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**CHILDREN'S RECEPTION AND USES OF FAIRY TALE NARRATIVES
IN A GREEK SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
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Abstract

Children perceive stories in particular ways and they use the rules and the roles depicted in their content to negotiate and formulate their everyday world (Wolf and Heath, 1992). This qualitative research study investigates children's construction of meaning and use of fairy tale narratives in a Greek second language learning environment. Twenty-two participants from the Canadian Greek Heritage Language School participate in the study. The students are asked to reflect on their engagements with specific Greek fairy tales, and then to express the ideas and feelings produced through their interaction with these cultural texts. The study highlights the salient role of texts in processes of identity formation, their influence on the definition of values, and their contribution to the installation of notions regarding the community and the future. Many theorists argue that the analysis of cultural texts from this perspective can lead individuals to challenge social constructs.

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To my parents,
Νικόλαος και Θεοδώρα

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A. Introduction

Fairy tales¹ are traditionally linked to childhood. Parents and educators are encouraged to introduce children to the enchanted world of princesses, kings, dragons and castles. Fairy tale content has been praised as well as condemned by different theorists. While some writers present interpretations of the beneficial effects and inner meanings of fairy tale content for the child, many critics have expressed concern with the violent content of folk and/or fairy tales. At the same time, fairy tales constitute popular cultural texts with which each child engages in unique and interesting ways. Certainly, these complex processes of engagement warrant investigation.

This study examines children's interpretations of fairy tales in a second language setting. Traditional Greek fairy tales are presented to Canadian-born students who are studying their heritage Greek language. The students are asked to reflect on their engagements with specific Greek fairy tales, and then to express the ideas and feelings produced through their interaction with these cultural texts. The purpose of the study is to investigate: 1) children's construction of meaning from the content of fairy tales in their heritage language, 2) the effects of fairy tales in children's ethno-specific learning of their cultural background, and 3) the production of children's desire, pleasure, fantasy, and/or resistance during the process of reading Greek fairy tales.

My interest in fairy tales has existed since my early childhood. My engagement with this particular type of narrative genre started as I became drawn into the magical world of my grandfather's wonderful fairy tales. At the ages of five and six years old, I was greatly consumed by his fairy tales. I would participate in the narration by adding words, imitating birds' and animals' voices, making natural sounds and commenting on

the protagonists' traits and attitudes. During my teenage years, I often nostalgically conjured up visions of my grandfather's fairy tales. And still today I reside enchanted, for the topic of my Master's thesis is related to fairy tales. Indeed, this study investigates children's reception and uses of fairy tale content in a Greek second language learning environment.

My interest in fairy tales as cultural texts that influence the formation of social beings and subjectivities was inspired by one of my graduate courses 'Cultural Studies and Education.' Through critical readings and group discussions this course demanded I begun interrogating myself as a socially constructed user of these cultural texts and, concomitantly, begun investigating the reasons structuring my engagement with them. I came to realize that fairy tales had significantly impacted my life and became, for a certain period, objects of obsession and desire. They became my fabulous property to which I would frequently turn - often borrowing from them magical elements for the construction of my own dreams. The product of this fanciful thinking filled me with hope and strength. As a result, I became aware of processes of identification as well as the transference of certain concepts from the text to myself, the reader. Moreover, I became increasingly conscious of the influence fairy tales have had on the formation of my national and regional identities and my gendered subjectivity.

The discipline of Cultural Studies provides the framework for my research. First, it facilitates my understanding of how individuals are formed as subjects by and through their responses to cultural texts, and secondly, allows me to focus on how Greek fairy tales re-insert children into dominant ideologies. My research, based on Johnson's (1983) model of the circuit of production, circulation, and consumption of cultural texts, not only

builds on scholarly work that examines the historical conditions of fairy tale production, but also extends ongoing research by examining the effects of Greek fairy tales in specific socio-historical and political contexts. Students' interactions with Greek fairy tales, and their own interpretations of those interactions, therefore become the focus of this research project.

A. 1) Research Questions

Haase (1993) notes that very few studies examine individuals' responses to fairy tales, and that even fewer studies consider children's responses to these popular cultural texts. Since children's developmental growth and cognitive ability influence their understanding of moral issues, their responses to fairy tales become even more significant. In an attempt to address the volume of research concerning children's engagements with popular cultural texts, the following research questions address children's responses and reactions to Greek fairy tales in the context of learning their heritage Greek language:

- (1) What formal literary aspects of Greek fairy tale texts, such as representations, language codes, narrative structures, or characters, are used or transformed by the children during their engagement with this cultural text?
- (2) Does this particular textual genre, the Greek fairy tale, affect children in the process of producing their ethno-specific identity?
- (3) What affective behavior (e.g. desire, memory, pleasure, fear, fantasy, and/or resistance) do children demonstrate during the reading process and of what significance are those behaviors in order to make self as gendered identities?
- (4) How do children use such texts to construct reality, or even to reproduce or resist forms of power?

B. Review of the Literature

This literature review examines work conducted by researchers who have evaluated the cultural role of the fairy tale. In conjunction, literature pertaining to the uses and effects of Greek fairy tales is investigated. An analysis of the fairy tale as a cultural text is traced through concepts such as representation, discourse, and codes. Simultaneously, theories connected to the influence of fairy tales on individuals, especially children, are illuminated. According to Johnson (1983), these theories cover the "abstract" and "universal" conditions involved in the historical production and reception of fairy tales, thus helping us to see how they both act upon readers, and help readers to "construct and organize personal choices"(26-31).

B.1. Theories on the Uses and Psychological Functions of Fairy Tales

Judging from the vast amount of literature in the field, fairy tales seem to be viewed as sophisticated works of art characterized by literary elegance. Appraised as literary because of their contribution to students' lingual abilities, and aesthetic development, fairy tales provide students with a basis for the appreciation of fine literature, the acquisition of cultural awareness, and the expansion of fantasy and creative thinking. On a psychological level, fairy tales provide, even the meekest of persons, an imagined means of success, a belief in one's ability to master personal deficiencies, and an opportunity to escape from the oppressive and intimidating conditions of the real world. Bettelheim (1977), a strong supporter of the fairy tale and its positive psychological effects on the "child's inner growth," presents the fairy tale as a "work of art" with therapeutic value, since it applies to "patients' inner conflicts at this moment of his [her] life" and suggests solutions for these conflicts (12).

There appears to be two distinct currents in the literature regarding the uses and psychological functions of fairy tales. On the one hand, there are theorists who encourage children's engagement with this textual genre. Bettelheim (1977) argues that fairy tales belong to a cultural heritage that "when transmitted in the right manner," provides important sites for children's construction of meaning (4). In addition, he posits that fairy tales entertain children, arouse their curiosity, and enrich their lives by stimulating their imagination, promoting the development of their intellect, and elucidating their emotions. Fairy tales do this by validating their anxieties, acknowledging the difficulties they struggle with, and suggesting specific solutions to the problematic situations in which they find themselves.

On the other hand, there are theorists who argue that fairy tales are inappropriate for children's consumption. Some feminist theorists, Chinen (1996), Franz (1993), Davies (1992), Lederer (1986), Waelti-Walters (1982), argue that fairy tales serve to justify the hierarchical social order, reflect patriarchal power, reinforce gender-bias, and impose specific role stereotypes that present women, the elderly or the disabled as weak, powerless, wicked and/or mean. According to some feminists, for example, unless these representations form the starting points for analyzing and interpreting fairy tales from a moral and ethical point of view, these cultural texts can have a negative influence on children's gender formation (i.e., by representing the acceptance of submission as an aspect of feminine subjectivity, and/or domination as an aspect of masculine subjectivity).

Favat (1987) suggests that teachers and parents should make use of dramatizations of fairy tales and read them aloud to children in order to "enhance [their]

fundamental appeal” (Koelle, 1981, 58). Though adults should be aware of the fact that frightening tales could cause fear in young children, they should also consider that narrating gruesome stories could possibly enhance children’s courage in the face of terror, offering them a secure fantasy space in which to confront their fears and, in turn, resolve them through narrative. Adults should focus their attention on the child and not so much on the ‘tale’s terror’ and ‘violence’, because the child is the one who creates meaning against the grain of the behavior that the tale suggests (Favat, 1987; Yeoman, 1994).

In a similar vein, Bettelheim (1977), disagrees with the argument that adults should avoid exposing children to violent stories depicting severe conditions of human reality and the difficulties of every day life. Parents who want their children to know only the “pleasant and fulfilling images” of reality, a dominant cultural position that hinders their children’s acceptance of the fact that the struggle against “severe difficulties in life is unavoidable and an intrinsic part of human existence” (7-8). Through the fairy tale, the child has an opportunity to confront basic human predicaments. This confrontation is facilitated by the existential dilemmas that the fairy tale presents, its simplified situations, its ‘clearly drawn figures’, its typical characters, and its depiction of both the good and the evil side of human nature (Bettelheim, 1977; Trousdale, 1989).

Bettelheim (1997) recognizes that children’s internal growth is also enhanced through their engagement with fairy tales, enabling them to acquire an appreciation of life-dimensions that are 'highly' important. Perhaps with their imaginations stimulated, children are empowered to create additional and enhanced worlds of fantasy that involve them in experiences needed for character development and for the discovery of new

aspects of themselves. The child is taught that persistence and bravery are two of the most important features that one can possess in order to face life's "hazardous struggles, without which one can never achieve true identity"(24). Fairy tales therefore, help the child to become a socialized human being by offering satisfying answers to important questions regarding the origins of the world and the purpose of life.

In addition, Zipes (1995) acknowledges the importance of introducing classical fairy tales into storytelling sessions, even though the codes of these tales serve patriarchal, middle-class ideology and are not universal. Although classical fairy tales tend to contain sexist, racist and abusive images or events, such representations are not necessarily limiting. Students familiar with these stories will be able to distinguish them from contemporary ones, recognize the differences between the genres, identify the different ways in which people thought in the past, become aware of other epochs, recognize and discuss anachronistic ideas and forms of life, and "become aware that they do not have to adjust themselves to that tradition...[or to any] environment if they cannot live [in harmony] with it" (17).

The multiplicity of fairy tale interpretations has been acknowledged by many scholars. Zipes (1995) argues that there is no correct way to interpret a fairy tale, "given the abundance of the inexplicable symbols and their profound layers of meaning" (39). In the same vein, Haase (1993) claims that "fairy tales consist of chaotic symbolic codes" (235). He claims that scholars engaged with the interpretation of fairy tales agree that the 'true' meaning of the tales and their texts remain elusive. While the texts have been explored from various points of view, from Freudian psychologists and theologians, to feminists and educators, diverse and contradictory conclusions are often drawn from each

field. Though Rowe, a feminist critic, maintains the legitimacy of these contradictory interpretations and identifies the seemingly paradoxical coexistence of both the repressive, patriarchal voice, and the liberating female voice in fairy tales (Haase, 1993).

Despite the widespread interest in this genre by many theorists, empirical studies exploring the effects of folk tales on young children are limited. Koelle (1981) cites Crago and Crago's (1976) early claim that details of children's responses to books have not come to the attention of librarians and writers of children's literature, while psychologists have interpreted the meanings of children's responses solely based on aspects of language. More recently, Flickinger, Garcia and Long (1992), Bloodgood and Worthy (1992), Haase (1993), Davies (1995), Engel (1995), Zipes (1995), and Giroux (1997) argue that few studies engage with individuals' responses to fairy tales. The field of Cultural Studies examines the production and uses of texts within culture, including the effects of texts on readers. The following delineates the relationship between Cultural Studies and fairy tales.

B.2. Cultural Studies as a Conceptual Framework: Examining the Conditions of Fairy Tale Production and Reception

Cultural Studies emerged in Britain in the late 1950s and is considered a 'cross-disciplinary' and even an 'antidisciplinary' field². Cultural Studies examines the social and cultural conditions of texts³, how or why they are produced, and the mechanisms through which they are engaged. According to Alasuutari (1996), this field emphasizes that the "practices and symbolics of everyday life must not be treated in isolation from questions of power and politics" (24). While referring to Cultural Studies' relationship to other forms of disciplinary knowledge, Johnson (1983) acknowledges the important role that social class plays in culture, the significance of the concepts of power and the

cultural distribution of it, as well as the idea that culture is a site of social differences and struggles. Johnson (1983) and Turner & Davies (in Bogdan & Biklen, 1995) discuss the important appeal of power and domination disseminated through cultural texts. In the field of Cultural Studies, power should be taken into consideration, “whether it is the informant’s power or lack of it, or the researcher’s” (31).

Therefore, Cultural Studies engages with: (a) the conditions of textual production; (b) the centrality of language (in order to understand how cultural forms produce social - not just aesthetic - meanings); and (c) the ways in which readers negotiate identity, desire, knowledge, and power through cultural texts. In other words, readers are recognized to be historically, socially, and politically situated. In view of the subject’s situatedness, Barker and Beezer (1992) argue that subjects are formed by and through their responses to cultural texts. Similarly, Robertson (1997) posits that readers interact with texts in such a way as to form meanings and values that reflect desires and pleasures⁴. Cultural Studies accepts that texts are produced, that they circulate, and that they are consumed and/or read. By studying the specific and particular context, we can understand how sites that produce certain texts, forms of textuality, and reading practices influence social beings and how social beings exert meanings through the texts.

Johnson (1983) argues that a Cultural Studies framework presumes historical, rather than static, forms of consciousness and/or subjectivity. Cultural Studies assumes that subjectivities are produced by external forces exerted on individuals and by social practices that produce them as thinking and feeling subjects. Johnson systematizes these pressures in model-form in order to make them more understandable. This model is based on the assumption that culture is dynamic. Cultural Studies endeavors to understand how

individuals are formed as subjects by and through their responses to cultural texts, producing a subjectivity that renders them objects of inquiry. Only through an examination of the conditions that produce cultural texts can we assess the importance of understanding the “specific conditions of ‘consumption’ or ‘reading’” (29).

Cultural Studies treats the fairy tale as a cultural object. Its framework supports my investigation of how and why socially constructed users of texts, in this case children, specifically engage the fairy tale text. But, before analyzing the children's responses and reactions to fairy tales, I draw the reader's attention to the genesis, development, and nature of these texts, an essential step in the analytic process as outlined by Zipes.

Zipes (1988) examines fairy tales by attempting to discern their socio-historical layers. Aware of the various, and sometimes contradictory values expressed through the fairy tale, Zipes endeavors to understand how different readers create contradictory meanings through their interpretation of these tales. He proposes that readers should understand the tale's historical conditions of development and reception, as well as their own responses to the specific tale. This becomes crucial, he maintains, in our attempt to understand the constraining and/or liberating effects of the fairy tale in socialization processes.

As previously mentioned, few studies explore individuals' responses to fairy tales (Koelle, 1981)⁵. Trousdale (1989), one of the few researchers who has made the attempt to formulate individuals' responses to fairy tales, studied three eight-year-olds' reception of fairy tale narratives and their construction of meaning through this engagement. Trousdale's study reveals that adults' and children's interpretations of fairy tales, and their subsequent construction of meaning, are not necessarily similar. Haase (1993)

claims that despite the difficulty in interpreting children's responses, investigating children's responses to fairy tales has "an endless potential for meaning" (245). Studies of readers' responses illuminate significant issues in 'fairy tale scholarship'. Public and private reception of fairy tales convey "[their] living meaning... and their role in society" (244). Hence, there is an urgent need to investigate the text itself, as well as the readers, and the context of reception.

B.3. Cultural Awareness Through Fairy Tales

Fairy tales have many aspects worth exploring apart from their beneficial impact on the enrichment of students' linguistic abilities. The traditional fairy tale expresses values, experiences, emotions, humor and struggles of every day life. Moreover, the traditional fairy tale communicates customs, signs and norms (i.e., that which is deemed both culturally appropriate and taboo). These tales also constitute a joint bond between generations, conveying a nation's historical moments and providing behavioral guidance for younger people.

Interestingly, it seems apparent that when the traditional storyteller narrates a fairy tale, he or she transforms it and gives to it dimensions that are shaped by the culture in which he or she lives. Engel (1995) argues that the storyteller certifies that s/he is a member of her/his cultural community through her animation of the story. Indeed, as Engel contends, by making the listeners tell stories "that are engaging and informative in a way that the community deems appropriate, [they, the listeners] can more easily and successfully enter into the culture. This is true for adults as it is for children" (47).

