severe criticism by Cassirer. He cites a passage from Max Muller in order to illustrate this view, and also to make it serve as a starting point for his attack:

> Mythology is inevitable, it is natural, it is an inherent necessity of language the outward form and manifestation of thought; it is--the dark shadows which language throws upon thought, and which can never disappear till language becomes entirely commensurate with thought--which it never will.[2]

Cassirer's comments on the above view follows:

> When we reduce it to its philosophical lowest terms, this attitude turns out to be simply the logical result of that naive realism which regards the reality of objects as something directly and unequivocally given, literally something tangible. If reality is conceived in this manner, then of course everything which has not this solid sort of reality dissolves into mere fraud and illusion.[3]

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[1] Bronislaw Malinowski, Myth in Primitive Psychology, (Great Br., R.I. Severs, 1926), p. 18.

[2] "Philosophy of Mythology", appended to Introduction to the Science of Religion, (London, 1873), pp. 353-355.

[3] Ernest Cassirer, Language and Myth, (U.S.A., Harper and Bros, 1946), p. 6.

Further causes for this tendency towards "realism" may be found in the Social and economic aspects of modern life. Most of the Western cultures are characterized by a high degree of the spirit of competition, where the success is the highest value in life; failure is the most dreaded and destructive prospect. "To rise in the world of business and industry one must keep getting promoted from one job to the next, from one salary level to the next."[1] College professors, preachers, debutantes, shop-keepers, doctors, engineers, etc., are all enmeshed in this dangerous web of competition...."One of the big realities to which we have to learn to adjust is the reality of the ubiquitous competition, and our relationship to it."[2]

Therefore modern thinkers support the views which emphasise the importance of early adjustment to and familiarity with the complexities and scheme of such a society. Moreover the individual must also acquire a suitable personality at an early age, for the modern business world is so conditioned, that men are not only required to sell their commodities, but their personalities as well. "The manual labourer sells his physical energy; the businessman, the physician, the clerical employee sell their 'personality'....as with other commodities it is the market which decides the value of [such] human qualities."[3]

Thus "success", "leadership","popularity" are important sociological values, which are gaining in importance; and which also call for a form of "reality-orientation" as its basis.

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[1] D.B. Klein, Mental Hygiene, p. 333.
[2] Ibid., p. 334.
[3] Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom, p. 119.

Another important reason for the increasing value of <u>socializa-</u>tion and need for "realism" (as the mental hygienists understand the term) is the broadening society of man. A new concept of a world community is emerging, hastened by the increasing speed and variety of the means of communication between nations today. The world has moved away from isolation to interdependence; from nationalism to internationalism. The U.N.O. and its specialized agencies are making efforts to spread cross-cultural information, to bring nations closer together. And they begin with the elementary school child.

Thus the modern child is expected to be "socialized" on an international scale. Thus much time and energy is spent on these activities.

Finally the last of the important causes, which has greatly influenced the modern views in favour of "realism", is the newly discovered <u>pathological implications</u> of what is known as "escape mechanisms" by psychologists, referring to fantasy, day-dreams, etc. and "escapistic literature", which constitutes of myths, fairy-tales etc. The pathological implications have been discussed earlier, therefore it is enough to mention it here, as one of the determining forces of the modern views.

Considering all the aspects discussed above, from a material point of view, the writer is able to arrive at a point when some amount of justification is found for the above mentioned views held by the modern thinkers. If the child is to be an efficient member of the society explored above, he would have to be far too busy learning all the rules for the "business of facing and adjusting to life". There

would be little room in his life for "dreams", little time for being a child. But the issue raised by this thesis, and which it intends to explore, is whether or not the material point of view of reality is the only reality, or whether there is another more relevant one to man. In essence then what is the position of dreams and fairy-tales with reference to this reality--and to childhood?

CHAPTER III

CRITICISM OF THE MODERN VIEWS

<u>The scientific mind cannot deny the existence of mysteries and the unexplained phenomenon and feelings for which science has no answer</u>. The scientific mind cannot tolerate the ambiguous, the unstructured or the mysterious--for science, whatever lies beyond its ken--is silence. But the mythical and fairy-tale imagination looks upon the face of oblivion and tries to understand this silence from which science turns away. It attempts to penetrate into the very depths of this apparently empty abyss, in search of meanings, for this "silence" is more eloquent than words, and burdened with meaning and suggestions more profound in their significance than the energy and mad frenzy of "living";--meanings which touch upon the inner roots of life and existence--with their bearings upon the great fundamentals and essences of this universe. Its relevance to life may be brought to relief by comparing it to the pause between two notes of music;—although in itself vacuous, it is nevertheless an essential and inextricable part of the melody--touch-stone of sublime harmony. These "silent gaps" stand in a similar relation the scientific knowledge of modern man. Scientific knowledge appears to be very limited when viewed from this new level or dimension of apprehension.

Science, like Faustus, climbs to the peaks of the highest mountains, only to discover the mocking distance of the stars and the sky above. But unlike Faustus, it does not acknowledge the existence of

the incomprehensible reality which lies beyond its reach; unlike Faustus it is devoid of the heroic rage and courage to clench its fists against it--instead, it quietly and indefinitely proclaims that the rest is silence. That which cannot be perceived; the existence of which puzzles and defies the will and capacities of man and his scientific theories and formulas, does not--or dare not, exist.

Erich Fromm comments on the reflection of this attitude upon the modern generation of youth and children:

> If it is true that the ability to be puzzled is the beginning of wisdom, then this truth is a sad commentary on the wisdom of modern man. Whatever the merits of our high degree of literary and universal education, we have lost the gift for being puzzled. Everything is supposed to be known--if not to ourselves, then to some specialist whose business it is to know what we do not know. In fact, to be puzzled is embarassing, a sign of intellectual inferiority. Even children are rarely surprised, or at least they try not to show that they are, and as we grow older we lose the ability to be surprised.[1]

Macmurray points out one important limitation of science as a medium of perception and evaluation of reality.

> ...It is concerned with facts, and the laws that govern the facts. It is completely unbiased, unemotional, disinterested. It has no purpose except to understand facts. Science has nothing to do with...the satisfactions of human desires...It is what we feel, not what we think that ultimately determines the course of life.[2]...Life is an art, not a science.[3]

Here myth and fancy enter the scene, for the substratum of myths and fairy-tales is feeling, not thought; emotion and not intellect.

Science on the one hand and myth and fairy-tales on the other are not fundamentally opposed to one another if they are conceived to

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[1] Erich Fromm, The Forgotten Language. (New York, Grove Press, Inc., 1951), p. 3.
[2] John Macmurray, Freedom in the Modern World, (London, Faber and Faber Ltd., 1935), p. 38.
[3] Ibid., p. 55.

be "organs of reality",[1] through the agency of which anything real becomes the object of intellectual apprehension, and as such made visible to man. Language, myth, art and science are "ideational forms"[2], which are not mutually exclusive, but supplement one another, and in a way they function organically together in the construction of reality--nevertheless each organ has its own special task or role. Myths and fairy-tales have their own claim to Reality, and are not the fantastic fabrications of the pre-scientific mind--. "Language, art and myth, each of these is a way of seeing, and carries within itself its particular and proper source of light."[3] Neither can they be understood in terms of objects on which they may be based, or the matter around which they may be centred; or which may be believed to have given rise to it. Cassirer argues on this point with convincing zest. He says that even if it were possible to resolve all mythology to a basic astral mythology, there would yet be a great difference between the mythical awareness derived from contemplation of the stars and the view "they present to empirical observation or the way they figure in theoretic speculation and scientific 'explanations' of natural phenomenon."[4] He further continues:

> ...The dawn of conceptual enlightenment can never be realistically derived from things themselves or understood from the nature of the objective contents. In language, art and mythology so many archtypal phenomena of human mentality can be indicated as such, but are not capable of any further "explanations" in terms of something else. The realists always assume, as their solid basis--the so-called "given", which is thought

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[1] Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myth, p. 8.
[2] Ibid., p. 9.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid., p. 11.

to have some definite form, some inherent structure of its own. They accept this reality as an integrated whole of causes and effects, things and attributes, states and processes, objects at rest and objects in motion, and the only question for them is which of these elements, a particular mental product such as myth language or art originally embodied.[1]

Myths have their own logic, an inner law that governs them. And they have their source in definite aspects of human experience--human feelings and creative thought. As Cassirer says, it is one of the modes of perception of reality--deeper stratum which is impregnated with deep emotional qualities--the same qualities which form the atmosphere and background of the fairy-tales. Cassirer says:

> ...Whatever is seen or felt is surrounded by a special atmosphere of joy or grief, of anguish, of excitement; of exultation or depression. Here we cannot speak of "things" as a dead or indifferent stuff. All objects are benignant or malignant, friendly or inimical, familiar or uncanny, alluring and fascinating or repellent and threatening.[2]

This form of human experience is common even to the experience of modern, civilized man. Under the strain of strong emotions the world becomes "dramatic" in this special sense. Everything appears to have been tinged by the emotions of the perceiver, be it love, hate, fear or hope. To continue with Cassirer's criticism of the scientific approach:

> There can scarcely be a greater contrast than between the original direction of our experience, and the ideal of truth introduced by science. All the efforts of scientific thought are directed to the aim of obliterating every trace of the first view. In the new light of sciences, mythical perception has to fade away. They have lost all objective or cosmological value, but their anthropological value persists. In our human world we cannot deny them and we cannot miss them; they maintain their place and significance, while science has to abstract from these qualities in order to fulfill its task, it cannot completely suppress them--they are only restricted to their own field. It is the restriction of the subjective qualities that marks the general way

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[1] Ibid., pp. 11-12.
[2] Cassirer, Essay on Man, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1944)

> of science. Science delimits their objectivity but cannot completely destroy their reality. For every feature of our human experience has a claim to reality.[1]

According to Cassirer each of these three stages--the primary stratum of our "feeling qualities", the second stage the world of sense-perception, and the third stage of generalizations that is attained in the scientific concept of the physical world--each of these have their definite functional value; none of them are illusions--each is a step to reality.

The mythical mode of perception is broader and much more intense than thelogical-scientific view. It is akin to the mystical vision of reality for it disposes freely over the data of intuition. Its view of life is a synthetic and not an analytical one. Life is not divided into innumerable air-tight compartments, separated by unsurmountable barriers. It is, on the contrary, felt to be an unbroken, harmonious whole. The borders are fluid and fluctuating, and the different realms of life blend into each other gracefully. Nor does the concept of "Degree" exist for the mythical imagination. There is no scale of nature or chain of being, which places one sphere above another, e.g. the world of animals above the world of plants, or man above animal, etc. Moreover nothing has a static shape, but is subject to sudden metamorphosis. Cassirer claims that the one law which consistently governs the mythical world, is the law of metamorphosis and the philosophy behind such a law is a deep-seated conviction of a fundamental "solidarity of life that bridges over the multiplicity and variety of its single forms."[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 77.
[2] Ibid., p. 82.

Graber[1] refers to this same mythical intuitive consciousness, as the fairy-tale of an individual which lives in the individual as a guiding idea throughout his life, and often survives him--"and it is in that which survives physical life and seems everlasting that true reality lies." What he conceives to be the real SELF of man, is the element in human beings which commune and contend with the higher forces of the universe--it is that aspect of man's most personal nature in which is "rooted that original harmonious whole, the god-like self-sufficient region--which the poets praise and which impels them to sing, and which is roused by the mystics and the truly religious so that it illuminates their conscious mind."[2]

He further continues:

> Even if we had never heard a fairy-tale in our childhood, we should never stop producing them in our dreams and phantasies. Only his lot is hard whose fairy-tale sense has been defeated--every attempt to do without fairy-tales in and around us is like that fox who found the grapes sour;...that identification with social morality, convention and the demands of civilization dictated from outside can never be our true reality, but only an apparent satisfaction of our ego in which we have entangled ourselves.[3]

<u>Realistic thinking does not always free man from Deception.</u>

To be awake--to have emerged from the "unreal" stratums of the wish, the dream and often ideology--is not exclusively a blessing, for realistic thinking does not always free man from deceptions. Deception, in a broad sense, is one of the "facts" of waking-reality. Moreover, today, with the mental hygienists' charge against "isolation" and "withdrawal" etc., the modern man-awake, finds the world too much with him.

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[1] G.H. Graber, <u>The Mental Life of the Child</u>, (London, Staples Press, 1949), p. 85.
[2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 85.
[3] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 86.

The quintessence of the sort of deception which surrounds modern life is given in a quotation from Erich Fromm:

> Modern man is exposed to an almost unceasing "noise", the noise of the radio, television, headlines, advertising, the movies, most of which do not enlighten our mind but stultify them. We are exposed to rationalizing lies which masquerade as truths, to plain nonsense which masquerades as common-sense or as higher wisdom of the specialist, of double-talk, intellectual laziness, or dishonesty which speaks in the name of "honour" or "realism", as the case may be. We feel superior to the superstitious of former generations and so-called primitive cultures, and we are constantly hammered at by the very same kind of superstitious beliefs that set themselves up as the latest discoveries of science.[1]

There are deceptions of various kinds, with different degrees of evil consequences, prevailing in the world. There are harmless visual deceptions; man perceives stars in the sky, some of which may or may not have a real existence at the moment of perception; to him the sky and the sea appear to be blue, although he knows that neither air nor water have any colour; the rail-lines appear to converge in the distance, the knowledge of the fact that they do not converge in no way changes his perception. Here man is deceived by his own senses and perceives things which have no existence. But merely the existence of a thing is no criterion for its reality. A counterfeit coin is an object which exists--but is unreal--it deceives man.

Deceptions go deeper into the level of man's beliefs and convictions. When a man professes to believe something which he does not actually believe--he is deceiving the world, deliberately giving currency to deceptions which spreads like the enlarging circles around a little pebble dropped in the still waters of a pond. But if he <u>thinks</u>

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[1]Forgotten Language, p. 35.

that he believes something, which he does not actually believe--then he too is caught in this deadly circle of deception.[1]

Today old men and women no longer wear the wrinkles of age and wisdom, which set in so gracefully with the passage of time. Plastic surgery helps them to "wipe" them away from their brow and the obnoxious rejuvenating pills further prepare the masquerade for a life of deceptions.

Therefore it is only when man withdraws to the privacy of his own thoughts, hopes and emotions, that he is able to rescue himself from the noise and nonsense--the deceptions that surround him--better able to feel and think his truest and most valuable thoughts and feelings--listen to the voice of his innermost self.