Consistent with the aforementioned point, some researchers such as Barton and Booth (1990), Bearse (1992), Bloodgood and Worthy (1993), and Young (1986), have

used fairy tales to teach children their heritage language and to provide them with an understanding and appreciation of their tradition. In fact, Champers (1970) claims that a complete literary education can not be guaranteed if oral storytelling is excluded from the curriculum. Omotoso (1978) used the method of telling and retelling traditional stories to Nigerian children in order to help them develop linguistic abilities as well as to provide them with a cultural and ethical background. Moreover, House (1992) engages his students with myths and folk tales from different countries as a way of “illustrating fully their own heritage and their connection with cultures outside their own” (73).

It has been argued that, through fairy tales, children become aware not only of their own culture but of the existence of cultural differences between people from around the world. Traditional fairy tales, then, can offer multicultural perspectives and understandings: students recognize both disparities and similarities in the prose heritage of various countries. Through fairy tales, children might also learn to appreciate how and why people form certain perceptions about the world while learning to relate to diverse histories, traditions and beliefs. Thus, fairy tales can contribute to a child’s social growth and to her/his moral education (Greene, 1991; Nussbaum, 1995). Indeed, the fairy tale ministers to moral education by translating qualities and virtues through narrative ‘actions’. According to the storyteller Max Luthi (Kallergis, 1995), instead of using abstract phrases such as “the young son has humanistic feelings”, the fairy tale narrates that the “young son shares his bread with an old man” (37). In this narrative context, the subjective world becomes objective and is presented in a ‘conjectural’ form that is easily visualized and captured by young minds.

B.4. Creativity and Imaginative Thinking Through Fairy Tales

Bettelheim (1977) and Stayer (1995) argue that traditional literature stimulates children's imagination and fantasy, and I contend that doing so sparks the children's interest in further engaging the language of fairy tales. Using fairy tale content to study students' reading and writing skills, Worthy and Bloodgood (1992) observe that students, who "earlier in the year would have done anything to avoid books" (300), are excited to read Cinderella and other fairy tales. In conjunction, they also notice that the students' new-found eagerness leads to their dynamic participation in discussion sessions and to their expression of ideas with other group members. Similarly, Flickinger, Garcia and Long (1992) point out that educational researchers acknowledge the potential of folk tales to stimulate imaginations and create enjoyable learning experiences. Focused and engaged in such an environment, children increase their potential to deal successfully with difficulties as they experience "escape", "consolation" and "recovery" through fantasy (75-80).

B.5. Fantasy and Fairy Tales

In his analysis of the "liberating potential of the fantastic," Zipes (1988) claims that "all good fairy tales aesthetically structure and use fantastic and miraculous elements to prepare us for our every day life. Magic is used paradoxically not to deceive us but to enlighten us" (172). The importance of the fairy tale depends on whether it, (a) reflects a process of struggle against forms of power; or (b) provides the reader with investments useful for the construction of reality. Fairy tale protagonists manage to overcome fears and personal deficiencies, learning to use their powers to free themselves from oppressive situations. The heroes' stories represent a successful struggle against dominating social

structures that restrict and/or limit their development. Such self confident characters breed optimism and kindle hope that personal empowerment and transformative action are possible.

Sigmund Freud (1958) posits that fantasies are identified with peoples' desires. Freud writes: "Unsatisfied wishes are the driving power behind the phantasies⁶" (47). Fantasy is produced in order to fulfill a wish and is activated when an intense desire is triggered by the occurrence of a certain event. Freud argues that fantasies are linked with early experiences and with wishes that have not been satisfied during infancy. For Freud, there is a connection between the past, the present and the future. In other words, fantasy is triggered by past memories and "creates for itself a situation, which is to emerge in the future" (48-49). The fairy tale can provide such a trigger and can establish a bond between such moments.

Furthermore, Freud (1958) relates fantasies to dreams arguing that fantasies help us make sense of the repressed material symbolized in dreams. Freud also makes reference to those fantasies which, when they become "over-luxuriant" and "over-powerful" (49) lead to conditions that facilitate an outbreak of neurotic or psychotic behavior. Franz (1997) recognizes the dangers associated with repressed or "unexpressed" fantasies. Unless individuals reveal their fantasies, their fantasy world exists in the dark and disconnects them from reality. Thus, Von Franz urges readers to bring their fantasies to the forefront of their consciousness and to separate creative fantasies from "nonsense". By "nonsense" Franz refers to consistent and pathetic fantasies that contribute to an individual's alienation from reality.

Within the realm of education, Robertson (1997a, 1997b) investigates teachers' responses to popular images of teaching and argues for the importance of encouraging teachers to "explore fantasy as a source of possibility and confinement in pedagogy," by investigating their responses to popular images of teaching (123). Her work also explores the pedagogical usefulness of fantasy objects such as children's picture books or novels, and children's use of narrative experience to help resolve the dilemmas of growing up (Robertson, 1999, 2000a, 2000b). Being aware and working to comprehend the true feelings behind our fantasies, we can determine the existence of the creative gems contained in them.

B.6. Magic and Animism in Fairy Tales

The world of the fairy tale is suffused with magic. There are certain magical objects, actions, thoughts and words that, narratively, are made to appear as vehicles for magic. Thus, in the fairy tale, the magical occurrence results after some object is acted upon, some action is performed, some thoughts are produced, or some words are expressed. Favat (1977) argues that the magical connection between 'thought' and 'things' takes the form of wishes in the world of fairy tales and exists simultaneously in the child's world. He bases his argument on Piaget's theory regarding the child's belief in magic⁷.

Piaget (Favat, 1977) posits the existence of magical beliefs in the child's everyday experiences and in the tale. Like Freud, Piaget argues that magical thinking in childhood relates to the struggle for autonomy, independence and separation from the mother. He identifies consecutive types and corresponding stages of animist beliefs in children. These beliefs can be linked to the presence of animistic formulations in most fairy tales.

In fairy tales, plants, animals, inanimate objects, stocks, stones, sun, stars, rivers and lakes are presented as having feelings and human characteristics such as thinking, talking, and agency. Consequently, children who engage with the content of fairy tale narratives are encouraged to believe in magic and animism. On a psychological level, such ideas help the child to conceive of him/herself as strong and capable of being in control. Such engagements with animism thus influence their perception of reality, and the way they choose to think or speak and/or the way they choose to act.

B.7. Self-formation and Identity Through Fairy Tales

It would appear that fairy tales provide children with fertile ground for the efflorescence of their beliefs and ideas. These beliefs and ideas are fundamentally based on fantasy, though they seem natural and rational to the child's formulation of them. In general, these beliefs and ideas are related to the child's exploration of her/his inner life and might focus on questions regarding the purpose of life, the creation of the world, and the formation of self-identity. Additionally, children may wonder about their parents' authority, their ability to transcend faults and wrong-doings, the reasons for the unbearable situation in which they may find themselves, and the consequences of their behavior. Of course, the importance the child attributes to these questions depends mainly on the extent to which s/he deems them pertinent to his or her own situation.

For children, therefore, fairy tales may be regarded as a pure and truthful source of answers to the aforementioned questions. Because of their lack of abstract understanding, children find fairy tales' fantastic explanations, comprehensible and more believable than realistic answers based on scientific data. Nussbaum (1995) and Bettelheim (1977) argue against the possibility of giving scientifically-oriented answers

to children because such “explanations leave [them] confused, overpowered and intellectually defeated” (48). Moreover, Bettelheim contends that such incomprehensible facts not only baffle children, but also create “new uncertainties” (48) within them. Indeed, myths and fairy tales promote a feeling of security for children by encouraging them to trust their own senses. Finally, Bettelheim claims that children who receive explanations - perceived as lies according to their experience of the world - tend to ‘accept’ them, distrusting their “own experience, and therefore themselves and what their minds can do for themselves” (48-49). Bettelheim’s views find echoes in those of Martha Nussbaum, who argues that narrative forms like fairy tales offer children something singular and necessary for learning about the complexities of existence.

Evidently, fairy tales can provide children with the tools necessary to construct their identities. In fact, Franz (1997) observes that girls tend to identify themselves with the female figure of fairy tales, even if the female figure is not the protagonist of the story. According to Franz, this is apparent from the scenes that girls chose to draw in his study. On the other hand, boys tend to identify themselves with the male hero, turning their interest to scenes that depict him as the central figure in the drawings.

Feminist critics are aware of the often complicated and contradictory effects of fairy tales on identity formation. They argue that fairy tales generally maintain the oppressive and submissive image of the female and the dominant role of the male. However, as White (1993) claims, a fairy tale can also encode girls’ and women’s urges for rebellion and “active participation in the world” (188), by exposing images of desperate female persons - characterized by dubious happiness - being both physically and socially constrained.

In conclusion then, this literature review presents theories analyzing children's engagement with the fairy tale genre, and as well, claims its potential to help children negotiate their sense of themselves and their world through the discourse of fairy tale narration. These theories and claims support the argument that students' engagement with fairy tale narratives promotes their linguistic abilities, cultural awareness, creativity and imaginative thinking. This review also introduces concepts related to children's use of a cultural object to imagine and produce their identity. Highlighted in the process of creating self is the significant role played by fantasy forms of narration, 'magic', 'animism' and 'identification'.

C. Methodology

People act, not on the basis of predetermined responses to redefined objects, but rather as interpreters, definers, signalers and symbol and signal readers. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, 25)

This study is situated within the specific conceptual framework of Cultural Studies. Through the application of qualitative research methods to the study of popular cultural forms (i.e., the effects of Greek fairy tales on children), I focus on readers' interpretations and reactions to these cultural texts. Fairy tale narratives are these, "as if," structures with plot, characters, settings, magical occurrences and transformations. People use stories to order and reorder experience, to produce meaning in their quotidian realities, and to resolve their problematic situations. Thus, the construction of personal stories is influenced by the ones that have been narrated to individuals, often ones that have been familiar to them since childhood.

The rationale for employing qualitative methods is related to the underlying goals of the research at hand. This study is interested in using popular cultural texts (i.e., Greek fairy tales) to understand how one interest group, children who are born Canadian but who come from a Greek background and who study the Greek heritage language, 'read' and are influenced by Greek fairy tales. In this research two kinds of data are collected: (a) two questionnaires completed after the reading of the third and the fifth fairy tales, (b) the interview transcripts (taped and transcribed by myself). The interviews are conducted on the third and the fifth fairy tale sessions, as well.

C.1. Participants

The participants of my study, the children, are recruited through their parents, after my having received permission from the school administration to approach the families. The children are currently enrolled in the Second Language Program of a Greek Heritage Elementary School in Eastern Ontario. Initially, fifteen students (five students from the 4th grade, five from the 5th, and five from the 6th) were to be selected. However, in the end, twenty-two students participate in the study as selecting only five students from each of the fourth, fifth and sixth grades would appear to discriminate against the two or three who would be left out in each grade. And, since both parents and students are enthusiastic about participating in the research, all students are, therefore, welcomed to participate.

The students, nine, ten and eleven years old respectively, are schooled primarily in a dominant cultural setting (Canadian) and come from a minority ethnic group (one or both of their parents are of Greek origin). I believe that the introduction of attractive and entertaining tales motivate the students to participate in the research, challenge their intellectual abilities and desires, and provide interesting material for studying children's meaning-making processes.

The appropriateness of selecting this age group for my study is confirmed by a host of researchers whose works illustrate that children's interest in fairy tales exist during specific periods of their childhood. According to Favat (1977), children's interest ranges from their pre-reading age and continues until approximately the ages of nine to ten years old⁸. Additionally, at the age of six to ten years, children are situated in a formative phase of development that permits them to acquire a sense of the story.

Therefore, storytelling can have a significant impact on them (Zipes, 1995). Also, the selection of the 6th grade students in my study is dictated by the fact that children of this age are more capable users of the Greek language, understanding the tales, and expressing ideas and feelings in a more articulate way than younger students.

The participants constitute a purposive sample. That is, they are selected with the likelihood that they will best understand the questions under investigation. Since I am studying the uses and effects of Greek fairy tales on children, it follows that children in a Greek language school setting comprise the best sample.

C.2. Researcher's Role Management

As the researcher, I try to assure the participants about the confidentiality of the data gathered. The participants are informed that the primary purpose of the study is to gain insight into how children perceive Greek fairy tales and to discover the uses and meanings that they construct while engaging with these cultural texts. After informing the parents and the students of the title and the subject of the research, the requirements of the study are discussed, and consent forms signed. Once permission is obtained, the participants are assured that they have the right to freely grant or refuse participation in the study at anytime without penalty. In respecting their right to privacy and confidentiality, I avoid questions that might frustrate or unease the participants. In addition, all names are kept anonymous and/or disguised. Finally, a short summary of the research findings are promised to them, upon request. Coming from the same cultural background as my participants, I feel confident that I can understand their cultural values and recognize cultural biases, thus respecting cultural sensibilities that if disregarded would threaten communication.

C.3. Research Strategies and Data Collection Techniques

Two data collection strategies ensure a rich, in depth supply of information for analysis; i) interview sessions in the form of focus groups following each fairy tale, and ii) two completed questionnaires, one after the third and fifth fairy tale.

Five Greek fairy tales are introduced as the principal catalyst to the participants' construction of meaning about their world and selves. My decision to use Greek fairy tales builds primarily on the research of Favat (1977), Bettelheim (1977), Haase (1993), and Zipes (1995). These scholars provide evidence of the effects of fairy tales on children's development. Specific variables and characteristics were taken into consideration for their selection (See Appendix 1, see p. 103)⁹. A teacher-led class discussion follow the reading of the first, second and fourth fairy tales. Discussions revolve around a sequence of questions that parallel those I ask in the group interviews and individual questionnaires on the third and the fifth fairy tales (See Appendix 2). After the reading of the third fairy tale and then after the reading of the fifth fairy tale, all the participants are asked to complete a questionnaire. Five group interview sessions round out the data collection strategies as the students in each of the three grades are asked questions about their interpretations of the specific fairy tales. (See questions in Appendix 2).

C.3. a) Questionnaires

The implementation of questionnaires in the research is considered important in order to extract responses to the examined texts by all the participants. The questionnaires therefore, provide an additional way for the students to comment on the fairy tales they

read. Thus, the questionnaires supply access to data unavailable through the interviews and class conversations, where not all the participants have the chance or the willingness to express themselves and contribute to the discussions. Engaging the fairy tales through this strategy also guarantees immediacy and anonymity. Two questionnaires are completed by the participants immediately after the narration of the third and the fifth fairy tale. The questionnaires are written in English, as I am interested in how the students elicit and construct meaning from the stories, and not how the students' express themselves in proper (standard) Greek.

Through the questionnaires participants are asked to reflect on their perceptions of each story, their emotional attachment to the story, their identification with the characters in the tales, their varying levels of interest in each part of the story, and their suggestions regarding changes they would like to make in the plot of the story. In the second questionnaire the participants are also asked to draw their favorite scene in the story, giving them the opportunity to reflect on the cultural text in a non-verbal, pictorial, artistic, and possibly more pleasurable way.

More specifically, the questionnaires, which take approximately twenty-five minutes to complete, parallel the questions included in the open-ended interview sessions that follow. Both questionnaires are composed mainly of the same questions, with the exception that in the second questionnaire, the questions are refined and rephrased in an effort to elicit more specific answers from the participants. Thus, the first questionnaire asks the participants to express their liking of the fairy tale by ticking "yes" or "no," while in the second questionnaire, the participants are asked to rate their level of engagement with the story by selecting one of the following answers: "I did not like the

story at all”, “I sort of liked the story”, “I liked parts of the story but I didn’t like other parts”, “I liked the story a lot,” or, “This is one of the best stories I’ve ever heard.”

The rest of the questions follow a similar pattern and the participants indicate their preference for their favorite characters in the stories, ascribing adjectives pertaining to them, and describing an act of the character that strikes them the most. Answers to the questions also reveal the person/s in the story whose attitude/s or ways of thinking they disapprove of. Students have the opportunity to write down feelings that surface while listening to the fairy tales, and to highlight any elements that point to their recognition of the story as, specifically, a Greek fairy tale. Some children indicate that they would like to make changes to the fairy tale. Furthermore, in the second questionnaire the participants are given the chance to draw their favorite scene in the story.

C.3. b) Group Interviews

A total of five group interviews are conducted. During the third fairy tale session there are three focus group interviews, each of the fourth, fifth and sixth grade consisted a focus group. During the fifth fairy tale session, due to time constraints, the interview sessions are divided into two time slots. There are two sets of group interviews. In the first set, first the students of the fourth grade are interviewed and then a joint second interview session is conducted with the students of the fifth and the sixth grades. These interviews are carried out in an empty classroom on the fourth floor of the school. Each interview is twenty to thirty minutes long and based on semi-structured, predetermined questions. I avoid the use of restrictive, leading and loaded questions. The questions revolve around the participants’ understanding and responses to the Greek fairy tale narratives presented (Appendix 2).

C.4. Data analysis strategies

In qualitative research, data are analyzed inductively. Fraenkel and Wallen (1996) refer to Bogdan and Biklen's claims noting that "qualitative researchers are not putting together a puzzle whose picture they already know. They are constructing a picture that takes shape as they collect and examine the parts" (443). Therefore, hypotheses emerge from the data while the study progresses. Throughout the study, the textual analysis of the fairy tales, interviews and questionnaires are reviewed and then coded into tentative conceptual categories. The analysis of the children's engagement takes a narrative form, as I construct and refine concepts through examples that fall into patterns derived from the data.

C.5. Limitations of the study

One of the most important limitations of this study relates to my awareness of my own cultural background that may bias what I perceive to be of interest for analysis. Indeed, current research within a Cultural Studies framework presumes that researchers cannot act objectively, but that they are influenced to some degree by past experiences influencing how they "see the world and the people within it" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996, 463). Also, my expectations as an observer is bound to affect my interpretation of the participants' attempts to construct meaning through their reading of Greek fairy tales.

My presence on the research site also influences the participants' responses. We are already comfortable with each other though, as I was their fourth grade teacher last year and I have managed to establish a friendly working relationship with them. The fact that I had taught some of the students in the past influences my interpretation of the data, insofar as a teacher's behavior and pedagogy influence children's learning.

Another limitation of the study is illustrated by the knowledge that the fourth grade participants are not seen to be fully capable of expressing their feelings and ideas in the Greek language, as they are not yet fluent speakers of the Greek language. In order to diminish the negative effects produced by their early stage of Greek language communicative competence, the questionnaires, as well as the interviews, of all the age groups are held in their first language. Furthermore, the picture-making activity allows them to represent their ideas without having to actually present them in linguistic or verbal terms.

D. Analysis of the Data

Introduction of the material in the study: Greek Fairy Tales

In this study, five Greek fairy tales are presented to the participants. Three of them are discussed in the presence of all participants after the presentation. The third and the fifth fairy tales are analyzed in more depth. The reading of those fairy tales is followed by interview sessions with the participants and by their completion of written responses to a relevant questionnaire.

The fairy tales used for further discussion belong to the category of traditional fairy tales, narrated originally by gifted individuals known as traditional storytellers. In Greek traditional settings these individuals were acknowledged for their narrative capabilities and given the opportunity to ‘practice’ them at home or in front of a public audience. The readings and conversations took place in the evening, usually in front of a welcoming fire, with a crowd that seriously embraced, and respected, storytellers’ “capability for critical view, language sense and civic experience”¹⁰ (Anagnostopoulos, 1995, 14). In this environment of mutual trust and understanding, the narrators would refer to stories heard in their childhood or would create new ones based on their experiences, adding details and changing characters and plots as they saw fit.

The tradition carries on today. Narrators endowed with a natural talent create interesting stories and captivate the interest of their audience, both adults and children. The same fairy tales continue to be told and adored by adults and youngsters from all age groups and from all social classes. Cultural researchers interested in the importance of the oral and written tradition make an important contribution to the preservation of that

heritage by collecting and printing the fairy tales and other stories told by Greek storytellers. All fairy tales used in my study come from this tradition.

For example, the fifth fairy tale, Chrisofeggaraki, can be classified in the “haunted/persecuted princess” category (Aggelopoulou, 1991, 260). In this fairy tale the central, haunting character is Chrisofeggaraki. Chrisofeggaraki was originally narrated in 1958 by Aglaya Filippou, a seventy-one years old woman. The narrator storyteller was illiterate. Chrisofeggaraki is recognized by collectors of this tale as similar in story line to the tale of Snow White. A summary of the fairy tale illustrates the similarities.

Chrisofeggaraki tells the story of three sisters, Milo, Roido and Chrisofeggaraki, who, each day, talk to the sun through a mirror, asking him to choose a favorite sister. Every day the sun answers the same way, that Chrisofeggaraki is the best, and so the sisters decide to try and kill her. One day while traveling through the forest, they stop for lunch. As planned, the sisters throw a loaf of bread over the cliff and convince Chrisofeggaraki to clamor down the cliff to rescue it. Chrisofeggaraki complies; but daylight is fading and as the night falls she realizes she will not make it home. Searching for shelter, she uncovers a hut where forty dragons live. Here, she spends the night, hidden behind a tub. The next morning, unaware of Chrisofeggaraki’s presence, the dragons leave for work. That evening when the dragons return they find the house cleaned up and a meal laid out ready to eat. Mystified as to who is doing all the domestic chores, the next day they leave behind a blind dragon to keep a look out for the answer to this puzzling incident. But, this dragon cannot see, and so it is not until the following day when they leave behind a crippled dragon, that they discover Chrisofeggaraki. Upon the rest of the dragons' return, Chrisofeggaraki kisses their hands and sits down beside the

big dragon, as the crippled dragon advises her to do, and narrates her story. Enchanted with Chrisofeggaraki the dragons take her into their home and promise that they will see to it that she marries into wealth. Meanwhile, the sisters looking through the mirror, as is their morning routine, find out from the sun that their sister is at the dragons' hut. Once again they set out to destroy her. In disguise they kill Chrisofeggaraki by throwing a ring into her mouth. When the dragons return in the evening, they place Chrisofeggaraki in a gold coffin, on a tree, outside their hut. The king's son passes by one day, sees the coffin and climbs up for a better look. The tree sways causing the ring to fall from Chrisofeggaraki's mouth restoring her sensibilities. Soon after, she marries the king's son and has a child. Once again, the sisters speak to the sun and are outraged to hear the news of Chrisofeggaraki's good fortune. They disguise themselves yet again, and travel to the king's house. On this occasion, they transform their sister into an apple-tree by throwing a needle into her mouth. When Chrisofeggaraki's child reaches for an apple, she (the apple-tree) leans her branches lovingly towards her, but she will not bend to the king's sister who has always been jealous of her. Finally, in a rage, the sister asks the king to cut the apple tree down. An old woman passing by bundles up a piece of the felled tree to use as a surface to pound meat. She stops in her work when she hears a voice. The old lady splits the wood open and a beautiful girl appears dressed in a golden gown. The king having followed the old lady, sees Chrisofeggaraki, draws her to his heart and they live happily ever after.

The third fairy tale, The Greek Children, is the second story I analyzed. Unlike all the others introduced to the participants, it was inspired by traditional embroidery, stone-sculptures, and hand woven materials from Greek traditional art. It is the story of

two beautiful children, George and his sister Maria. They grow up to become even more beautiful, and brave adults. In their village, all residents have to follow the orders of the Turkish emperor, who takes advantage of his position and exploits them. One day, the emperor, Master Agas, orders George to bring him a mermaid in a cage, threatening to kidnap Maria if he fails in this task. George travels for ten days, until he finds a mermaid. Kind of heart, the mermaid tells him that his sister is in danger. George rushes back to the village, where, to his astonishment, he cannot find anyone, except for a peacock who informs him that everyone has gone to Pagona's wedding. At the ceremony, Master Agas asks Maria to dance with him. She refuses and a battle between the Greeks and the Turks ensues. The old people stay in the village but the young ones flee to the mountains. When George arrives, he hears a girlish voice shouting, "It's better to live one hour of freedom and independence, than forty years of slavery and imprisonment". Unfortunately, the tale does not reveal anything more about the fates of the characters.

Having summarized the two Greek fairy tales I use to explore the children's engagement with these cultural texts, I now draw the reader's attention to my analysis of these stories, and what the children speak, write, illustrate, feel, think and dream about in their interpretation of the stories.

D.1. “The Greek Children” [Τα Ελληνάκια] - Session 4

First, I will analyse the data collected from the third fairy tale presented to the participants, The Greek Children [Τα Ελληνάκια]. As mentioned in the data collection strategies section of this paper, two sources of data are displayed and analysed: 1) the focus groups interviews, and 2) the questionnaires.

This fairy tale tells the story of two brave Greek children, a boy and a girl, who grow up to become brave heroes and supporters of ideals and virtues such as independence and boldness. They resist the dominant power and threat of the Turkish emperor and demonstrate their willingness to sacrifice their lives for the cause of peace and freedom.

Eighteen students, nine from the fourth grade (6 girls and 3 boys), four from the fifth grade (3 girls and 1 boy) and five students from the sixth grade (all girls) meet together to complete their questionnaires (Appendix 3). The students are given twenty minutes to complete it; some of them complete it in fifteen minutes. Also, students of each of the fourth, fifth and sixth grades comprise a focus groups. Therefore, three interview sessions were conducted for the third fairy tale. Each interview session lasts about twenty-five minutes.

The following analysis generally follows the seven questions asked on the questionnaires. The focus groups cover similar or complementary issues. Both questionnaires and interview data are used in the analysis.

D.1.a) First impressions of the fairy tale

The first question in the questionnaire and the interview is designed to extract the participants' initial impressions of the fairy tale just narrated to them. Responding “yes”

or “no” with a tick mark, indicates whether they like or dislike the fairy tale. Seven out of nine participants from the fourth grade answer “yes.” The two remaining participants who are not impressed with the fairy tale are males. In the fifth grade, one out of four children like the fairy tale, two do not like it, and one answers that she likes it “a little”. In the sixth grade, a similar pattern emerges as three out of six participants determine that they like the fairy tale, one does not like it, and one likes it “a little”. Summing up, eleven out of eighteen participants like the fairy tale, five do not like it and two like it “a little”.

During the interview session, participants are given the opportunity to discuss why they like or dislike the fairy tale. Almost all of them respond that they have comprehension difficulties with this individual fairy tale. These difficulties seem to arise from the plot of the story complicated by the perceptible parallelism between scenes. Perhaps the fact that this is largely a historical and not a magical fairy tale provokes their disappointment. Historical facts pertaining to the domination of Greece by Turkey are beyond them, though the magical elements included in the story capture their attention.

For the fourth graders this is a “sad” (Girl 4) fairy tale, and therefore, different from “the other ones [that] were like happy endings, this one is not really a happy ending, because they will have to die.” (Boy 4). The fifth grade students register their difficulties in understanding the story. “It’s very good, but hard to understand and hard to say to other people” argues a boy; and a girl adds that “it’s complicated to get all into your head,” referring to the chronological sequence of the scenes. They also discern that the lack of magic makes the story less interesting and less appealing to them. What largely differentiates this fairy tale from the other ones introduced to the students is the lack of

characters. The students complain that other fairy tales “had more about princesses and how he liked somebody and end up like (married),” (Girl 5) and are “kind [of] romantic,” whereas The Greek Children is a “plain thing” (Boy 5). In the same vein, students from the sixth grade characterize this fairy tale as “boring” since “it had less magic” (Girl 6).

D.1.b) Characterization - Identification

The second question refers to their favorite character in the story, and the participants are asked to choose an adjective to describe him or her. Six girls out of nine in the fourth grade remark that their favorite character is Maria (the female protagonist); two boys declare that their favorite character is George (the male protagonist), and one boy says that he mostly likes Master Agas (the male mean guy in the story). Correspondingly, two participants from the fifth grade favor Maria, and two, one girl and one boy, favor George. And yet again, the results from the sixth grade show that three girls speak in support of Maria and two in support of George.

The adjectives attributed to their favorite characters can be identified according to five main categories. Participants like their favorite characters because they are: i) “brave” and “courageous”, ii) “pretty” and “nice”, iii) “polite” iv) kind, and v) because of their gender. Five participants from the fourth grade and one from the sixth grade say that their favorite character is “pretty” and/or “nice”. Two from the fourth, all the students from the fifth (four in all), and three from the sixth like their character because he /she is “brave” and/or “courageous”. Two from the fourth grade state that they like Maria because she is a girl, while another participant from the same grade writes that Maria is “polite” too. And last, one participant from the fifth and one from the sixth grade characterize Maria as “kind”. (See Table #1, for overview)

Table 1

Participants' responses to the second question of the questionnaire regarding their favorite character of the third fairy tale.

	Maria	George	Master Agas
Girl-4 th grade	Pretty		
Girl-4 th grade	"she is a girl"		
Girl-4 th grade	Beautiful		
Girl-4 th grade	Pretty & polite		
Girl-4 th grade	Pretty, nice & brave		
Girl-4 th grade	"she is a girl"		
Boy-4 th grade		Brave	
Boy-4 th grade		*	
Boy-4 th grade			Greedy, selfish & mean
Girl-5 th grade		Courageous	
Girl-5 th grade	Brave		
Girl-5 th grade	Brave and kind		
Boy-5 th grade		Brave	
Girl-6 th grade	Good		
Girl-6 th grade	Beautiful		
Girl-6 th grade	Brave		
Girl-6 th grade		Brave	
Girl-6 th grade		Brave & persistent (George)	

In the same vein, during the interview session, the majority of the participants respond that their favorite characters are “George” and “Maria”, not only because of the virtues and the charisma they possess, but also because of their gender. The adjectives most ascribed to them are “beautiful”, “pretty”, “good”, “courageous”, “brave”, “kind”, “hard-working”, and “tough”. As the students' words indicate, girls are drawn to the female protagonist of the story, while the male participants identify themselves with the male character.

During the focus groups participants are more likely to state that their favorite character is Master Agas. Almost all fourth grade male students clearly prefer Master Agas stating that they are impressed by him because he is “rich”, the one who “gets the bucks” as illustrated by his ability to extract money from innocent people. Financial supremacy is recognized as most preferable. One boy from the fourth grade remarks that his favorite character is Master Agas, described by the student as “greedy, selfish, mean”.

Moreover, the fourth grade boys identify and value Master Agas as a conqueror, because he could manage dictatorially the Greek folks. Master Agas is in position to suppress the others and force them to bend to his will. Therefore, fourth grade boys describe him as “good”, “excellent” and “perfect”, while the rest of the participants regard his character as “mean”, and “like busted, not letting anyone have [a] good time” (Girl 5), and a disagreeable person because he is “thinking only of himself” (Girl 6).

D1.c) Scene attraction

In the third question the participants are asked to describe a character's action that impresses them the most. Only eight participants of the eighteen are able to describe such a scene. Two participants claim that their favorite scene is “[When Maria said to Agas] I

don't dance by force"]¹¹ (Girl 6). Two girls from the fifth grade specify the scene where "Maria stood up in front of everybody and put the flag up" (Girl 5). Two participants are struck by George's attempt "to get the mermaid" (Boy 4), and a female participant from the sixth grade refers to the scene where George "takes out his sword and goes to fight Agas" (Girl 6).

The rest of the participants keep reiterating the names of their favorite characters, ascribing adjectives to them that closely resemble the same words and phrases uttered in answer to the second question. The fourth grade boy who seems attracted to the "mean" guy of the story, Master Agas, maintains his liking for Master Agas and describes his favorite act as the one when "the Master asked Maria to dance" (Boy 4).

D.1.d) Disappointment - Antipathy

Participants are asked to express whether they feel antipathy towards any person in the fairy tale, and to point out what it is from his or her attitude, character and ways of thinking, that they do not like. In contrast to the fourth grade males, responses during the interview session, the questionnaires reveal that the majority of the participants express their antipathy towards one specific character in the story, "Master Agas". These participants determine that they dislike Master Agas because of his greediness, his mean actions towards innocent people, his anti-social behavior at a joyful social function, and his exploitative attitude.