Invalidity of some of the criteria of mental health. The invalidity of some of the criteria of mental health will be discussed in terms of certain humanistic values. Some of the criteria are not directly stated, but implied on a less specific level--such as--(a) adequacy in interpersonal relations, (b) leadership and action. And amongst those which are more positively stated are (c) correct reality perception, and (d) problem solving--the latter, if applied to the problems of everyday life, would lead to the idea that success is a prerequisite condition for mental health.

Because the capacity for good interpersonal relationship, leadership and action are greatly approved by mental hygienists as symptoms of goodhealth, the opposite tendencies--shyness and timidity--are regarded

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[1]Some of the ideas concerning the sense deceptions and the counterfeit coin in the discussion above were drawn from Macmurray, Freedom in the Modern World, pp. 120-21.

suspiciously, in the light of the above mentioned standards. In fact some investigators[1] in the field of mental hygiene rated these symptoms as serious, indicating schizoid trends. The logic behind such an assumption, as Klein points out, is that both the unusually shy child and the schizophrenic patient, exhibit a certain common element--a tendency to withdraw from the social environment; therefore it is hastily concluded that there is a causative connection between the two states. In fact following the same logic, any form of withdrawal from the social reality would be considered to be psychotic or pre-psychotic. Jahoda cites an interesting example, which illustrates this point--the folly of drawing drastic conclusions on the strength of apparent similarities. Alexander[2] interprets the Buddhistic self-absorption of Indian mystics, with the physical manifestations of rigidity and immobility, as an artificial schizophrenia of the catatomic type. The Buddhists can not only control, having full command over their faculties, the onset and termination of these "symptoms"--but the very purpose of these "withdrawal" is to achieve a mental discipline--a higher form of mental hygiene.

Moreover if the same logic of symptoms is to be applied, the experts ought to be just as concerned about "over-activity" etc. as a symptom of the manic phase, in the manic-depressive psychoses.

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[1] Wickham, E.K., Children's Behaviour and Teachers Attitudes, (N.Y. The Commonwealth Fund, Division of Publications), Stogdille, R.M., "Parental Attitudes and Mental Health Standards", Mental Hygiene, 1931, 15, pp. 813-827.

Klein further states:

> ...the child with push and go is regarded as better adjusted than the more thoughtful, less obviously self-assertive child. In the field of education it is often taken for granted that schools ought to be training "leaders" and "doers" and "future executives" for the world of tomorrow. Whether such an apotheosis of leadership and action is in accord with a sound philosophy of mental hygiene is to be seriously questioned.[1]

Klein further refers to an investigation carried on by a sociologist[2] to find out whether the schizophrenic trait of seclusiveness was already manifest in childhood. This study consisted in checking on the childhood personality characteristics of a hundred and one schizophrenic patients admitted into a given state hospital. The cases were taken in consecutive order, just as they entered the institution--to avoid bias. The result in 53 out of the 101 cases, did not yield sufficient evidence to reach a decision. Of the other 48 cases, 21 were found to have been seclusive children, while the 27 were definitely reported to have been normally sociable, in their childhood. Therefore it may be concluded from this study, that sociable as well as seclusive children have chances of developing schizophrenia, and no relationship has been established between the dreamy or shy seclusiveness of childhood and the adult mental disorder, as have been claimed by some mental hygienists.[3]

Correct perception of reality is considered to be an important criterion of mental health. But there is an inherent ambiguity in the term <u>correct</u>, for who is to decide and according to what standards is it to be decided--what is correct?

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[1] D.B. Klein, <u>Mental Hygiene</u>, (New York, Henry Holt and Co., 1944), p. 196.

[2] Faris, R.E.L., Dunham, H.W., <u>Mental Disorders in Urban Areas</u>, (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1939), pp. 175-177.

[3] Refer to page 41, for example.

Jahoda questions the validity of the use of the term "correct" for, he argues that it is possible to look at reality in a number of ways; one may perceive a landscape in terms of form, while another may do so in terms of colour, and others in terms of both the facts or neither. Therefore the concept of"correct" perception is rejected on the grounds of ambiguity. Nevertheless, Jahoda, replaces the term with a longer one--"relative freedom from need-distortion", e.g. perceive reality "without inventing cues not actually existing"[1] which is more popularly known as reality testing. Therefore Jahoda puts in one important condition to the criterion..."whatever the individual way of perceiving the world, there must be some objective cues to fit the resulting percept."[2]

If reality is to be gauged in this manner, then everything which does not possess this solid sort of reality "dissolves into mere fraud and illusion",[3] an illusion that reflects a reality but to which it can never measure up, or even adequately portray. Arguing against this point of view of the realist, Cassirer in the context of discussing the origin of myths, he takes a stand with artistic creations; nevertheless his arguments may be used here for the purposes of refuting the view which requires ideas and perceptions to be tested for their degree of correspondence to reality and vice versa. He says that all artistic creations would become mere imitation, if the element of subjectivity--the very personal coloring, idealization, manner

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[1] Jahoda, p. 51.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myth, p. 6.

and style were to be eliminated. Moreover, if judged strictly by the "naked truth" of the object to be depicted--"idealization is nothing but subjective misconception and falsification".[1] All art, Cassirer, claims, basically involves a departure from the objective reality of the immediate data of experience.

The next important issue related to the invalidity of some of the criteria of mental health, is the question of value, for implicitly these psychological attributes are assumed to be "good" for something. But at this point it may be questioned--good for what? Jahoda makes a comprehensive list of possible values which may be held in view--which will be quoted here:

> Good in terms of middle-class ethics? Good for democracy? for the continuation of the status quo? for the individual's happiness? for mankind? for survival? for the development of the species? for art and creativity? for the encouragement of genius or of mediocrity and conformity?[2]

Jahoda further questions the basic accepted values of each of these criteria of mental hygiene. He questions the mental hygienist's assumption that adequacy and competence in interpersonal relations is a pre-requisite for happiness of the individual. He also seriously wonders whether happiness or productivity is the underlying value of an "active orientation to problem solving."

Another important aspect which is responsible for invalidating some of these criteria, is the fact that they are, to a great extent culturally bound. For the people of the Orient, contemplations, withdrawal or nonattachment, would, probably, be a positive mental health

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[1] Ibid., p. 6.
[2] Jahoda, p. 77.

criterion; while self-assertive aggressiveness would be a more "healthy" and suitable criterion to fit the dominant values in the working class of the Western civilization. Mental health criteria are therefore relative to cultures and it may also be possible to go a step further and say that they are relative to individuals as well, social class differences, and differences in occupation. Humanists were opposed to this "movement" because the exponents of this movement tended to neglect the higher values of life--for the mental hygiene standards were incommensurate with the "appreciation of greatness, unique achievements or the depths of human experience". But if the idea is accepted that the criteria are also relative to individuals, and the same norms are not to be applied to the poet and the doctor, this thesis will have resolved its differences with the mental hygienists--for then there will be room for dreams and fairy-tales in the life of the child who wants wings. As Jahoda says and it is worth quoting his statement in conclusion: "It is perfectly possible and plausible to maintain one's high admiration for William Blake, and to regard him as not mentally healthy in terms of, say, reality perception."[1] As the mental hygienists understand reality to be, for the reality perceived by this poet was transcendental, far beyond the narrow, limited concept set up by the mental hygienists. As far as the world is concerned, it would by far be richer aesthetically and spiritually, if there were more of this particular species of mentally "unhealthy" people--with such breadth of vision and depths of sympathy and understanding, and a sublime gift of a creative imagination.