"I did not like the guy that asked Maria to dance with her.... Him." (Girl 4);

"Yes I don't like the person who asks to dance with Maria:

Agas = greedy, stubborn" (Girl 4);

"AGAS" (Girl 4);

“I disliked (Agas) because he was demanding and the part I did not like was when he came to the wedding” (Girl 5);

“I did not like ‘Agas’ because he was mean and he wrecked the reception” (Girl 5);

[“I did not like Agas because he could do whatever he wanted and he was mean”] (Girl 5);

“I dislike “Aga” because he wanted everything done his way, and he wasn’t very nice” (Girl 6);

[“I did not like Agas because he was thinking only of himself and he was mean”] (Girl 6).

It’s interesting to note how the majority of participants (except one) are affected negatively by this character because of one specific behavior, i.e., his forcing the female heroine to dance with him.

Antipathy is also expressed towards the “soldiers”, the people who serve Master Agas and carry out his commands. In particular, two participants express their annoyance and opposition toward the violent and authoritative attitude of the soldiers. More specifically, they claim that they dislike “the soldiers that want to hurt one of the good men. I don’t like people that would kill others!” (Girl 6). The second participant not only condemns the harmful, possessive and merciless attitude of Agas and his soldiers but recognizes her own resistance towards Aga’s authority and claims that she dislikes “the soldiers that ...want to hurt anyone who don’t follow “THE RULES” (Girl 5).

A expansion from a girl in the fifth grade needs to be noted here. The participant argues that her antipathy towards the singer stems from his ironic attitude to people through his tattoos and his cruel treatment of animals on stage. She writes “I don’t like the singer Marlyn Manson because he has tattoos over his body to make fun of people and he kills animals on stage.” At first, this response seems irrelevant to the subject

examined. However, it attracts my attention and on further inquiry I find that clearly, the girl is able to make an association between an ancient mythical character and a modern day rock singer (an anti-hero). Her thinking suggests that both the “mean” characters of the story and Marlyn Manson possess power and use it in such a way to harm others, whether human or non-human living creature.

Additionally, four participants offers that they like everybody in the story, in direct contrast to one student who maintains that he “hates everything” (Boy 4). The boy, who in the previous questions expresses his liking of Master Agas’s greedy and mean attitude, gives no answer to the question of disappointing characters, actions, or behaviors.

The participants respond openly and without hesitation to the questionnaire. While somewhat nervous and reluctant during the interviews and the class discussions - the majority of them appear to avoid participating in the dialogue - the questionnaire is taken up as an acceptable text through which their views and attachments can be expressed. Later, I come to see that the participants’ answers are influenced mainly by their own social histories and experiences. Answers which seem irrelevant or unrelated to me in the beginning do not seem so after I learn more about each participant’s daily lived realities, and to the extent that this is possible, I will elaborate on this point later in my discussion.

D.1.e) Feelings - Emotions

The fifth question addresses the participants’ emotional state of mind during the narration of the fairy tale. The participants are encouraged to discuss the feelings they experience while listening to the story and the part that evokes those feelings. Engaging

with the tale, students report feeling sadness, suspense, madness, anger, fear, confusion, and pride. I am amazed to discover that the majority of the fourth graders feel sadness, and that the students attribute this feeling to the story's ending, "because everyone was dying" (Boy 4). They express grief and distress in discussing the characters' impending deaths. One sixth grade student qualifies her feeling of sadness, an isolated feeling that surfaces when George finds himself alone, ["I felt not scared but sadness for George when there was no-one in the village"] (Girl 6). This particular girl seems intensely sad about the idea of being left alone or unattended.

Students express contradictory feelings about the story's ending. Thus, while a fourth grader "felt sad at the end when Maria said, 'It's better to live for one more hour in peace than to follow someone else ... Turk'", a sixth grader "felt proud ... when Maria started singing: '[It's better to live an hour of free life than forty years of slavery and imprisonment.]'" This student from the sixth grade appears to claim a belief in the value and importance of unfettered freedom as evidenced through examining her engagement with the story.

During the interview, the majority of participants imply that they have an understanding of the historical events presented to the fairy tale. Even the fourth-grade students are somewhat aware of the importance of these events, yet the reality of the scenes portrayed, removed from the magic of illusion, create feelings of sadness in the students. After all, the reality as the students understand it, is that the characters of the story are risking their lives and death is imminent. Thus, linking the story's theme to a historical event makes the events in the fairy tale appear closer to reality, and therefore, the idea of death is approached by the students with more seriousness and consciousness.

Along with feelings of sadness, two fifth grade girls report that they feel anger and discomfort towards Master Agas. “Everybody was having a good time at the reception and all of a sudden ‘Agas’ came in and wrecked it”, explained one girl. “I felt very uncomfortable when he (Agas) came to the wedding and demanded to dance with Maria”, asserts her frustration the other. These girls express resistance and opposition to a male character whose anti-social tendencies disrupt happy occasions and subjugate a female.

Add now, yet two more participants, who claim that the suspense of the fairy tale story line kindles in them feelings of pleasure and enjoyment: “I feel very enjoyable when it comes to reading fairy tales. I feel that way through the whole story! (I feel suspense!)” (Girl 6). Lastly, a sixth grader admits to feeling confused, especially at the beginning of the story, “when the mother had twins”. The student’s confusion appears to emanate from her difficulty in following the meaning of the text in the Greek language.

D.1.f) Social, historical and cultural influence

In the sixth question, the participants are asked whether they find any elements in the fairy tale that inform them that the origin of this fairy tale is Greek. Almost all the participants respond "yes", except for two fourth graders (one of whom is the boy who supports his liking of the “mean” person of the story and does not answer this question, and the other participant who answers negatively.) Some of the students find more than one representation that establishes the fairy tale as a Greek one. These elements are now presented below.

First, pictures and illustrations largely influence the students’ awareness of the Greek elements in the fairy tale texts. Through the pictures, especially the description of

the heroes' clothing, eight participants are able to draw the conclusion that this story comes from Greece.

“The pictures look Greek” (Boy 4);

“Yes, because what they were wearing” (Girl 4);

“I find Greek costumes that are worn by the characters”
(Girl 5);

“The title and the pictures” (Girl 5);

“Yes I do because I hear the names and see what the men
are wearing” (Girl 6);

“The boy was wearing Greek clothes” (Girl 6);

“...red caps (ΦΕΣΔΪΚΙΑ)” (Girl 6);

[“The fearless men in the photographs are dressed up with
a kind of Greek kilt and other....”] (Girl 6).

Secondly, six participants point out that historical elements of the story make them realize that this is originally a Greek fairy tale. These participants seem to be historically and chronologically knowledgeable of Greek slavery under the Turkish Emperor and the Greek War of Independence of 1821. Some of their responses are highlighted:

[“The Turks”] (Girl 4);

“Greeks, slavery, war” (Girl 4);

“Yes. There is a Greek action to it” (Girl 4);

[“...and the “It’s better one hour of free life than forty
years slavery and imprisonment”] (Girl 6);

“...1821 war ...” (Girl 6);

[“...22 March 1821”] (Girl 6).

And last, a collection of three elements trigger other participants' awareness of Greek culture present in the fairy tale; the Greek flag, the names of the heroes - [Giorgos

and Maria], and the title; “because it is called “Ελληνάκια”, that “Ελληνα” means Greek and “άκια” means kids (Ελληνα παιδάκια)” (Boy 5).

D.1.g) Possible changes – Preferences

Having discussed what they like and how they feel, the participants are now given the chance to state whether they would like to make any changes to the fairy tale and asked to decide what those changes would be. Nine participants respond negatively to the question, claiming that they would not make any changes “because the story is very good” (Girl 4), or because [“I liked the story very much and what I preferred mostly was the ending”] (Girl 6).

Eight participants appear eager to make changes to the fairy tale. Some of them wish for “a happy ending” (Girl 4), remembering that “there were many bad people and the fact that someone wanted to marry the princess” (Girl 5). In contrast, another participant suggests revisions wishing to include more violence, somehow imagining violent acts as a way to obtain freedom. She [“would like when George came, he would see Maria married to Agas and then George would have killed him and Maria would be free”] (Girl 6). Another student proposes adding a touch of humor to the story, leading to a happy outcome; she “would [have] the soldier men to marry the mermaid and live happily ever after!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” (Girl 6). Other participants mention that making it more comprehensible would stimulate their interest; “I would like to change the fact to make it to explain more” (Girl 6), and “I would change the starting because it was a little boring” (Girl 5), and more emphatically, “I would like to change everything because it was so boring” (Boy 4).

To summarize, the imaginary changes desired by the participants pertain to their wishes to construct a world of goodness, a life of pleasure, fanciful imaginings and themselves as empowered, loved and free.

D.2. “The Golden Moon” [«Το Χρυσοφεγγαράκι»] - Session 6

Chrisofeggaraki, (summarised earlier on p. 31, 32), is the fifth and last fairy tale read and discussed with the participants. It belongs to the category of magic fairy tales, and its translation into the English language reads, The Golden Moon. Similar to the Cinderella fairy tale, Chrisofeggaraki is the story of a beautiful young girl who suffers undue hardships caused by the envious and jealous dispositions of her older sisters. Participants seem to enjoy this fairy tale more than the previous one, mainly because this is a magical tale with a happy ending, similar to the patterns of their favorite tales, especially Cinderella.

The questionnaire and the interview sessions follow the presentation of the fairy tale. The same seven questions addressed in the fairy tale, The Greek Children, are now explored with this particular fairy tale.

D.2.a) First impressions of the fairy tale

The questionnaire pertaining to Chrisofeggaraki is completed by twenty-two participants, eleven from the fourth grade, four from the fifth grade and seven students from the sixth grade. This time, participants are encouraged to elaborate on their responses stating not only whether they like the fairy tale or not, but also rating the level of their engagement with the text. Here, the research reveals widely discrepant responses. For example, only one fifth-grader perceives this story as “one of the best I’ve ever heard

off” (Boy 5). Half of the participants, eleven in all, claim that they “liked the story a lot”, while another five state that they “liked parts of the story but they didn’t like other parts”. Two fourth graders “sort of liked the story” and five others are adamant that they “did not like the story at all”.

The interviews reveal similar findings. At the beginning of the interview sessions, the participants eagerly interject their first impressions. The fifth and sixth grade students respond positively. For them, it is “one of the best” stories they have read with their teacher. Both girls and boys equally state that Chrisofeggaraki is “very good”. It is the fourth grade students who openly express their ideas. Male participants more so than the girls argue that this fairy tale is “cool”, “pretty good” and that they “kinda love it.” At the same time they express their annoyance with the consecutive repetitions of certain phrases and sentences. To them the fact that “it [keeps] saying the same thing over and over again” (Boy 4) makes the story boring. In contrast, a female participant argues, “It’s supposed to be like that...that’s the point.” It appears she values repetition as a common phenomenon in specific genres of fairy tales.

Further exploring the factors that make them like or dislike the story, I notice that another male participant disregards the fairy tale, calling it a “more girly story”. His idea sparks the imagination of the rest of the boys who begin talking about story themes that could become movies. Influenced by cultural fads and recently released movie productions they proceed to share details and scenes from their favorite horror movies, “Matrix” and “Mummy.” They applaud a female student’s idea that they should watch and talk about vampire movies. Taking up the challenge when another girl reminds them that their purpose is to analyze Greek fairy tales. The boys respond with a suggestion,

that perhaps studying Greek mythology instead of Greek fairy tales would be more interesting. It is noteworthy that the participants' discussion here reveals their sophisticated ability not only to distinguish between classical fantasy narratives (for example, myths and fairy tales), but also to apply their understanding to contemporary popular forms (horror movies).

D.2.b) Characterization - Identification

Answers to the second question illuminate the participants' attitudes toward identified characters, what they appreciate and approve of and what they cannot stand. The majority of the students, fifteen participants out of twenty-two, claim that their favorite character in the story is Chrisofeggaraki, describing her most frequently as "beautiful" and "brave", and also adding that she is "nice", "pretty", "interesting", "smart", "very kind", "helpful", "very strong" and "the main character". Interestingly enough, only two boys out of eight who complete the questionnaire answer that they like Chrisofeggaraki because she is "beautiful" and "pretty". The fourth graders refrain from any reference to what she looks like choosing instead, adjectives such as "brave", "interesting", "smart" and "strong", descriptions that refer to inner character rather than external appearance.

Four participants declare that they do not have any favorite character. One, in particular jots down, "I actually hated the story and I didn't like any characters" (Girl 6). Three, fourth grade boys affirm their liking of the "scary drakula", making reference to the dragons in the story. Rounding out the group, a female participant remarks that her "favorite characters in this story are the other girls that want to be like the other girl that's beautiful" (Girl 6).

Table 2

Participants' responses to the second question of the questionnaire regarding their favorite character of the fifth fairy tale.

	Chrisofeggaraki	Dragons	None	Sisters
Girl-4 th grade	Smart			
Boy-4 th grade		*		
Boy-4 th grade			*	
Boy-4 th grade	*			
Boy-4 th grade		Scary		
Boy-4 th grade		Scary		
Girl-4 th grade	*			
Girl-4 th grade	Very interesting			
Girl-4 th grade	*			
Boy-4 th grade	Beautiful			
Girl-4 th grade	Brave			
Girl-5 th grade	Very kind & main character			
Girl-5 th grade	Helpful, brave, nice			
Girl-5 th grade	Nice, pretty, helping, brave			
Girl-5 th grade	Very strong			
Boy-6 th grade			*	
Girl-6 th grade			*	
Girl-6 th grade			*	
Girl-6 th grade	Brave			
Girl-6 th grade	Beautiful & the best			

Girl-6 th grade				*
Boy-6 th grade	Pretty			

During the interviews sessions, Chrisofeggaraki seems to attract the attention of participants who do not identify her as a praiseworthy character. Noticeably, the argumentative fourth graders oppose the other students' contempt of her, debating their appreciation of her character. This opposition is confirmed through the students' choice of words. Whereas girls describe her as "good" and "beautiful", boys ascribe adjectives to her such as "dumb", "small" and "stupid". Chrisofeggaraki's actions are understood as bravery by some female students, but perceived as "stupid" and non-logical by the boys.

As well and stated earlier, the participants of the fifth and the sixth grades mark Chrisofeggaraki as their favorite character in the story. In their unconscious acceptance of traditional notions of femininity, the students value traits Chrisofeggaraki exhibits, "clean", "kind", "considering", "brave", "courageous", "gentle" and "bright", all characteristics sanctioned by a patriarchal notion of being female. This being said, they also do not believe then, that she should be responsible for making independent decisions about her own course in life. Influenced by her name, which in Greek gets a neutral and not a feminine definite article, the participants characterize her as "a thing, and not a human being". For example, one boy observes that Chrisofeggaraki "is like a bird". The fact that the name of the main character is a neutral noun in the Greek language [Goldenmoon] and therefore takes a neutral article in front, "TO" instead of a feminine one "η", seems to cause some misunderstanding between the participants and they have difficulty discerning and acknowledging that Chrisofeggaraki is a female character.

In spite of this, almost all the participants still agree that their favorite character is Chrisofeggaraki. The exceptions are argued by the fourth grade boys, who cite that their favorite characters are the non-human, mythological characters, the dragons, because they are “cool”, “so rich and they’ve got money”. While all the students acknowledge that the dragons in this story are “good” and “kind” towards Chrisofeggaraki, participants from the fifth and sixth grades consider that the dragons are also suspicious and untrustworthy persons. It is important to observe here that the deviation between the responses of participants of different grade levels, may co-relate to developmental processes. In other words, younger students identify with non-human creatures and easily attribute human qualities to them. Alternatively, older students appear fascinated by those qualities possessed by humans that give them strength and endurance.

Chrisofeggaraki’s sisters, described as “bad” and “mean” by all the participants, are also sized up by the boys of the fourth grade as active individuals capable of making decisions about their own lives and free to intervene drastically in their sister’s life. Furthermore, the students characterize the sisters as “murderers”, and associate them with killers they see in western movies. All the participants recognize the sisters’ malevolent attitude towards Chrisofeggaraki and their jealousy of her beauty. The following responses illuminate that eight participants abhor the two sisters, recognizing the sisters’ ill will towards Chrisofeggaraki.

“I dislike Chrisofeggaraki’s sisters. Because they tried to kill her the most.” (Girl 4);

“The sisters” (Girl 4);

“The characters in the story I dislike are the main character’s sisters because they were all, throughout the whole story, jealous of hers.” (Girl 5);

“I dislike (Μήλω and Ροιδώ) because they wanted to kill Chrisofeggaraki. And they were very mean” (Girl 5);

“I dislike the 2 sisters because they were jealous of their sister, Chrisofeggaraki and they werelosers. The wanted to be the nicest and the most beautiful out of all the sisters but since Chrisofeggaraki was, they planned 1st degree murder by trying to kill her” (Girl 6);

[“The sisters because they were jealous and mean only because of the fact that they were not more beautiful (than Chrisofeggaraki)”] (Girl 6);

“I dislike the girls who want to be exactly like the other girl, and I can’t stand that!” (Girl 6);

“I didn’t like Μήλω and Ροιδώ because she was mean to Chrisofeggaraki” (Boy 6).

Another eight participants insist that there is no character in the story whom they dislike. Actually, one boy claims that he “loves every character” (Boy 6). Adding to the variety of responses, two male fourth graders argue that they detest “all the rest of the characters because they had a bad part in the story”, and a girl in the sixth grade laments that she loathes “everyone because of their act”. It is obvious, that students, depending on their age, personal experiences, and gender express individual preferences regarding their interaction with the characters in the story.

D.2.c) Elements regarding the origin of the fairy tale

As with the first fairy tale, almost half of the participants relate elements in the story that remind them of the tale's Greek heritage. From the twelve participants who answer positively, five point out that this is a Greek fairy tale because of the language it

is written in. Others cite character names and the tale's title as evidence of its Greek origin. Charming explanations surface in their writing.

“Well it sort of sounds like Snow-white but changed into a Greek story” (Girl 4);

“I find lots of elements that makes me realize that it is a Greek fairy tale ...the accent” (Girl 4);

“The girl keep on living” (Girl 4);

“The element that I found to make this a Greek fairy tale would be that they were talking to the sun which could be a myth” (Girl 5);

“Yes I could realize that this is a Greek fairy tale because they were talking to the sun which could be myth, and we have many myths” (Girl 6).

We see revealed in these responses the participants' sophistication as readers of magical and other classical tales.

D.2.d) Feelings and Emotions

Several participants voice specific feelings, the most frequent of them being “happiness.” Six participants, from the fourth and the fifth grade, assert that they feel “happy” and that these feelings are generated by the fact that Chrisofeggaraki keeps coming back to life; she “was alive again” (Boy 4). By the same token, three fourth graders feel “sad”, sad about the truth that Chrisofeggaraki is killed by her two sisters. Interesting to note, one participant claims that she feels "sad when she dies but she came back to life". Thus the students as a whole display contradictory feelings toward the idea of death and re-birth.

Contradictory feelings also surface in relation to other aspects of the tale. On the one hand, two participants complain of being bored, “Bored. All time” (Boy 4), and, “I

felt bored... Because I didn't like the story" (Girl 6). On the other hand, there are participants who recount feeling excitement during the reading of the story. A fifth grader illustrates, "Some of my feelings are happy. I [am] really excited what is going to happen next" (Girl 5), and a sixth grader agrees, "I felt good listening to the fairy tale because it wasn't boring" (Boy 6).

To "happy", "sad", and "bored", certain participants add experiencing anger and rage. For example, one girl postures, "Some of my feelings while listening to that fairy tale was angry because when the girls want to be like the other girl to see who looks better" (Girl 6). Disapproval is absorbed by a sixth grader "...when the sisters killed her" (Girl 6). It is important to note that antipathy in all instances is experienced by girls in the study as they appear to recoil from characterizations of envy and aggression. A fourth grade girl feels ambivalent in the presence of a female character who displays courage, writing, "[I feel] brave and scared when she goes to get the bread" (Girl 4). Finally, two participants are adamant that they "didn't have any feelings" (Boy 5) while listening to the fairy tale.

To sum up, the children reveal a pattern in which there is a range of emotions experienced by them in response to the fairy tales, emotions which range from displeasure and boredom to deeply felt emotions, such as anger, sadness or happiness. Later in the discussion, I examine how variables such as age, sibling relations and gender contribute to this pattern.

D.2.e) Lack of realism

During the interview discussion, it becomes apparent that the lack of realism in the story seems to annoy the male participants, especially the fourth graders. The fact that

Chrisofeggaraki dies of a ring is not accepted as a good enough reason for her death. These readers appear unaware of the cross-cultural use of the ring as a symbol of evil possession, (e.g., Tolkien, *Lord of The Rings*). A male participant sums up his exasperation, “She is pretty interesting, because she is weak. She just dies of a ring! Buh! Nobody would ever die. It would hurt you, yes, but not a ring! A ring!” Drawing on movie representations of how one usually dies an untimely death, the students create potential changes to the story. “Change the part where she dies because of a ring. She could die because of a knife or something” (Boy 6). Additionally, another participant proposes, “The ring could change into a bomb. That would make sense” (Boy 5).

As mentioned earlier, some boys from the fourth grade had difficulty in justifying Chrisofeggaraki’s willingness to risk her life and go down the cliff for a loaf of bread, an act perceived as brave and courageous by the female participants of the fourth grade and all the other participants from the other two grades. But to these particular boys such an action cannot be characterized as brave. Going down a cliff is not dangerous enough, it’s “easy, brizzy”. Even if it can be understood as risky, putting your life in jeopardy for a piece of bread does not stand up as a logical act. It is rather a “suicidal performance”, an uncalculated risk taken with no possibility of a valuable return or incentive.

The girls, though, as mentioned before, portray Chrisofeggaraki as “good”, “beautiful” and “brave to go down the cliff”. However, they do not seem to question or argue with the boys about the male impression of Crisofeggaraki’s character. Except for one girl, who tries to justify one of Chrisofeggaki’s actions, described as “dumm” by the boys, the female participants appear unwilling or unable to disagree with the points brought up by the boys.

Participants from all three grades find it difficult to accept the actions of the dragons who leave a blind dragon home, charged with the task of finding out who has been wandering about in their house. The participants describe that specific decision as “dumb”, “stupid” and “not wise”, ostensibly because a blind dragon cannot see a thief or intruder. The grade four boys are also quite precise about changes they would like to make. They are not carried away by the fantasy. For example, while discussing the way Chrisofeggaraki is murdered, a fourth grade boy objects to the use of a magic spell to kill her. Another example of a disregard for magic is expressed by a male participant as he responds to a female's acceptance of the-princess-marries-the-handsome-prince story line. The girl, while talking about the similarities between Snow White and the examined fairy tale exclaims, “The prince came and kissed her on the lips and then she was fine”. Agitated, the male student responds, “It didn't say he kissed her on the lips. He just kissed her!” Perhaps betrayed in his outburst, is a ten year old boy's need for public authority, and his willingness to focus on tiny, precise details to claim his competitive edge.

It is important to note that the girls' compliance in this discussion does not necessarily demonstrate their solidarity with male points of view. Rather, it may reveal the female tendency to acquiesce in public discussions where opposition or aggressivity may threaten standard notions of femininity. Furthermore, girls appear to express various ideas regarding Chrisofeggaraki. While in one point of the interview they agree with the boys that Chrisofeggaraki does not have the power to decide about her life, later on they state that she is an active person and that she can take up her own struggle to make decisions and negotiate possible life plans.

D.2.f) Biases and stereotypes

“She kept on going back to life” (Girl 4)

“She kept on dying.” (Boy 4)

While discussing thoughts and feelings experienced through their engagement with this particular cultural text, the participants bring along their own biases informed and influenced socially. To the fourth grade boys, Chrisofeggaraki “is not a hero. She is a girl. She can’t be a hero”. To them, gender is the defining factor that draws the line between what a male or female can say or do or be. Thus, this excludes females from the possibility of becoming heroines.

As mentioned previously, certain traits and attitudes of Chrisofeggaraki’s character, are sanctioned by the female participants, but do not have the same effect on the boys. On the one hand, the majority of the participants describe Chrisofeggaraki as “beautiful”, “courageous” and “brave”, and on the other hand the male participants from the fourth grade call her “dumb”, “stupid”, and “weak”. For them, Chrisofeggaraki could have left the dragons’ house if she wanted to, but she didn’t. She stayed there performing duties as if she were a “house-slave” (Boy 5). Even when she gets married to the king, she does not gain much decision making power. According to one student, [“When she got married to the king, he would say to her ‘You are the queen and you won’t do anything’”] (Girl 6). This participant seems to be expressing some dismay for Chrisofeggaraki's lack of autonomy. Such patterns of response reveal that some participants believe that Chrisofeggaraki fails to take on her own life and make responsible decisions for herself. In stark opposition, other participants view Chrisofeggaraki as a person who is called upon to act bravely given the difficulties fate delivers her.

The student participants are confused by the name of the main character. In Greek Chrisofeggaraki means, “Golden-Little Moon”, and this name takes a neutral article. Some of the students perceive Chrisofeggaraki as something neutral, and can not identify her as a feminine figure. They explain that Chrisofeggaraki is “a moon”, from a different galaxy than her sisters (Boy 4), or that she is, “like a bird”(Boy 5), [“she was a thing, not a human being”], and [“when she went to the dragons’ house [she] seemed more like a woman”] (Girl 6). It sounds like Chrisofeggaraki gains her gender identity for these students only when she is capable of performing as a “woman”, for example, by taking care of the housework. Thus, it is only her domestic or care-giving qualities that mark her femininity, not her capacities for endurance, transformation and intelligence.

Finally, fourth grade male participants characterize this fairy tale as a “girly story” and express their preference towards more violent and “boyish-like” themes such as fairy tales with vampires, horror movies, or parts from Greek mythology that highlight adventures and deeds performed exclusively by men, such as “Hercules”.

D.2.g) Influence of family inter-relationships – Siblings

“I want my brother and my sister to beep off” (Girl 6)

“I am jealous of my sister. She gets all the attention” (Boy 5)

Participants’ family life experiences and relationships influence as well, the way that each student responds to the fairy tale. The participants are able to recognize that the sisters’ meanness and cruelty towards Chrisofeggaraki is motivated by their jealousy and signals sibling rivalry. However, it is important to note that in the fourth grade the students do not refer clearly to jealousy and seem to not give much thought to this particular matter. They simply acknowledge the sisters as “bad” and “active murderers” who “look[ing] at the mirror because they are ugly. They wanted to become human.”

For the fifth and the sixth graders though, jealousy is recognized as the driving force behind the sisters' destructive behavior toward Chrisofeggaraki. The participants associate the siblings' relationship with their own family life experiences. Some of them are honest enough to acknowledge that they are jealous of their siblings because of their parents' alleged unfair treatment of them. "I am jealous of my sister. She gets all the attention," said a boy from the fifth grade. Others argue that their siblings are the ones who are jealous of them, and the ones who are perceived as "dorks" (Girl 6). The issue of the sibling's rivalry due to jealousy seems to be an important one for the participants. Actually one participant makes a wish, "for all the brothers and sisters to not get jealous" (Girl 5). I return later in my discussion to this issue of the participants' identification with the theme of sibling rivalry, and children's capacity for envy and sibling competition as theorized by psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud and other theorists, such as Bettelheim.

D.2.h) Influence of society, culture, religion

Through the responses of the participants it becomes apparent that social and cultural influences, as well as religious beliefs, play an important role in the way that children view and interact with cultural texts. The fact that, at this period of time, the release of movies such as The Mummy and The Matrix indicate that students do make reference to them and propose them as more favorable subjects to engage than traditional or historical fairy tales. The male participants, thrilled by horror movies and stories with vampires, use their knowledge of popular forms and their creative imagination to fantasize, and talk about, "vampires' fairy tales" which attract their attention. In some instances this leads to individual participants actually acting out and performing some of

their imagined scenes from proposed movies. This is an example of students displaying what Bourdieu would call their “cultural currency” to negotiate and attribute value to new social forms.

Having also been exposed to other classical texts of the fairy tale genre, participants find it easy to correlate the Greek fairy tale, Chrisofeggaraki, with other popular fairy tales most known to them. They talk about similarities between Chrisofeggaraki and Snow-White. In particular, they note the congruencies of plot structure and characterization between these two fairy tales. Both Jack and the Beanstalk, and Sleeping Beauty, are also identified by the students as possessing similar characteristics as Chrisofeggaraki. One student illustrates, “The giant had a child in his house too” (Girl 6). Another reference comes from the Old Testament story, Joseph and his Coat of many Colors. One girl portrays her sophisticated ability to perceive analogies in plot structure and characterization between Joseph in the ancient Hebrew story and the examined fairy tale.

“When he said in the Bible, he said that because of the coat that his father gave him and then the other brothers, they, they were jealous and they put him down in this hole and they sent him away and they pretended that he had blood on his jacket and that he died. And he was, his father loved him very much, uhh, more because he was much nicer than these others of his brothers” (Girl 5).

The above response came as an answer to the question of “why the sisters were mean and why they wanted to hurt Chrisofeggaraki. The particular girl who offers this answer is influenced by her religious beliefs (Christian), and makes the link between the particular case of Joseph’s brothers’ jealousy referred to in the Old Testament, and the

Chrisofeggaraki sisters' jealous and mean attitude. In making this connection, the participant enacts adept, inter-textual, cultural knowledge and interpretive skill.

D.2.i) Scene attraction - Magic and empowerment

As the findings illustrate, only ten out of twenty-two participants are struck by a particular action initiated by a character in the story. The most frequently talked about act is "when Chrisofeggaraki actually went up to the dragons and kissed their hand" (Girl 5). Three participants describe this scene. It appears that Chrisofeggaraki's actions prompt the most response as yet another scene is described by the students. They refer to the scene where Chrisofeggaraki "volunteers to go down the hill to get the bread roll that her jealous sisters dropped" (Girl 6). A third action, described by a male participant, relates to the part of the story where Chrisofeggaraki "came back from dead" (Boy 5). Attracted to the nurturing side of Chrisofeggaraki, another participant writes, "[what] strikes me the most would be the fact that Chrisofeggaraki helped the dragons and would feed good people but not bad" (Girl 5). This act, actually, is not even included in the story. These responses suggest the students' attraction to representations of courage, selflessness, and transformation from death to life and justice.

There are a few instances where students focus on characters other than Chrisofeggaraki. For instance, two participants are impressed with the King's power, "[He]cut a very big branch that nobody else could cut". A female sixth grader claims that she is attracted to "any of the character[s] ... who always answers back to the other girls, because I think it's cool!". Once again, four participants, all fourth graders, reiterate that the dragons leave the strongest impressions on their minds. Of course, not all participants in the study are suitably impressed. Three six graders write, "None of them (the

characters) strikes me the most". Lastly, one male sixth grader notes, "All the characters strike me the most because they strike me in bad and good ways". To sum up, the twenty-two participants reveal, as they did in the first fairy tale analyzed, a range of varying engagements with the scenes of the text. The children appear to be most interested in scenes where characters possess power, magic, and where rebelliousness is displayed.

At one point during the interview session, I ask the participants whether they find something interesting in the fairy tale, something that attracts their attention. Whether they are disgusted or elated by the scene that refers to the siblings' killing of Chrisofeggaraki, the boys answer that what grabs their attention is "when they killed her". Boys seem to emphasize this response perhaps in order to shock the girls. They imagine their lives as boys as being less fettered when girls are not around. On the opposite side, a female participant reports that she is most attracted by the scene where the main character "kept on going back to life". The notion that one can come back to life intrigues her, and impresses another girl who comments "Many people do that." The girls seem to like the idea of transformations and immortality, whereas another boy argues that people "can't do that" and stresses the point that this happens only in mythology.

For the most part, the participants' favorite scene parallels their favorite characters' actions in the scenes. The oldest participants in the study, the fifth and sixth graders, illuminate a variety of favorite scenes in the story. Most agree that they are attracted to the scene where Chrisofeggaraki is transformed to an apple tree and bends her branches only to those she loves. Another participant refers to Chrisofeggaraki hidden inside the branch, talking to the old lady, and finally being released back to her human figure again. The fact that Chrisofeggaraki could come back to life is once again singled

out. Another striking scene highlighted by a sixth grader describes Chrisofeggaraki swallowing the ring. Again, the theme of magical transformations and fantastic empowerments appear to captivate participants' interest, as evidenced by their responses.