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[1] Ibid., p. 79.

CHAPTER IV

VALUES OF THE FANCIFUL TALES IN TERMS OF THE PSYCHE OF CHILDHOOD

> Fancy is to the imagination what the seed is to the tree. Let it be on barren ground and it will not grow. But nourish it and care for it through the years and it will grow into imagination,....He who lacks imagination lives but half a life. He has his experiences, he has his facts, he has his learning. But do any of these really live unless touched by the magic of the imagination? So long as the road is straight he can see down and follow it. But imagination looks around the turns and gazes far off into the distance on either side. And it is imagination that walks hand in hand with vision.[1]

Fancy is a predominant element in the child's apprehension of life and this universe, diffusing into his consciousness and experiences, and it is one of the important factors which distinguishes his experience of life from that of adults. The child apprehends the world in his own terms, in accordance with his own level of experience. Therefore it is only when an experience is thus meaningful, that the child is able to identify himself with it. And creativity to a great extent springs from such a process of identification with an emotional, intellectual, perceptual or aesthetic experience. Fairy-tales beautifully correspond to the child's level of psychic experiences, in all the above-mentioned aspects. It is the purpose of this chapter to bring out this correspondence, as well as to emphasise the fact that fairy tales do not cause the development of the magical attitudes--the belief in miracles,

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[1] Paul Fenimore Cooper, "On catching a Child's Fancy", in Three Owls, Third Book by Anne Carroll Moore (N.Y., Coward-McCann, Inc., 1931), pp. 56-57. Cited by Cornelia Meig, et. al., A Critical History of Children's Literature. (N.Y. The Macmillan), p. 467.

belief in elves, nymphs and mermaids and other fanciful beliefs of childhood, but that they present in terms of art that which is already a characteristic feature of children's thinking--and attitude towards life.

The fundamental magical attitude can develop only in definite psychic structures, Stern claims,[1] which varies between two opposite poles--or attitudes, of playfulness, on the one hand and the religious on the other; and the child, according to him, even at an early age, manifests all the stages between the two extreme attitudes. The preliminary condition for the presence of a magical attitude in childhood is the lesser degree of differentiation in the psychic expression in childhood, which shows itself mainly in two ways:

1. The diffuse nature of perception;

2. "The less clear separation of the ego from its environment, the greater part played by the subjective, affective reactions in the idea formed of the world of persons and the things by which it is surrounded."[2]

The diffuse nature of the child's perception is revealed in many of his play activities and attempts at art productions. In the early phases of childhood things are brought together in the mind through chance association; and resemblances are also seen in things which are not immediately apparent to the adult-sometimes beyond the stretch of the adult's imagination on the conscious level. A quotation from Symonds brings out this idea very well:

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[1] William Stern, Psychology of Early Childhood, translated by Anne Barwell, (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1930), pp. 583-84.
[2] Ibid.

To the very young child the resemblances between animals and men outweigh their differences. So the young child is able to enjoy stories of animals who talk and act the parts of people. The very tiny child even sees a resemblance between the stars, sun, and moon, and the flashing eyes of the people about him. Such an association may explain why heavenly bodies have symbolic value for adults in fantasy.[1]

The diffuse nature of children's perceptions is apparent in the quality of their drawings, of human beings, trees, animals, etc. Lowenfeld[2] says that to a five year old child a tree is very different from what it appears to be to a child of ten or sixteen--"for a five year old a tree is something undifferentiated, a trunk and something indefinite on top;...it would be beyond the comprehension of a five-year-old child to perceive or understand a tree in all its details as a part of environment...what the child draws is his subjective experience of what is important to him during the act of drawing."

The child's apprehension of size, dimension, distance and the relative proportion of the child's self to the environment or very different from what they appear to the adult perception. To the child's imagination, everything acquires greater dimensions, and appears to be enlarged and magnified to awesome proportions.

The second aspect of indifferentiation--that between the child's ego and the environment--is a much deeper preliminary condition for the development of the magical attitude of childhood. Not only is the environment influenced by the ego--its emotions and efforts but the ego

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[1] Percival M. Symonds, The Dynamics of Human Adjustment, (New York, Appleton-Century Croftis, Inc., 1946), p. 488.

[2] Victor Lowenfeld, Creative and Mental Growth, (New York, Macmillan Company, 1953), pp. 61-62.

as well is completely open to its moulding forces of the environment.

Piaget refers to this process of the blending of the subjective and objective worlds within the child's consciousness, as "animism" or the "spiritualizing" of things by attributing human characteristics to non-human objects. "Animism" itself is marked by several phases of development, according to Piaget--the first is referred to as "Indissociation", which corresponds to the period of the lack of distinction between the external and the internal worlds; the second phase is "Introjection", or the projection of personal feelings and emotion on the environment. Stern describes it thus:

> "Thus there comes to pass a personification of the world of things; under certain circumstances a 'demonification' as well, if the experience of inner fear turns objects into terrifying mysterious phantoms. Real demonic conceptions make their appearance by means of such anthropomorphic views as soon as feelings of fear try to embody the uncanny atmosphere in their surroundings...The demonification of the outside world is only the simplest and most palpable expression of a feeling that in a higher form, reaching beyond early childhood, appears as a fateful connection of the ego with nature and gives the impulse to real magic actions. For this or that half-muffled feelings of the connection of the personal ego with a mighty world around, causes a sense of man's dependence on that surrounding world, which often cannot be ruled or even influenced by technical-natural means, but only those of a magical nature."[1]

The second variety of magic attitudes described by Stern are those which are expected to influence fate by means of some partly ceremonial proceedings or what he refers to as the "wish-and-prayer-magic" for the child, according to him, tends to confuse his wishes with reality; therefore it is very easy for the child to believe in the magical power of his own wishes. He says:

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[1] William Stern, Psychology of Early Childhood, (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1930), p. 584.

A special form of wish-magic is the utterance of the wish in the form of prayer. That prayer in early childhood is often--[a] magical compulsion is shown by the ceremonial nature of the attitude, the necessity of a definite formula upon which fulfillment depends. By prayer everything that is desirable may be attained; prayer is a worker of miracles.[1]

Many other magically effective things beside the ready access to "prayer" in this special sense, are in the possession of the child; objects ranging from garments, shoes, toys, stones to names and places.

Thus it may be said that this early stage children naturally possess a magical-fairy-tale-imagination.