The magic in the story seems to fascinate the participants. Scenes that include magic are described as favorites. Students from all grades are attracted to parts of the narrative in which events or happenings are mysterious and unusual. To the question regarding their favorite scene of the story, I have always documented that the participants refer most often to the scene where Chrisofeggaraki is transformed to a tree and can decide upon who she chooses to reach her apples. The magic illustrated by the sisters talking to the sun thrill them; "It's weird, it's cool to talk to the sun, and the sun to talk back". Lastly, the magic represented by Chrisofeggaraki's coming back to life and regaining her human figure centralizes the participants attraction to this fairy tale.

Looking through these particular preferences of the participants, we realize that the parts of the story that focus on magical transformations are the ones that suggest some sort of empowerment for the characters. In the case of Chrisofeggaraki, being an apple tree provides for her the possibility to decide upon whom will have access to her products; or, being in such an ideal and commanding position, she would serve only lovable and fair persons and she would have an authoritative and dominating position. Similarly, the ability to talk to the sun, which is a symbol of power, appears attractive and "cool", while gaining human embodiment can also be translated as obtaining a superior position to being a powerless and impotent piece of wood.

The participants' fantasy engagements with the idea of magical transformation speak in an important way to the developmental struggles that are part and parcel of

growing up. Later in my discussion I will elaborate on children's use of fantasies and magic towards the psychological work of becoming autonomous and leaving behind their dependence on the mother.

Participants are also given the opportunity to express their preference to their favorite scene in the story not only literarily, but also artistically, by drawing it. Almost all the participants come up with a drawing, expressing their preference with the most touching scene, accompanying it with an explanatory sentence. There are certain scenes of the story that repeatedly capture the attention of the participants. Analyzing their drawings, it is apparent that the most frequent drawing is of Chrisofeggaraki being transformed into an apple tree, with or without people trying to reach its branches (Appendix 8, figures 1, 2, 3, 4). More specifically, four students from the fourth grade, one from the fifth, and one from the sixth draw a scene of this transformation. And finally being released from the branch that imprisons Chrisofeggaraki, one participant depicts in her drawing an old lady chopping up a branch of the tree and placing it on a table. The wood appears to have voice and pleads with the old lady, ["Do not hit me"] (Girl 6).

Two boys are fascinated by the scene where the girls are talking to the sun. One of them drew a sun's reflection on a probable magic mirror. The sun appears with human characteristics and he is wearing sunglasses. On the bottom he writes: "My favorite scene was when the girls reflected the sun of the mirror to talk to it" (Boy 5, see Appendix 8, figure 5). The second boy also draws a sun and includes two people, and he writes, ["Sun, who is the best Milo, Roido or Chrisofeggaraki?"] (Boy 6). The scene that depicts the jealous sisters, Milo and Roido, communicating with the sun attract these participants' attention.

Humor is detected in some of the participants' scenes. For example, two participants draw the scene where the main character of the story kisses the hands of the dragons as a token of respect. One of them illustrates a person who looks like a king sitting on a throne and saying, "O, no" while another person is kissing his hand and is saying, "Yuk". On the bottom of the page he writes, "Funny, isn't it. Ha, Ha, Ha!" (see Appendix 8, figure 6). Another participant sketches a person with interesting ears sitting on a throne while someone is kissing his hand. This student's caption reads, "He stinks yuk." On the bottom of his page he adds, "Grose isn't it" (see Appendix 8, figure 7).

The dragons are included in the scenes of two participants. A boy from the fourth grade draws eight dragons sitting on chairs around a table and explains, "The Dragons Eating". A girl from the fifth grade creates a drawing of a girl, neatly dressed up, smiling at a dragon next to her and reaching for his hand. On the bottom she prints, "I drew the part where she is telling the dragons how she came to the forest." (see Appendix 8, figure 8). Another participant draws a girl in a colorful dress with some blue sparkles around the top half of her garment. She writes, "I like when she came out of the tree with gold and fancy stuff on" (Girl 4). A fifth grade girl draws a picture of a woman in a furnished room. She argues that this scene of Chrisofeggaraki in the old lady's house is her favorite one because of the safety and the security depicted by that environment. All participants in these examples visually illustrate their pleasurable engagements with the idea of magical transformations, warmth and safety.

To continue my exploration of the students' drawings, I note that three participants choose to copy only pictures created by the illustrators of the fairy tale. These participants, and three others who choose not to draw at all, write that they do not

have any favorite scene. Some of them state quite clearly, “[I] didn’t even like the story” (Girl 6). These participants reveal their lack of engagement with the story through their adherence to the standard pictorial representation of the tale provided by the original artist. However, their unwillingness to produce their own pictorial response to their favorite scene, and generally their oppositional behavior may be interpreted as their own way of participating in the whole process of interaction. In the same vein, it could be argued that this behavior is the result of the fact that these participants are not yet in the developmental state to express themselves clearly.

D.2.j) Suggested changes – Preferences

Seven participants out of twenty-two suggest changes that should be made in the story to make it more pleasurable. Two suggest changes regarding the structure of the story, “... I would like to make the story a little longer” (Girl 5), and, “I would like the fairy tale to have a bigger intro, body and conclusion because more could’ve happened with Χρυσοφεγγαράκι that way” (Girl 6). Two other participants argue for changes that would make the death of the character more plausible. These fourth-grade boys lay out a plan that would “change the ring to a rock and the pin to a spear”, and one of them insists on Chrisofeggaraki’s death being final; “If they kill her she dies and doesn’t come back.” These participants seem to struggle with the lack of realism in the tale and attempt to give more believable causes of death to the main, female character in the story.

On the contrary, a fourth grade girl would like to change the part of the story “when Roiso and Apple killed the silver moon”. Furthermore, another female participant from the sixth grade analyses more profoundly the reasons behind the siblings’ attitude and expresses a more general thought concerning her personal vanity. According to her

judgment, she would “like to change on how the girls thought of themselves as wanting to be prettier than others and not happy with themselves” (Girl 6).

A few final comments from the students outline further suggestions for change. One participant expresses a rather humorous outcome to the story by writing that she would “make it a cool fairy tale” (Girl 6). Yet, the majority of the participants argue that they “wouldn’t like to change anything in the fairy tale because it’s easy to understand and I [they] found it interesting” (Girl 5). In complete contrast, a final suggestion expresses one girl’s total dissatisfaction with the story, “No I would not like to change something from the story; I would like to change it all” (Girl 5).

At the end of the interview the participants are again asked to propose their own suggestions for changes to the story to make it more pleasurable. Some of the changes suggested include parts which seem to annoy certain participants with their lack of realism. The fourth graders prefer to imagine a more plausible reason for the death of Chrisofeggaraki. Dying because of a ring does not seem real to them. “She could die because of a knife or something” (Boy 4), or the ring could be replaced by a bomb, “that would make sense” (Boy 4). The participants’ request to identify pleurably with the idea of magic in this instance stands in stark contrast to previous identifications, and may have to do with their rejection of “bad magic” which can lead to disempowerment or death.

The fact that Chrisofeggaraki could die and come back to life does not seem appealing to the male fourth graders. According to them, Chrisofeggaraki, once killed, should stay dead. “Kill Chrisofeggaraki and that would be a good movie. Because there is someone finally dying.” (Boy 4). And another boy adds, “Exactly! I said somebody is

dying for I mean permanently” (Boy 4). The other fourth grade participants do not seem to oppose this suggestion; whereas during the interview with the fifth and the sixth grade participants, the possibility of getting back to life is viewed positively and is one of the appreciated parts of the story. It will be important to return to these discrepancies later in my discussion, and to try to understand the role of fantasies of violence in male, nine year old development.

Drawing my attention to the notion of 'fair punishment', the fourth graders propose that the sisters she should “be executed” (Boy 4). Again the fantasies of revenge are most remarked in (but not limited to) male responses. Participants from the fifth and the sixth grades have more ideas to expound. They suggest, for example, that the dragons [“should do something bad to the sisters”] (Girl 5), they [“could eat them”] (Boy 5); or they could take them to stay with them and compel them to do the housework , or work under the surveillance of Chrisofeggaraki, be transformed to trees, or even, “they could die of sadness...because they are sad they aren't the most beautiful in the family, so they could have died of sadness” (Boy 5). The responses of elder participants reveal a greater capacity to imagine justice in subtle ways, including the idea of suffering or grief as an apt consequence for wicked behavior.

E. Discussion

“Every eye sees its own special vision
 Every ear hears a most different song
 In each man’s troubled heart, an incision
 Would reveal a unique, shameful wrong”

The Book of Counted Sorrows

One of the theoretical paradigms in the field of Cultural Studies is that readers are historically, socially and politically situated and they are formed as subjects through their responses to cultural texts. The process of subjectivity is an ongoing one and therefore individuals are not unitary beings but complex, changing and contradictory creatures. Through the interaction with cultural texts, such as fairy tales, readers are involved in the art of making do with what is available, to use in the negotiation of identity, desires, knowledge and power. This particular research focuses on investigating how children as subjects use cultural products, Greek fairy tales, in the process of the social circulation of meaning, values, desires and pleasures.

It appears to be a commonplace standpoint, moreover, that fairy tales “consist of chaotic symbolic codes” (Haase, D.,1993, 235) to which the responses of the readers are highly ambiguous and diverse. Haase goes on arguing that a recipient’s responses to fairy tales reflect on his/her individual “experience, perspective, or predisposition” (235). Applying psychoanalytic theories of the subject on the particular framework of this research it could be claimed that children’s meaning of the text is constructed differently by each participant, depending on discourses, knowledges, prejudices, and resistances defined by their age and level of familiarity with the Greek language and Greek historical culture. Yet, within these differences we may discern predominant themes whose organizational features I will now attempt to elucidate.

This chapter will examine the meaningful influence of Greek fairy tales, in a contemporary social context, on children from three different grades, who study in a Greek Second Language School. Taking into consideration the research questions (see p. 3, 4), in this chapter we will explore: (i) the literary aspects of Greek fairy tale texts which are transformed or used by the participants while engaging with the particular texts; (ii) the possibilities provided to the participants during the process of producing their ethno-specific identity through their interaction with the text; (iii) the affective behavior (e.g. desire, pleasure, fear, fantasy and/or resistance) and how these behaviors assist them make self as gendered beings; and (iv) the uses of the texts by the participants in order to construct reality and to negotiate the challenges of development.

E. 1) Greek fairy tales as educational tools for language learning

Some participants demonstrate a particular ability to make an association between heroes and characters of the particular fairy tales and other individuals known to them through varied circumstances in their life. Thus, in the fourth question of the questionnaire where participants are asked to express whether they feel any antipathy towards any person in the particular story, a participant from the fourth grade refers to a modern day rock-singer anti-hero, Marlyn Manson. Her resentment is directed towards the fact that he has “tattoos over his body to make fun of people and he kills animals in stage”.

It seems that this respondent sees a particular common characteristic (anti-social and frightening behavior) in both the mean mythical character of the story, Master Agas, and in a modern rock singer. Both characters are identified as cruel users of power, which they deploy in such a way as to harm human or non-human creatures. It could be

argued that this correlation between these two characters takes place unconsciously, but what comes out is the expression of a strong feeling of antipathy and resentment to individuals who are characterized by their ironic attitude and their cruel intentions towards others.

Furthermore, participants display a sophisticated ability to recognize elements and characteristics of particular classical fantasy narratives, such as myths and fairy tales, and also to apply their understanding to contemporary popular narrative forms, such as horror and adventure movies. Thus, during the interview for the second fairy tale, Chrisofeggaraki, students from the fourth grade express their favoritism towards other forms of popular entertainment and propose story themes that could be viewed and talked about during the research, other than the Greek fairy tales. Influenced by the recently released horror movies, Matrix and The Mummy, fourth graders state their liking of these themes and express their preference to interact with similar themes, depicted in Greek mythology, rather than engage with the particular fairy tale characterized as a “more girly story” (Boy 4).

In the same vein, another female participant from the fifth grade makes a connection between the rivalry and sibling’ jealousy identified in the relationship of the siblings of the second fairy tale, Chrisofeggaraki, and in the relationship of Joseph with his brothers, a story drawn from the student’s religious tradition. This particular reference demonstrates her ability to enact inter-textually, cultural knowledge and interpretive skills.

Mitchell and Walsh (1996) examine the experiences of preadolescent readers with non-classic, fictional texts and recognize that there is a particularized way these readers

interact with and read popular fiction. Taking into consideration that these readers do not read in isolation but in the context of other texts, it is argued that children read intertextually. This means that through their interaction with a broad range of texts, pre-adolescents develop skills of literacy analysis. For example, they are exposed to the possibility of classifying the text, of acknowledging patterns and seeing how parts fit into whole. Furthermore, Mitchell and Walsh argue that children bring their cultural capital to their reading of texts and the texts produced by them are based on the ones they have read. Their main statement is that through the experience of reading popular texts, “the reader draws on particularized knowledge gained from, and applied to, reading serial books. “...this particularized knowledge ranges from the formal – including how formulaic conventions operate, and how any episode exists as part of a series – to the terrain of cultural studies” (Mitchell & Walsh, 1996, 54). My research supports Mitchell and Walsh’s assertion that children develop reading competence by reading intertextually (across genres and media forms), and that their reading of specific texts is informed by the pleasure of their previous experiences in reading.

E.2) Ethnic identity: Connection to ancestry

Participants in this research demonstrate their use of particular Greek fairy tales in order to augment their identity as Greeks, their ancestral nationality. They present particular sets of competencies and are able to recognize elements in the fairy tales which characterize them as Greek in their origin. Thus in the first fairy tale, most participants state that they are influenced by the pictures and so conclude that this cultural text is Greek. Aspects of the setting, including the specific clothing of the heroes, with the traditional Greek costumes and the “red caps”, are identified by the participants as the

main elements that draw them to the above conclusion. Their responses present evidence of analysis and judgment in children's mental processing of culture texts.

Apart from the icons, participants appear to possess the ability to associate some of the specific parts of the tale to specific events of the Greek history. Historical elements are recognized by the students as those which prove the tale's Greek origin. Three girls from the fourth and three from the sixth grade seem to be chronologically and historically aware and knowledgeable of the Greek slavery under the Turkish Emperor and The Greek War of Independence of 1821. They are also attracted to those scenes of the tale which are related more intimately to their own experiences of specific dimensions of Greek life. Their favorite picture is the one of the wedding, and through the interview they are able to mark similarities between the traditions depicted in the fairy tale and those that they have attended and experienced in reality.

These interpretations agree with Bobo's main argument regarding the concept of cultural competency. Bobo (1989) argues that "specific viewers interpret a cultural product according to their specific cultural backgrounds" (100). Thus, the particular traditional and historical fairy tale represent customs, sights and norms of the Greek life particularly resonant with children of Greek heritage and culture. Participants are able to reflect on those customs and instances of traditional life and enhance memories and knowledge of this subject matter. Engel (1995) posits that through the engagement with such culture texts, participants interact in an informative way and use these texts in order to "enter more easily and successfully into their culture" (47).

Students have the competency, also, to make alphabetic, semantic clues regarding the title of the fairy tale and recognize it as a compound word, consisting of the words

Greek and a diminutive proposition. Thus, a boy from the fifth grade responds that “it is called “Ελληνάκια”, that “Ελληνα” means Greek, and “άκια” means kids (Ελληνα παιδάκια)” (Boy 5). Undoubtedly, storytelling and interaction with fairy tales constitute a vital vehicle for literary education in heritage languages, an important standpoint supported by Champers (1970). Omotoso conducts research with the participation of Nigerian children (1978), and acknowledges the importance of telling and retelling traditional stories for the development of linguistic abilities and for the intergenerational transference of a cultural and ethical background.

It appears that participants in general are quite conscious of the Greek cultural tradition. The majority of them interact successfully with the expressions and particular Greek quotes in the text. During the interview sessions participants are asked to provide explanations and prove that they comprehend the content of those expressions. Participants from all three grades are able to give satisfying responses. Being able to identify the meanings in the text depicts their awareness and knowledge of the Greek culture. In general, other literary studies conducted by several theorists, such as Bloodwood and Worthy (1993), Barse (1992), Barton and Booth (1990), and Young (1986) reveal that through the readings and involvement with the content of fairy tales, students interact constructively with their heritage language as well as gain an understanding and appreciation of their tradition.