The child reaches a higher level of imaginative growth and development when the discrepency between the fantasy stimuls and the associated percept becomes apparent to him and yet he pays no heed to it. "The object perceived sinks to a mere symbol, to the simple stimulus required for association or incentive by the keen inner perceptual process."[2]

Here Stern gives the example that the pleasurable memories of riding on a train are evoked by the child at play by the mere setting of a row of chairs against each other; the illusion is complete by his overlooking the differences, and the presence of what he considers to be the essential feature, the arrangement of carriages behind one another. At this point "a conscious symbol takes the place of a mechanical association and immediately raises the process to a higher level."[3]

At this stage of the child's psychic development when the distinction between the subjective and the objective world begins to make

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[1] Ibid., p. 588.
[2] Ibid., p. 279.
[3] Ibid.

itself felt in his consciousness, he continues to indulge in illusion, and sometimes voluntarily alternates between the two states of complete absorption in illusion and detachment from it. Stern feels that often the child deliberately turns away from everything that might destroy his illusion. Then "there are psychic conditions when the child is conscious of this discord and hovers between the opposite poles of taking reality seriously and playing with his percepts, [which]... confers a sense of sovereignty, and at the same time a feeling of very pronounced pleasure."[1] This deliberate self-deception is a general and characteristic feature of artistic enjoyment--the very same experience which Coleridge has described as "a willing suspension of disbelief" and that is precisely the response called for by fairy-tales; the experience which is so common to childhood, and which children show abundantly in their response to the fairy-tale and their marvellous and enchanted world of fairy folk. Thus in his reading of fairy-tales the child gets a foretaste of artistic enjoyment and pleasure. Without carrying this correspondence too far, a reference may be made here to a similar idea of art--a waking dream to which a voluntary surrender of the self is made--as expressed by Bergson in his theory of beauty:

> The object of art is to put to sleep the active or rather resistant powers of our personality, and thus to bring us into a state of perfect responsiveness, in which we realise the idea that is suggested to us and sympathise with the feeling that is expressed. In the process of art we shall find, in a weakened form, a refined and in some measure spiritualized version of theprocesses commonly used to induce the state of hypnosis...The feeling of the beautiful is no specific

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[1] Ibid., p. 284.

> feeling...every feeling experienced by us will assume an aesthetic character, provided that it has been suggested and not caused...[1]

The idea of art being a form of "escape" from a possibly shallow and narrow conventional world, as described above, is not wholly acceptable. As may be inferred from the quotation above, the "intuition" of Bergson is not an active principle but is, more or less, a mode of receptivity; nevertheless an element of passive responsiveness is inherent in every artistic enjoyment. It may be said to constitute the preliminary stage of artistic appreciation.

This passive response allows the aesthetic experience to seep into his being and suffuse his consciousness with its richness. Thus from this point of view the child's capacity of maintaining "a willing suspension of disbelief" (as he reads fairy-tales this capacity is most emphasised) and his powers of universal animation (manifested in the fairy-tales), the child is in the "ante-room of art",[2] and if the question of the "reality" or the healthiness of such fantasy or illusory activity, is raised in this context, it is best to answer it by referring to Stern once again, who appears to grasp the significance of such experiences excellently in relation to childhood. He says: "'Real' for this early stage of life is simply what is keenly felt, and it remains real as long as feeling is absorbed in experience. The child is engrossed in an imaginary concept, and whilst it lasts its content is no less real for him than at other times, perhaps, his food, a memory image--is an objective reality."[3]

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[1] Bergson, R.L. Pogson (English translator), Time and Free Will, (London, Macmillan 1912), pp. 14 ff. Quoted by E. Cassirer, An Essay on Man, (U.S.A., Yale University Press, 1948), p. 161.
[2] William Stern, Psychology of Early Childhood, (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1930), p. 154.
[3] Ibid., p. 283.

"Make-believe" is a token of the liberty of the child's imagination. Jersild at some length discusses the place and purposes of make-believe in relation to the child's imaginative development:

> By virtue of being able to transcend his actual limitations and to go beyond the restrictions imposed by reality, the child is able to deal with the world in a freer manner. He is able to reason on a lower level of concentration. He is not held to all the rules of logic and consistency. Through his imagination the child is able to deal with situations and solve problems that he could not so easily handle when dealing with reality. Make-believe enables the child not only to realize his wishes vicariously but also provides a means for him to cope with his fears. Frequently children will deal on an imaginative level with things that in reality they fear. [They] are also--able--to be rid of imitations, to remove conditions that annoy and thwart them in real life.[1]

Fairy-tales reflect the quintessence of the child's imagination; they are thus more than the mere expression of the fantasy of childhood, they are a representation and an artistic interpretation of the child's imaginative search for all that is just, pure and beautiful, all that has wonder and imagination.

Childhood is fleeting yet intense. Lillian Smith describes this "intensity" of childhood experience beautifully:

> Children's problems are simpler than those of their elders, yet--cut nearer to the heart of things--children perceive the abstract distinction between the true and the false, the good and the bad, happiness and sorrow, justice and injustice, rather than the particular application of these principles...[2]

Fairy-tales are permeated with the same intensity of experience. Beyond the apparent fantasia, they record the wisdom and the fundamental experiences of man down the ages--from a time when man thought in

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[1] A.T. Jersild, Child Psychology, (New York, Prentice-Hall Inc., 1954), p. 480.

[2] Lillian H. Smith, The Unreluctant Years. (Chicago, American Library Association, 1953), p. 15.

images, spoke in fables and wrote in hieroglyphics. Paul Hazard describes them thus:

> Fairy-tales are like beautiful mirros of water, so deep and crystal clear! In their depths we sense the mysterious experience of a thousand years. Their content dates from the primaeval ages of humanity, from the fabulous times--when man instinctively created fables and symbols to express himself.[1]

The fairy-tale first provides the child with everything that he reaches out for--rich with its "high imagination, wealth of symbolism, interpretation of the fundamental experiences of life, its concentration on the great moral ideas, rather than moral precepts or admonitions, its sense of wonder--"[2] to match his own. It teaches the child an understanding and appreciation of the invisible and intangible moral forces that govern life, it teaches and builds an attitude of reverence for man's hopes, beliefs and ideologies--a spirituality on a less transcendental plane, and yet which sustains the spirit of man.

When good or evil forces or facts are represented in fairy-tales, through some gesture of sublime grace, or extreme violence and brutality (chopping off of the head, or the act of devouring etc.) the children are not completely unaffected by the immediate sequence of events, but they are capable of looking through the superficial or surface values and gaining an insight into their very nature and essence. Moreover it may be relevant to point out here a fact (which will receive further attention later), that pains, outrages, cruelties,

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[1] Paul Hazard, Books Children and Men, translated by Marguerite Mitchell, (Boston, The Horn Book, Inc., 1947), p. 157.

[2] Cornelia Meigs, et. al., A Critical History of Children's Literature, (New York, Macmillan Company, 1953), p. 315.

and atrocities become means of emotional self-liberation for the child--a simpler version of the process which is described as "catharsis" by Aristotle in his Poetics in his aesthetic analysis of Greek tragedy. But the condition for its presentation on the child's level, is that compensation for the element of the brutal or the violent must be equal.

As the child reads through the pages of "The Mermaid" or "Beauty and the Beast", etc., engrossed in the story and the picturesque imagery of the tales--the philosophy of the tale enters his mind quite inostensibly, and affects his outlook and fundamental values of life. The high moral ideas of grace and strength are reiterated in the pages of the fairy-tale. They are the rewards of those who are brave, and forever willing to wonder and investigate, and those who strive mightily to keep an honest and kind heart.

Poetic justice is thus one of the fundamental features, or laws of the fairy world, which supremely enhances the value of fairy-tales, from a philosophical, as well as a human point of view. There is a population of evil characters in the fairy world who as rightfully belong to this world, as do the fairies and pixies and the host of other beings. They are the hags and the ogres, the witches and the giants who are continuously indulging in pernicious activities--enchanting the good, devouring the beautiful, etc., --but retribution soon follows. And even the youngest child will not fail to see the relationship. When the good and virtuous maiden smiles, precious gems flow with her laughter, while the evil one vomits ugly toads when she speaks--and what could be a more effective and more picturesque manner of presentation of these abstract forces, in vividly concrete

terms. Poetic justice is effective due to the proximity of a deed and its consequence.

In life there is justice, but due to the wide separation in time between the act of virtue or vice and the administration of justice, that the child fails to comprehend it; but in the fairy-tales the child not only recognises the force of justice, but is inspired by its beauty and the variety of forms in which it manifests itself, in reaching its conclusions.

Paul Hazard discusses the philosophical questions which provoke man's imagination and thoughts throughout life; but which is first apprehended in the pages of these tales.

> The awakening of this Beauty, asleep for so long a time, can it be the awakening of nature at the call of spring? The ogress who wants to devour Dawn and Day, could that be night?--while we watch dwarfs and giants at play, are we feeling again the amazement of primitive man gazing at the wonders of creation in the infinitly big and the infinitely small? When we witness the struggles between the good fairies and the wicked magicians are we witnessing also, in this primitive and ancestral form, the eternal struggle between good and evil, life and death?[1]

Hazard further claims that these fairy-tales also contain the echoes of rites and customs beyond the reach of history--they contain an entire"poetic mythology"[2] which reflects the dawn of human imagination. Or perhaps they wish to draw us still further back

> ...to the awakening of an undefined soul, unable to distinguish the ego from the non-ego, to separate reality from dream?...every child repeats, through the tales the history of our species, and takes up around the journey of one spirit from its beginning....The universe is not yet organised according to the laws of reason, but the individual is aware of it in each of its manifestations.

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[1] Paul Hazard, Books Children and Men, (Boston, Horn Book, Inc., 1944), p. 158.

[2] Ibid., p. 160.

> It is the individual himself. Matter is alive; everything is real, nothing is real, and this chaos far from astonishing a child reader, seems natural to him, as if he remembered passing through it himself some twenty thousand years ago.[1]

Fairy-tales <u>are</u> thus heavy with a profound significance for man. They reveal the sympathetic relationship between the all-embracing cosmic laws--and the laws prevalent in society, as well as in the animal world. Violation of the law of love and justice may disturb universal harmony. For it is love, true love that is at the foundation of creation, and it is stronger than sorrow, stronger than death, and all those things which are unwelcome to the child. It is love which breaks the spells of the enchanted, it is love that will win a soul for the little mermaid, who is otherwise doomed to turn into foam at the end of her life--a night without sleep or dreams! and it is through love and complete sacrifice that she is able to win her immortality. It was love which aroused the sleeping beauty from her enchanted sleep of a hundred years, and broke the spell which had been cast upon the castle. The motif of love is also found in the ancient Greek legends. Pygmalion a sculptor and the king of Cyprus, had fallen deeply in love with the statue of the maiden he had carved out of ivory, and it was his overwhelming love which brought to life the maiden Galatea. Therefore the tales ought not to be dismissed as lies or unrealities which are of no utilitarian value." [Fairy-tales] give scope and awareness, beauty and growth. Growth comes only through contact with what is larger and greater than oneself--something to 'stretch' the mind and give direction, to the imagination."[2]

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 161.
[2] William H. Smith, <u>The Unreluctant Years</u>, (Chicago, American Library Association, 1953), p. 38.

In this section a relevant list of some of the basic needs of childhood, will be enumerated, followed by a discussion of how fairy-tales satisfy these needs. They are the needs for:

1. Joy,
2. Play,
3. Surprise,
4. Wonder, mystery magic,
5. Adventure,
6. Sense impressions,
7. Aesthetic satisfactions,
8. Fantasy and the purely imaginative,
9. Poetic justice,
10. Humour,
11. Violence and the tragic.[1]

Sheer <u>joy</u> for its own sake is a fundamental heritage of childhood. Children are creatures of the moment-lost in its depths, holding and enjoying every passing experience that touches their fancy.

Fairy-tales also satisfy the <u>play spirit of childhood</u>, since they are not bound by any law of cause and effect, or by the requirements of actual life.

<u>Surprises</u> of varying intensity are continually faced by the child. He is not only constantly surprised by every little thing that is new to his experience, but he is also in need of surprises to keep him happily amused. He is also in search of surprise--a search satisfied by the unexpected in fairy-tales. A tale such as "Alice in Wonderland" abounds with the element of surprise, which is the basic factor for the development of the story.

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[1]Many of these were drawn from Laura F. Kready, <u>A Study of Fairy</u>

Wonder, mystery and magic, which were shown to be integral aspects of the child's psychic needs as well. The child craves wonder and excitement, and he is intrigued by everything that is incomprehensible and follows spellbound. Magic is believed by the child to be the key to every mystery, and must be possessed and mastered. The spirit of wonder in the child is the will-o-the-wisp which leads him on through the wildly "reasonable" sequence of events, giving pleasure and delight. The mysterious and the inexplicable is experienced at different levels of intensity by the child. Charles Lamb said:

> We crush the faculty of wonder and delight in children by explaining everything. We take them to the source of the Nile, and show them the scanty runnings, instead of letting the beginnings of that seven fold stream remain in impenetrable darkness, a mysterious question of wonment and delight to ages.[1]

Charles Lamb is slightly carried away by his enthusiasm and the force of his belief in the importance of keeping alive the sense of wonder in the child. The sense of wonder is to be kept alive, but not at the cost of keeping the child deliberately ignorant of what is known. What is desirable is to give the child ample opportunities to speculate about what is not known. And the fairy-tales are ideally suited for this role.

The keen interest in everything that is mysterious in creation and in man, if sustained through the years, will lead to the development of an intellectual curiosity, and a spirit of enquiry on the artistic and philosophic planes. It is the fairy-tale, which first teaches the child the beauty of the mysterious--(and) Einstein once made a relevant

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[1] Charles Lamb, "Play-house Memoranda". In A.C. Ward, ed., Everybody's Lamb (New York, Harcourt Brace, 1933), p. 302. Cited by Cornelia Meig, A Critical History of Children's Literature, (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1953), p. 314.

statement--"The most beautiful thing we experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all art and science." It is the arrogant challenge of the mysterious that has always teased the spirit of man and has lured him on to undertake the most hazardous journeys across the seas and land, over and under the polar ice caps--to climb to the most precarious of peaks and finally to attain outer space.

Adventure is a form of curiosity, and is related to a sense of wonder and love of the mysterious. It is the unexpected events encountered by the fairy-folk once they set out on their journeys to seek their fortunes, which are a challenge of the unknown. The child, through a process of identification, shares their experiences.

The sense impressions conveyed through the fairy-tale are consonant with the child's vision, its freshness of approach, not as yet blunted or dulled by the "civilizing" forces of the society. The child perceives with an eager heart and an unbiased mind, the pageantry of the universe about him, and the images of the fairy-tales satisfy him immensely. The symphony of colours found in the sunset, in flowers and in sparkling gems,--of sound and sight and often of taste, set the pages aglow.

In Andersen's story of the little mermaid, he describes the experiences of the five mermaids, as each of them comes up to the surface of the sea and sees the world of human beings for the very first time--and thus their vision is permeated with the unsophisticated freshness, wonder and delight of childhood. The scenes are taken from nature, yet the subjective naivete casts an atmosphere of unearthly beauty which comes close to poetry.