E.3) Gender stereotypes in Greek fairy tales.

Fairy tales are approached from various perspectives by theorists. These cultural texts are appraised for providing the readers' possibilities of self discovery and producing imagined means for attempting to succeed in life and escape oppressive and intimidating

conditions. On the other hand, some feminist theorists argue that fairy tales promote stereotypical female behaviors towards men, emphasize certain standards of appearance, reflect females as being manipulated, passive and excluded from the possession and use of power, and project males as creative and powerful and the main characters in active performances. It is obvious that different theorists produce diverse and contradictory interpretations for the same texts.

The focus of this research is on investigating children's own responses to this cultural text and their uses of this text to make self as gendered and culturally situated identities. Even though an equivalent participation between the male and the female participants in the study is not able to be ensured in all three grades, it remains possible and important to analyze and reflect upon the differences and similarities between their responses.

This study reveals that girls are more eager to express their liking towards female characters in the story and boys towards male ones. During the interviews, participants state clearly their preference for gender compliant characters. Through the questionnaire on the first fairy tale, all boys identified with the male characters, whether this is "George", the brave, good hero, or "Agas-Afentis", the greedy, mean character. Girls on the other hand, identify with the female character, "Maria", the courageous girl of the story, except for two girls, one from the fifth and one from the sixth grade, who favor "George" as their most favorite character. Notably, however, in the questionnaire of the second fairy tale, the majority of the participants respond that the character they identify with is "Chrisofeggaraki", the female character in the story. Only two boys from the fourth grade claim that their favorite characters are the dragons.

The pattern of gender-compliant identification is consistent with Franz's (1997) main standpoint. Franz observes that girls tend to identify themselves with the female figure of fairy tales, even if the female figure is not the protagonist of the story. Franz comes to that conclusion after analyzing the scenes that girls choose to draw. On the other hand, boys are more interested in scenes that depict the male characters of the stories as the central figures in their drawings. While my research appears to support Franz's finding, that fairy tales can provide children with the tools necessary to construct their gendered identities, it suggests greater mobility in the process than Franz accounts for. I would suggest that cross-gender identifications (revealed in my study) show children as active and unconstrained in their use of gender models to forge ideal versions of themselves through reading. Notably, in the fairy tale, children of both genders identify with the heroine's characterization of power and virtue in the face of adversity.

Let us return, however, to the pattern of same-sex identifications. This standpoint acquires specific importance as we consider the stereotypical portrayal of woman's role in society in the tales, and how children interact and use these notions. Gender stereotyping in fairy tales is reflected through the emphasis on beauty as well as through the asymmetrical use of power between the male and female characters in the stories. This obsession with female standards of appearance and the perpetuation of the images of powerful, active and creative male heroes and those of passive, victimized or mischievous females, can also be recognized among participants' verbal and written responses to the particular fairy tales.

Studying the responses of the participants regarding their favorite character in the first questionnaire, it should be noted that almost all children from the fourth grade are

more fascinated by the appearance of the female hero in the story and recognize her beauty as the main feature in her personality. Almost all the girls describe her as “pretty” and “nice”, or they express their likeness towards her due to gender resemblance. Thus, two fourth grade girls claim that they liked Maria, the female hero, because she is “the best because she is girl and pretty” (Girl 4).

Alternatively, all participants from the fifth and the sixth grade, except for one sixth grade girl, recognize Maria as “brave” and “courageous” and two of them described her as “kind” as well. It seems that for the girls of the fourth grade, beauty is perceived as a major attribute for the female character, even though this character’s attitude and persona could reflect other features such as courage, bravery, intelligence, and independence of thought and action.

Furthermore, this fairy tale describes, in a specific way, how beauty looks. That is recognized by Luthi (1984) as a stylistic trait in fairy tales, to give a description of beauty metaphorically or through its effects on others. For example, Maria’s beauty is described through its effect on other people:

[“...Maria grew up to a big girl. And what a girl! When she would go to the orchard, the flowers would lean on her side, pleading her to cut them off. The birds would sing her one thousand songs. And when she would put a crimson carnation on her hair, all the neighborhood would sigh! Ah, Maria!”]

This passage suggests that in the fairy tale adjectives of beauty are not given to this character. However, the students of the fourth grade refer to her as a “beautiful” person projecting their own ideal of beauty onto the character. The responses of the participants separate them into two categories. On the one side, younger respondents recognize the ideal of beauty as an important one and they favor culturally constructed standards of

external appearance. Thus, fourth graders focus on the beauty of the female hero. On the other side, the fifth and the sixth graders appreciate her brave and independent spirit. A distinction between the perceived meanings of the particular cultural text appear to be based upon their age.

Traditional literature scholars such as Tatar (1992), have raised the issue that fairy tale readings promote stereotypical female behaviors in regard to passivity towards men and perceived standards of female beauty. As well, feminist critics support the argument that through this genre the oppressive and submissive image of the female and the dominant role of the male characters are maintained and projected. However, Donald Haase (1993) refers to Karen Rowe's notion "of hidden language speaking to a sisterhood of readers" which may be said to introduce readers to a "female voice speaking a code of liberation" (237).

Taking this notion into our consideration, we can recognize voices of "liberation" through the responses of some of the female participants. A female student from the sixth grade, while analyzing the reasons behind the sibling rivalry, argues that siblings' problematic attitude derives from their willingness to attain higher beauty standards than the ones possessed by their brothers and sisters, a stance that results in female readers' being unhappy and dissatisfied since they do not accept their own selves. Therefore, she proposes that a change of females' attitude should take place especially with the way girls view themselves.

Bettelheim (1997) argues that narcissism is "very much part of the young child's appearance" (203). This form of self-involvement and obsession with one's own appearance is gradually transcended. Bettelheim claims that in the fairy tale of Snow

White (as well, I suggest, as in the examined one, Chrisofeggaraki) there are some warnings regarding the disastrous consequences of narcissism for the evil sisters as well as for the main character in the story. The participants in this study seem to have come to realize that narcissism can evoke feelings of jealousy and rivalry between the siblings. Older students, however, establish the source of the specific rivalry to be in the problematic way individuals view themselves.

Through the interview sessions on the second fairy tale, Chrisofeggaraki, participants express dismay towards the main character's lack of autonomy. However, some students' responses present Chrisofeggaraki as being an autonomous personality with the ability to act responsibly in the face of difficulties, others argue that she fails to meet those expectations. Almost all participants identify her domestic and care-giving qualities as the ones that mark her femininity. A boy from the fifth grade calls her a "house-slave" and a sixth grader girl recognize that ["when she went to dragon's house, she seemed more like a woman"]. The fact that Chrisofeggaraki is viewed as the representation of the culturally constructed image of the domestic, care-giving 'female', may be one reason that this fairy tale is characterized as a "girly story".

Donald Haase (1993), emphasizes the importance of the meanings generated by the fairy tales produced in a specific contemporary social context. Haase refers to an example of his own daughter interacting with the context of a specific fairy tale and her interpretation of the events of the story. The six-year-old girl uses the concept of "slave" instead of "wife", the one used in the tale, depicting how significantly fairy tales function in the process of socialization. In my research, students define the social role of Chrisofeggaraki as one of a "slave", as well. The responses of the children reveal that

they have linked the domestic exploitation and domination with the concept of marriage. Even more, they define femininity and gender according to the traditional portrayal of woman's domesticity. Haase argues that through the study of response, the focus of the interest shifts "from what fairy tales mean or meant historically to the question of how fairy tales mean in a given context" (240).

The data gathered through the interviews and the questionnaires depict that the male participants in the study favor characters in the stories who are in some possession of power dynamics. For the fourth graders, in the first fairy tale, the character that they identify with is Master Agas, the person in charge, the one who is able to use power in any way that will satisfy his greedy desires. While the other participants regard him as an antipathetic and egoistically driven person, the boys from the fourth grade describe him as a "good" and "excellent" character in the tale.

In the second fairy tale, the male participants from the fourth grade identify with the dragons, who they describe as "cool". What attracts them to these characters is the fact that the dragons are "so rich and they've got money" (Boy 4). For the male fourth graders, the dragons represent financial independence and the possibility of the use of power. It should be mentioned, though, that other participants in the study do not approach the dragons from the same point of view. Generally, all participants agree that these characters appear to be "good" and "kind" in the particular tale. However, participants from the fifth and the sixth grades agree upon the idea that dragons are suspicious and not trustworthy persons, judging from their experience with the content of other tales.

This deviation between the responses of participants of different grade levels may be related to their age status and thus to developmental processes. It appears that younger participants identify with non-human creatures and ascribe human qualities to them. They claim that they are their favorite characters because of their possession of wealth, whereas nowhere in the text is this specific information present. Through the text it appears that the dragons are hardworking creatures, kind and sympathetic to the female main character. Alternatively, older students do not proceed to those projections in the character of the dragons. They are more fascinated by qualities present in human figures in the tale. Probably the fact that their favorite characters are humans is what gives their identified characters strength and endurance.

Children's engagement with the content of fairy tales and their identification with their favorite characters has been the focus of many theorists and writers. Yolen (1977), and writers of fantasy, such as Tolkien and Lewis, support the argument that fairy tales have a therapeutic effect on young psyches. According to Yolen's standpoint, through the archetypes and the symbolic language, the reader can externalize inner conflicts and situations which cannot be consciously analyzed. Yet, "by reading and then identifying with a fairy tale character or a fantasy situation, the child can begin to cope with ...threatening things in his/her own life..." (8).

Participants' contradictory responses as recognized due to their age difference, should draw our attention to each reader's own perspective while interacting with the cultural text. We should bear in mind that the interpretation of the structures and the language of the fairy tales can be varied from one participant to another, depending on each one's own understanding of the text, his or her life experiences, and his/her own

responses to it. These responses are influenced by the sum of experiences of the participants and the specific circumstances of reception.

While analyzing the data gathered through the interviews and the questionnaires of the same fairy tales, it seems that on some occasions students are more eager to express their own perspective to the examined cultural text and on other occasions they appear to be more reserved in demonstrating their stances. It can be argued that in some cases during the interviews the dialogue is dominated by the voices of some (male) students, whereas other students avoid debate or any participation at all. Thus, my research demonstrates the importance of utilizing multi-faceted forms of response in data collection around narrative effects. The questionnaires give the opportunity to all participants to express their positions toward the texts. However, it can also be argued that during some interview sessions a variety of ideas and positions are presented by some individuals, adopted by others, and expanded through the dialogue.

E.4) Symbolic play through fairy tales

Through the analysis of the interview transcripts and participants' responses to the questionnaires, it seems that students from the fourth grade are drawn to characters that possess power, even though these persons represent the "mean" characters in the story. In the fairy tale, "The Greek Children", Master Agas, the hostile emperor who takes advantage of other people's submissive position and does not hesitate to exploit them materially and psychologically, is favored by the boys of the fourth grade. During the interview, all of them argue that they identify with this character because he is "rich" and he possesses the power to have anything he wants at his service.

Through participants' responses to the second examined fairy tale, Chrisofeggaraki, students display a preference towards scenes of the story that reveal possession and use of power. One of the scenes drawn by them is the one where characters in the story are communicating with the sun, through the use of a mirror. The possibility of interacting with a powerful figure such as the sun attracts their attention and is characterized as a "cool" action during the interview session.

However, the most frequently drawn scene is the one in which the main character of the story is transformed into an apple tree, with or without people trying to reach its branches. Analyzing further, we can acknowledge that it is one of the few times in the whole story in which Chrisofeggaraki is in a position to decide whether or not to allow people to reach her branches. It could be argued that in this instance she possesses some sort of powerful ability to reward those who are kind and fair to her, and punish those who behave with hostility and cruelty to her throughout her life as a human being.

The participants' fantasy engagements with the idea of magical transformations constitutes an important vehicle for children's developmental struggles that is part and parcel of the growing up process. Piaget (Favat, 1977) argues that magical beliefs are existent in the child's and the fairy tale's world, a view also put forward by Freud (1958). Piaget developed a scale of types and corresponding stages of animal beliefs in children, in which magic allows animals, objects, plants, stones and stars to possess human characteristics related to the functions of thinking, talking and agency. It is argued that through children's engagement with fairy tales, these fantasies of possessing power are enhanced through magic and animism. Both Piaget and Freud sustain the argument that magical thinking relates to the struggle for autonomy, independence and separatism from

the mother. More generally, these beliefs act on the psychological level and encourage the child to conceive itself through mental processes as strong and capable of being in control.

In the same vein, Bettelheim (1977) supports the argument that traditional fairy tales expose children to the belief in magic and feed them with fantasies that encourage them to cope with reality. In other words, without fantasies that provide children with hope, they might face difficulty in inventing stories that will empower them and strengthen them to meet the adversities in life. Bettelheim's standpoint is based on the claim that "the unconscious is the source of raw materials and the basis upon which the ego erects the edifice of our personality;...our fantasies are the natural resources which provide and shape this raw material, making it useful for the ego's personality-building tasks" (121).

Furthermore, Koelle (1981) who examines children's reaction to violence in fairy tales comes to the conclusion that the more violent the story to which children are exposed, the less violent is the story written or told by them. More specifically, less violent stories enable children to express directly their anger and own aggressivity with violent stories. However, the more violent stories supplement them with fantasy, suppressing their direct expression. Koelle states that "more self-confidence, independence, and ego strength appear to underlie the stories of those children who would deal directly with unpleasant themes" (100).

Melanie Klein also makes an important contribution to theories of child development by recognizing sadism in infants and arguing that it is a separate instinct endowed from birth to humans. In her theory, 'sadism' and "any extreme form of

aggression” (Hinshelwood, 1991, 48) are stated as synonymous concepts. According to Klein’s arguments, sadism provides for a possibility of liberation of anxieties, and through the process of expressing such violent phantasies in play or in other symbolic activities, a process of ‘externalization’ takes place. What is even more interesting in this theory of Klein’s is that “sadism is overcome when the subject advances to the genital level. The more powerful this set is, the more capable the child becomes of object-love, and the more able he is to conquer his sadism by means of pity and sympathy”, as quoted by Hinshelwood (1991, 51). We may speculate that the violent attachments shown by some fourth grade respondents in this study relate to their pre-adolescent stage of development, and that “genital love” may ameliorate their aggressive fantasies.

The image of an independent and courageous female figure seems to attract the most attention from the girls. During the interview of the first fairy tale, The Greek Children, and in the questionnaire, girls respond that their favorite scene in the story is the one where Maria refuses Master Agas’ demand to dance with him. This opposition and resistance to comply with the manipulative desires of the dominant emperor is applauded by the participants. Furthermore, the majority of the participants express their antipathy towards Master Agas. What strikes them most about him is illustrated by a particular scene in the story, where with his anti-social behavior, he interrupts a joyful social event, the wedding. Most of them claim that they dislike him because of his exploitative attitude, and his demanding behavior which ends up with a “wrecked reception” (Girl 5).

Except for Master Agas, participants are annoyed by the violent and authoritative attitude of the soldiers, who follow the orders of their master and carry out

his commands without hesitation. They express their resentment towards people who would hurt and kill others. A participant goes further, recognizing in the face of the soldier, the representation of any form of authoritative and exploitative power, and she dislikes “the soldiers that would always want to hurt anyone who don’t follow “THE RULES” (Girl 5).

It seems that even though the particular fairy tale encodes some elements of dominant ideology through its representations, it cannot be argued that these hegemonic subject positions are inhabited by all participants. Bobo (1989) examines the way in which individuals from specific social groups create meaning from a mainstream text and use the reconstructed meaning to empower themselves and the social group they belong to. The study of the reception of The Colour Purple, Spielberg’s film, by Black female viewers, demonstrates that readings of a culture text can be dominant, negotiated or oppositional, and the interpretation of the text is determined by “elements in a viewer’s background play” (103). The findings of Bobo’s study demonstrate that the particular film worked as one of the catalysts that empowered Black women to defend their social and cultural heritage and additionally to envision possibilities for political and social change, and, at the same time, work for its realization.

One of the most experienced feelings reported by the fourth graders during their engagement with the first interview fairy tale, The Greek Children, is ‘sadness’. All of them argue that they feel sad at the end of the story “because everyone was dying” (Boy 4). In contrast to those feelings, other participants from the fifth and the sixth grades claim that this last scene of the story infuses them with feelings of pride and empowers them to the point that they recognize the importance of unfettered freedom.