> "[The splendour of the sunset]...the whole sky had looked like gold--and--the clouds floated in red and violet splendour over her head, and far faster than they went, a flock of wild swans flew like a long white veil over the water towards the setting sun."[1]

Such vivid and poetic description ~~sinsitises~~ the child's perceptual processes, and makes him aware of the beauty and ugliness around him. Ugliness is not completely spared--usually accompanies the sinister and the evil elements. An example can be given from the same story of the mermaid.

> "...The little mermaid went towards the roaring whirlpools at the back of which the witch lived. No flowers grew there, no seaweeds, only the bare gray sands stretched toward the whirlpools, which like rushing millwheels swirled round dragging everything that came within reach down to the depths. She had to pass between these boiling eddies to reach the witch's domain...Her house stood behind this in the midst of a weird forest. All the trees and bushes were polyps, half animals and half plants; they looked like hundred-headed snakes growing out of the sand, the branches were long slimy arms, with tentacles like wriggling worms, every joint of which from the root to the outermost tip was in constant motion."[2]

The need for <u>aesthetic satisfaction</u> is partly met by the profusion of picturesque imagery of the fairy-tales. Arbuthnot[3] neatly summarizes the two aspects of life where children seek beauty--nature and the heart of man.

> Children reach out for beauty as well as food. They respond to the beauty of the world around them and to the beauty of decent human beings doing the best they can, and the varied expressions of this beauty and goodness as we find them in the arts. So children need to discover in books this nebulous experience that we call aesthetic satisfaction--a sense of the significance of life in terms so arresting and so beautiful that life takes on richer meaning.

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[1] Hans C. Andersen, "The Mermaid", <u>Fairy Tales</u>, (London, Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 89.
[2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 95.
[3] May Hill Arbuthnot, <u>The Arbuthnot Anthology of Children's Literature</u>, (U.S.A., Scott, Faresman and Company, 1952), Bk. 3, pp. ii-iii.

Fantasy, according to Lillian Smith is a metaphorical approach to the perception of universal truth. Alice's two adventures are classic examples of fantasy, which have fascinated and satisfied generations of children with their sheer, chaotic jumble of nonsense--yet there is a deeper level of meaning here. Lillian Smith gives her own interpretation:

> When Alice runs forward to meet the Red Queen whom she sees ahead of her, she is bewildered to find that the queen has disappeared. "I should advise you to walk the other way" said the Rose. This seemed nonsense to Alice but it was only when she did so that she found herself face to face with the Queen. Is there a suggestion here that what may appear nonsense can hold in its essence a higher truth not to be apprehended, perhaps, through the mere logic of common sense?[1]

There are other fantasies such as Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress", or George Macdonald's "At the Back of the North Wind", which through their overtones reveals to the child's intuition glimpses of the spiritual world, which he partly apprehends, but does not as yet completely understand. These stories manage to discover some of the unexplored recesses of the child's thoughts and touch upon the intangible, half-formed, yet very real questions which lurk at the back of the child's mind.

Poetic justice with relation to fairy-tales, has already received due attention earlier. It may only be mentioned here, that this concept greatly satisfied the child's unconscious emotional demand for justice and fair-play. At this age the child cherishes an all-embracing trust

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[1] Lillian H. Smith, The Unreluctant Years, (Chicago, American Library Association, 1953), p. 155.

in life, and in the justice he expects of it; and this faith calls for an immediate meting out of rewards and punishments. If this need is ignored, or remains unsatisfied for too long, or once too often, the child is liable to lose faith in the intrinsic value of goodness honesty etc., which might even be a permanent spiritual damage.

Humour is inseparable from childhood. The child is always the first to notice the ridiculous or the incongruous, and derives consummate pleasure from laughingover it. The over-brimming energy of childhood needs to giggle away parts of itself. Fairy-tales, especially the ones which contain speaking animals, and many of the diminutive characters serve this purpose well.

Whether or not violence and a sense of the tragic is a need of childhood, is a controversial point. Writers and literary critics of children's literature, mental hygienists, educators and parents are not agreed on any definite solution. Some of them, who accept fairy-tales, as such for children's perusal, nevertheless insist on a high degree of selection; tales of violence, tales of the witch, tales of the dragon, giant tales, unhappy tales, etc., they feel ought not to be available to children. This objection is raised by Kready; according to her the cutting off of the head, or devouring etc., are too gruesome and ought not to be given a chance to impress themselves upon the child's mind. "Life cannot be without its strife and struggle, but the little child need not meet everything in life at once."[1]

The present writer is of the opinion that even at an early age the child needs to witness the manifestation of a certain amount of

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[1] Laura F. Kready, A Study of Fairy Tales, (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), p. 32.

violence, for there is potential violence and aggressiveness in the child as well as the adult in some shape or form, which requires a means of expression. This expression automatically takes place when the child unconsciously identifies himself partially with some of the brutal or violent activities in the fairy-tales, many of which are redeemed by the beauty of words, the moral ideas and philosophy upon which the tales are based. Today comic books and gun-crazy cowboy films are taking over to satisfy this essential need of childhood. But since these are quite devoid of the aesthetic aspects found in the fairy-tales, they fail to serve their purpose.

About the wisdom of including elements of grief and sadness in fanciful tales for children, it is appropriate to quote Albert Schweitzer's[1] view on the matter:

> ...We tend to shield the young readers from exposures to some of the less happy aspects of life as they appear in books, and I wonder if it isn't true that we underestimate the ability of children to accept reality?.... You can doubtless think of books that hold all the great realities [love, beauty, virtue, sorrow, and death--as listed by Schweitzer] in the solution of stories beautifully and imaginatively told.

Schweitzer realises the importance of introducing sorrow to the child with a great deal of mature tact, but he is very much <u>against keeping it out</u> of the domain of children's literature, since childhood is not immune from grief. He feels that their literature ought to familiarize with the <u>idea</u> of grief, and also to "fertilize their sympathies for other people who sustain it."[2]

Children are familiar with grief which is relatively quite in-

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[1] As cited by Annis Duff, "Whatsoever Things Are True", <u>Library Journal</u>. Vol. 79: pp. 723-728, April 15, '54.
[2] <u>Ibid</u>.

tense in degree. When the neighbours move away to another town and the little boy next door has to part with his companion, it is like a little death, for they feel that they will never, never meet agin. Or when a little pet dies, children insist on a ceremonious burial, which to an extent helps to alleviate their sorrow also in a way to satisfy their grief with the aesthetic aspect of the ritual. Sometimes children place a favourite coin, or pebble or flowers along with the pets, even with frogs and birds they insist on such rituals.

Schweitzer in the above context mentions a few books in which the subject of death is treated with beauty and sensitivity; the book which receives most emphasis is written by Walter De la Mare--"The Mulla Mongers". The idea here is more subjective and more universal. "Mutta, the, mother, speaks of the third sleep, and an explanation is made--"First Sleep is Night-Sleep; Second Sleep is Swoon Sleep; Third Sleep is Death. So too the mulgars say, the first is little go, the second the great go, and the third is come no more, as if their bodies were a lodging, and sleep and death a kind of out-of-doors. Isn't that a comforting conception for a child to grow up with?[1]

Emotions aroused by the fairy-tales are worthy, for they have just and worthwhile causes which prompt them; they have a vividness which is capable of enlargement of vision and sympathies; and they give an insight into the truths of the human heart and an abiding "reverence for life"--to quote Scheitzer once again. Therefore these emotions aroused by the fairy-tales, which are centred around definite moral

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[1] Ibid.

and philosophic ideas, belong to a higher plane. It is this inner quality which gives fairy-tales their depth and intensity.

In conclusion it may be said that the fairy-tale helps to preserve the Peter Pan region of every soul, and encourage the child to speculate and to undertake the boldest and the most impossible flights of fancy and imagination, and in themselves fairy-tales and myths, etc., are a mode of perception of a Reality or Realism which cannot be apprehended directly, but an intuitive awareness of which is essential for the full understanding of life, and a familiarity with which should begin in childhood.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The pursuit of this study has led the writer to a number of tentative conclusions which she believes merit careful attention and investigation. The modern approach seems often to be too abrupt, ultra-sanitary and headstrong in its sweeping generalizations about children, and excessively reliant on those facets of life which happen to lend themselves to on-the-spot measurement. The following tentative conclusions, therefore, are felt to be worth investigating before they are lost sight of altogether, quite possibly at great expense to the child and the adult he is to become:

Fanciful thought is conducive to the growth and development of the imagination.

Imagination is a vital factor in the life of the child.

Fanciful literature is probably one of the most useful tools for developing creativity in the child.

In the realm of the fanciful, the child finds his own experiences of life expressed in his own terms, in his kind of logic of events, in his kind of imagery, and in a form consonant with his thought process.

There is a need for fanciful tales as a counterbalance to the modern world of war and anger; there is need for human beings to have understood and felt the warmth and the values of the fireside.

Fanciful tales provide children with truths they can grasp and hold on to--not moral truths in the sense that "John is good because he is obedient"--but more profound truths leading the child to achieve an insight into the cosmic operations of good and evil, of life motivated by love, of poetic justice in this universe.

The provision for material needs is not enough to give the child a sense of security, and without the values obtainable through fanciful literature, the child will lack stability and reflect only the confused values which more often than not surround modern life.

Science does not have all the answers; and the spirit of man will always fill the vacuum. Where sciences leaves off, fancy takes over. Answers to the apparent gaps in knowledge and understanding can only be supplied by the symbolic language of the primeval myths and fairy tales whose origins are lost in the origins of the human races. An intuitive apprehension of this heritage is conducive to a fuller understanding of life.

Fairy tales and myths, therefore, have their roots firmly implanted in life and reality.

Fanciful tales are not psychologically bad for children and do not necessarily cause withdrawal from reality.

Withdrawal from reality is not necessarily unhealthy and may, in fact, be positive in its effects.

Neither children nor the literature provided to them, should be reduced to formulas, to be treated in terms of I.Q. range, grad-level norms, vocabulary restrictions, "readiness", etc.

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A BRIEF AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THE WRITER

As I look back without anger at the most precious years of my life--my childhood--I recall a little girl who would be regarded with great suspicion by the modern mental hygienists. She was a shy, quiet girl who thrived on story books and cherished some of the most fantastic dreams. Every time she passed by a chemist's shop, she was attracted by the gigantic colored jars which roused her fancy; broken glass pieces which glittered in the sun-light were her most precious possessions.

I was born in the year nineteen thirty eight, in Calcutta, the second child in a family of three children. Five years younger than my brother, I enjoyed the privileges of being the youngest for a long time, there being a gap of ten years between me and my sister.

My early education was not systematic, the greater part of which was carried on at home under no particularly formal supervision. My mother was eager to send me to school, and admitted me into some of the best schools in Calcutta, but without success, for I, with my father's indulgent support, managed to stay away from classes long enough, until she too gave up. Somehow I felt deprived of my"freedom" by spending long hours in the class-room. I missed my toys and my books.

However, fortunately an endless variety of reading material was available for me in the house ranging from "Superman" and "Wonder Woman" comics to Charles Lamb, Louisa M. Alcott and Alexander Dumas; myths and

legends of the world, etc. Moreover my mother subscribed to several children's magazines in Bengali, which brought me hours of happiness. I was particularly fond of the fairy-tales with the rare and beautiful illustrations, some of which I can still recall vividly. The books which impressed me most at this age were the two volumes of fairy-tales by Dakhina Ranjan Majumdar. Hans C. Andersen was also a fundamental source of pleasurable reading. Grimms, Perrault and Oscar Wilde's tales for children, "The Happy Prince", "The Selfish Giant", "The Nightingale and the Rose", etc. were also great favourites. I loved listening to stories, even after I had learnt to read myself. Many of the stories, with their occasional dialogues in verse, which were dramatically narrated to me by our old nurse, after supper, were not to be found in any published source.

There was another old lady who came to give me lessons on the Koran; and after the lessons she always told me many beautiful religious stories of Adam and Eve, Noah's Ark, etc. There was one particular story, with symbolic overtones, which affected me greatly. It was about the night of the twenty-seventh of Ramadan, which is a holy night for the Moslems, usually spent in prayers. It is the night on which God takes an account of our activities of the previous year; and later He writes our fate for the coming year. But before He did so, there was a pause when all nature, every flower and every tree, bows low before Him--and at that moment whatsoever was wished for would be granted. For many years after that I kept myself awake in bed, on that night, waiting for the miracle to happen so that I could make my wish. This was long before I realised that the "miracle" was the mystic's moment

of illumination, when he attains the vision of absolute and divine Harmony. Those nights of waiting did not damage my faith in the possibility of such an event, on the contrary I felt a kinship with the flowers and the trees, as though they too had hopes and wishes to make--a sort of shared "creaturehood".

Up to the age of six we lived in the city. I did not have very many friends, except that I played with the neighbours' children at the park, in the evenings. Later we moved to Jalpaiquri, a small quiet town, to live in my paternal grandfather's house. It was a large house with a big compound; there were innumerable nooks and corners to be explored. My four uncles were also living there with their families. For the first time I became acquainted with all my first cousins, and we were all more or less of the same age. At this period there was an apparent change in my personality. I became active and noisy, initiating games, suggesting plots for plays which continued for days; in fact I was officially acknowledged to be the "ring-leader", by which name I am still fondly remembered by my cousins. But basically I remained the same dreamer. It was during these years that I wrote my fairy-tales in an exercise book with little illustrations, and named it in Bengali the "Rainbow Hues".

In 1953 we migrated to East Pakistan, and settled in Dacca. My brother suggested that I should appear for the Matriculation examination privately. My knowledge of history, geography, etc. was scrappy, and I had only approximately two months to prepare for the examination. However with private coaching, the help of my brother and my own personal interest and effort I managed to pass the examination and qualified for

college. I joined college the same year and did my Intermediate (Arts) in 1955; and went to the university for my B.A. (Hons.) English. I got my degree in 1958 and M.A. in the following year and left for Beirut where I am about to complete the requirements for a master's Degree in Education.

I have come a long way from those days of familiarity with miracles and fairies, etc., but at heart I still believe that every child--to be a child--must be acquainted with the fairy-folk who enrich our experiences of childhood, and form an inextricable part of it.

APPENDIX

SOME SOURCES OF FANTASY AND FAIRY TALES FOR CHILDREN

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