More specifically, the very same words in the text causes diverse feelings to surface in different age groups of participants. Through the responses in the questionnaire, a fourth grader “felt sad at the end when Maria says, “It’s better to live for one more hour in peace than to follow someone else...turk”, whereas a sixth grader participant “felt proud at the end of the story when Maria started to sing: [“It’s better to live an hour of free life than forty years of slavery and imprisonment”]. It could be argued that younger students are not yet culturally aware of the significance of values such as freedom and independence to the degree that they would comply with the idea of laying down their life for the cause of peace.

It should also be mentioned that some fourth graders throughout the research express ambivalent responses to particular subject matter. For example, whereas all of them report experiencing a feeling of sadness towards the possibility of death, while interacting with similar matters in the second fairy tale, mostly the male participants, appear to advocate quite opposite ideas. All the boys, during the interview regarding the second fairy tale, Chrisofeggaraki, claim that they would like to make changes in the story so as to make it seem more real. For example, one of those changes proposed is for Chrisofeggaraki to die and not come back to life. Whereas, fifth and sixth graders embrace the possibility of getting back to life as a positive one and depicted it as one of the most pleasurable and appreciated parts in the story.

Additionally, the data gathered through the answers to the questionnaire of the second fairy tale, depict that students are quite impressed by the idea of re-birth. The particular part where the main female character of the story keeps coming back to life makes them experience feelings of ‘happiness’. These scenes are embraced as the most

favorable ones by some participants. However, there are contradictory feelings displayed by particular students toward the idea of re-birth. To the boys of the fourth grade, the fact that Chrisofeggaraki might come back to life is approached with resentment and a part of the tale that makes them 'sad'.

Whereas it seems that fourth graders appear to express ambiguous positions from case to case, a specific element between these two fairy tales should be mentioned in order to shed some light on their ambivalent interaction with them. These two cultural texts belong to the genre of fairy tales, but they are drawn from different categories of tales. The first one, The Greek Children, is a historical tale, referring to a particular event of Greek history and includes some mythical and magic elements. The fact that this tale refers to particular cases of Greek history, makes its content closer to reality, and the possibility of death appears to be more real and more threatening. Whereas, the other fairy tale, Chrisofeggaraki, is a magic one and death itself does not negatively affect the emotions of the male participants. Even more in this case, death is suggested for the female figure of the story, who is characterized as the most resented one.

The fourth graders appear to be annoyed by the lack of reality in the second fairy tale. For them, the reason the death of Chrisofeggaraki occurs is not justified. They are not satisfied with the narrative explanation that she dies because she swallows a ring. They argue that one of the changes that they would make to the story, in order to make it more pleasurable to them, would be to change the reason of Chrisofeggaraki's death. Therefore, they would change the "ring to a rock and the pin to a spear" and they would also prefer that she would stay dead and not come back to life.

Furthermore, during the interview session, contradictory opinions toward the female character of the story are presented between male and female participants. On the one hand, girls describe Chrisofeggaraki as ‘good’ and ‘beautiful’ and perceive her actions as ‘brave’ and ‘courageous’. On the other hand, boys from the fourth grade are quite argumentatively opposed to those responses. To them, Chrisofeggaraki is ‘dum’, ‘small’ and ‘stupid’. Her going down the cliff to get the loaf of bread does not seem to them a logical and valid reason to put her life at risk. They characterized such an action as “suicidal performance” without any worthwhile incentive.

It is obvious that grade four boys are quite annoyed with the lack of realism identified in some parts of the tale. Even in the case of the dragons, whom they claim are their favorite characters, they do not hesitate to call them “dummed”, “stupid” and “not wise” at their decision to leave a blind mate to find the person hiding in their house. Additionally, they are quite precise while referring to specific parts of the tale. For example, they do not always agree with specific interpretations of the story, when details are added that imply particular meanings gleaned from other relative narratives. Thus, while a girl narrates that “the prince came and kissed her on the lips and then she is fine”, a male participant argue that in this fairy tale “it didn’t say he kissed her on the lips. He just kissed her” (Boy 4). It could definitely be argued that this male participant focuses on tiny, precise details in order to claim his competitive edge.

On the other hand, the lack of realism and the presence of magic in the fairy tales is reported as being the main elements of the stories that make them attractive and pleasurable. During the interview session of the first fairy tale participants express their dislike towards this historical kind of tale due to its lack of magic. They claim that this

fairy tale is less interesting and less appealing to them and they could differentiate this tale from other ones by the fact that magic fairy tales “had more about princesses and how he liked somebody and end up like (married) (Girl 5), and thus, they are “kind [of] romantic” whereas the historical one is a “plain thing” (Boy 5).

Through the interviews and the written responses of the students in the questionnaires, it is obvious that participants come to identify the siblings’ jealousy as the main explanation of the characters’ dysfunctional relationship. In the second examined fairy tale, participants express their antipathy towards the two sisters and are able to justify their negative feelings. They characterize the sisters as exhibiting malice, cruelty and ill-will towards their sister, Chrisofeggaraki, and recognize that their attitude derives from jealousy.

It should be mentioned that participants from different age groups demonstrate different responses to the particular subject of siblings’ jealousy. Fourth grade students do not make any clear reference to jealousy, as being the trigger of the siblings’ problematic relationship. They ascribe adjectives such as “bad” and “active murderers” to the sisters of Chrisofeggaraki, and interpret their reason for staring at the mirror as being their desire to acquire human qualities. However, the fifth and the sixth graders acknowledge that jealousy was the main motivation behind the mean and cruel intentions of the two sisters towards Chrisofeggaraki. This is another instance in which we observe children using their own experiences and feelings to interpret the meanings of a culture text. Specifically, students make associations to their own lived experiences of jealousy, envy and sibling rivalry – dynamics that are part of the structure of family life in many instances.

In the field of psychoanalysis, the concept of jealousy has taken on a new depth with the theory of Klein, going further than Freud who posits jealousy as the cornerstone of his theory in the form of the Oedipus complex. Klein argues that “the earliest experiences of antagonism are almost pure violence and persecution” (Hinshelwood, 1991, 334.) She also shows the way that jealousy relates to envy, in which admiration is hidden: it “crystallizes out of that as a more specific affect that allows admiration of the person towards whom the jealousy is felt” (Hinshelwood, 1991, 335.) Furthermore, Klein acknowledges the existence of various degrees of jealousy intensity as it is worked through the phases of human development, through what she calls the depressive position and towards healthy competition in later life.

Bettelheim (1977) refers to sibling rivalry as one of the overwhelming and vague emotions experienced at childhood. Fairy tales that refer to siblings’ rivalry and correspond to the child’s inner experiences attain “an emotional quality of ‘truth’ for the child” (237). Both boys and girls are possessed by those feelings and the desire to be saved from a subordinate condition and to surpass those who seem to dominate them. Fairy tales, such as Cinderella, and we could include in that category the specific Greek fairy tale, Chrisofeggaraki, engage with those feelings of the child such as “the agonies of sibling rivalry, of wishes coming true, of the humble being elevated, of true merit being recognized even when hidden under rags, of virtue rewarded and evil punished” (Bettelheim, 1977, 239). Such fairy tales make strong appeal, and give the child the mental opportunity to gain some relief through fantasies of glory and triumph.

Elaborating more on the subject of sibling rivalry, theorists in the field of Individual Psychology recognize the “influential and varied dynamics of the sibling

relationship” and turn their attention to the “psychological position that one creates in the sibling context where each member strives to find significant place of belonging” (Morawski, 1999, 177). The feeling of jealousy, the fear of dethronement, the need to excel and the striving for superiority are some of the experiences in participants’ lives, as expressed through their responses to fairy tale texts. Adler (1956) has emphasized the significant role of birth order in relation to personal dynamics and his work has drawn the attention of other researchers to investigate the relation of birth order to achievement and success in school, intelligence, self-confidence, affiliation, dependency (Nelson & Harris, 1995). Furthermore, teachers’ awareness of their own perceived sibling position in the family can “provide them with valuable insights about their current perceptions and behaviors related to content area instruction” (Morawski, 1999, 175).

F. Conclusion

Fairy tales have been presented as sites to provide a possibility for escape from oppressive and intimidating conditions, or to elucidate children's emotions, and validate readers' anxieties while suggesting specific solutions to their problems. The present research has been conducted in such a way as to demonstrate the validity of such statements. The findings of the analyzed data reveal that such speculations about children's mental processes in relation to narrative experience may be regarded as plausible. Most certainly, the findings suggest that the interaction with fairy tales constitutes an important site for children's construction of meaning. Fairy tale experience provides readers with a framework to discover aspects of their identity and imagined means for success.

It seems that "each fairy tale is a magic mirror which reflects aspects of our inner world, and of the steps required by our evolution from immaturity to maturity" (Bettelheim, 1977, 309). Because fairy tales are regarded as one means to discover and gain peace with ourselves and the world, and since this rewarding interaction is related to childhood, fairy tales have been central to theorists' and educators' focus. An extensive literature review reveals the importance and the interest attributed to the specific narrative genre by experts from various epistemological domains. While their arguments and standpoints have been somewhat contradictory and ambiguous, it remains clear that the fairy tale genre exerts important effects.

Through all this abundance of the studies conducted in the field of fairy tale narratives' influence on the readers, it has been argued that few studies have attempted to understand individual responses and uses of this cultural text. Most studies have focused

on examining the influence of the particular genre on children's language acquisition and enhancement of their cultural awareness. Limited studies have been interested in investigating the effects of fairy tales from a psychological point of view through the readers' responses. The findings of such studies elucidate that there is no specific true answer regarding the meaning and the impact of fairy tales. There is a diversity of responses which indicate that the particular genre plays an important role in the readers' construction of gender identity, and that gender itself comprises one of the determining factors of the reading and reception of the tale by each individual. Undoubtedly, other factors which can be considered as equally likely to influence the meanings and uses of tales are age, personal history, conditions of reception, and individuality.

To realize that reception and interaction with fairy tales depends on the particularity of the historical and socio-cultural conditions of its reception, as well as the text itself, and the potentiality of the reader, means that we accept that there is "no single truth about the meaning and the impact" of the specific cultural text (Haase, 1993, 242). Haase goes on and argues that what is important to conclude is not simply to accept the endless potential for meaning, but also to "recognize the recipient's control over the text's meaning" (245). This has been one of my greatest interests in my academic progress, that is the processes of identification and the transference of certain concepts from the text to the reader as well as the way though which readers make use of the text to make self.

More specifically, as a reader myself, a socially constructed user of cultural texts, I have been fascinated to investigate the reasons structuring my engagement with them. My personal engagement with the particular cultural texts, the traditional Greek fairy

tales, narrated by a talented storyteller, my beloved grandfather, has influenced the formation of my subjectivity as a social being. Fairy tales have been sites to construct and implement my dreams, sites to draw hope and strength to face the struggles of my early life, sites to acquire cultural and regional awareness, and sites to struggle with the formation of my gendered subjectivity. Being aware of the processes of identification of certain concepts from the tales' text to myself, the reader, I have been fascinated in investigating and understanding how forms of subjectivity are regulated and transformed through the structured character of such social forms as language, ideologies, myths, significations and narratives.

This research has been related to children's construction of meaning and use of fairy tale narratives in a Greek second language learning environment. More specifically, I have been interested in examining children's interpretations of fairy tales while studying their heritage Greek language. The students were asked to reflect on their engagements with specific Greek fairy tales, and then to express the ideas and feelings produced through their interaction with these cultural texts. The study investigated children's construction of meaning from the content of fairy tales in their heritage language, the effects of fairy tales in children's ethno-specific learning of their cultural background, and the production of children's desire, pleasure, fantasy, and/or resistance during the process of reading Greek fairy tales.

Cultural Studies provides the framework of my research interest. Cultural Studies is the discipline that tries to understand how individuals are formed as subjects by and through their responses to cultural texts. Using this framework, then, my research also focused on how Greek fairy tales re-insert children into dominant ideologies. Based on

Johnson's (1983) model of the circuit of production, circulation, and consumption of cultural texts, the present research builds on work that examines the historical conditions that produce fairy tales and extends it to the study of the production and effects of Greek fairy tales in specific socio-historical and political contexts. The focus of the present research, therefore, has been on students' interactions with Greek fairy tales and their own interpretations of those interactions.

More specifically, the interest of this research has been focused on interrogating the meanings constructed and produced by children through their interaction with fairy tales; the use of formal literary aspects during their engagement with the particular text; the influence of the cultural text on readers' demonstration of affective behavior such as desire, memory, pleasure, fear, fantasy, and/or resistance; the contribution of the text to readers' production of their own ethno-specific identity, and the use of the texts by them in order to conceive and construct reality and furthermore to reproduce and/or resist forms of power.

The analysis of the data reveals that the participants of the study interact with the specific cultural texts, Greek fairy tales, in particular and individual ways. Acknowledging the fact that each participant brings with him/her a unique socio-cultural background and taking into consideration the importance of this factor at the process of engagement with the text, it is significant to recognize and respect the individuality in each response gathered through the interview sessions and the questionnaires. By recognizing the participants as pre-adolescent readers, the participants of the study are at a critical stage of their identify-formation, and they are on the "edge" of the developmental changes of adolescence (Mitchell & Walsh, 1996, 46).

The discussion of the research findings demonstrates that the participants interacted inter-textually with the texts. More specifically, they used the Greek fairy tales to make self. Their engagements with fairy tales helped the children to articulate themselves in four ways: i) as gendered identities; ii) as Greek identities, through making connection to their Greek ancestry and expressing particular sets of cultural acknowledging competencies; iii) through fantasy symbolization and use of stories as play objects in order to imagine possibilities for self-autonomy, empowerment and comfort that sustain growth, and iv) for educational tools for learning Greek and English language and literary competencies.

G. Contribution of The Study

Parents and teachers should be very concerned about issues regarding the formation of subjectivity. School and classroom sites have been recognized as important sites for effective intervention in the construction of femininity and other aspects of identity such as ethnic identification, classism, or racism. Henry Giroux (1997) argues that Cultural Studies “offers educators a theoretical framework for addressing shifting attitudes, representations and desires of this new generation of youth [that have] been produced within the current historical economic and culture juncture.” (33).

Therefore, the present research focused on the investigation of students’ responses and interaction with particular popular texts. Studying and analyzing these responses should be the first priority in the formation of our understanding of the dynamics between the reader, the text, and the particular conditions of the engagement. The analysis of the data revealed that through that interaction, participants were given the possibility to explore their gendered, ethno-specific identities, to negotiate the challenges of development and contribute to the literary aspects of the texts.

Taking into consideration such findings of studies conducted on readers’ interaction with cultural texts, educators should, then, emphasize exploring, with students, the conditions of the ‘production,’ ‘consumption’ and/or ‘reading’ of cultural texts. They should also teach them how these texts are salient in processes of identity formation, that they influence the definition of values, and that they instill notions regarding the community and the future. Many theorists argue that the analysis of cultural texts from this perspective can lead individuals to challenge social constructs, and to understand the dynamics through which texts acquire meaning in learners’ lives.

According to Gilbert and Taylor (1991), such radical change is possible “through cultural politics in the classroom.” (129). Awareness of the existence of dominant ideologies and their contribution to the construction of students’ subjectivities can begin by investigating individuals’ own experiences and engagements with cultural texts. The result will be “an understanding of how forms of subjectivity are regulated and transformed through the structured character of such social forms as language, ideologies, myths, significations and narratives” (129).

Fairy tales constitute popular cultural texts with which everyone engages in unique and interesting ways. These complex processes of engagement warrant investigation. One of the purposes of my M.A study has been to provide a basis and reference point for further study. In a future study the focus could be on reader’s responses to tales and how these responses might differ among difference in age, sex, sibling order within the family, or socioeconomic background groups. Comparing adults’ responses with those of children’s might shed light on differences and similarities between the meanings that different age groups construct from the cultural texts. Furthermore, the investigation would be centered on the various ways that different age groups interact with the texts in order to make meaning out of their content. Children and adults might have different ways to communicate and respond to the text, such as telling the story, discussing it with others, through improvised dramatization, through paintings and art expression.

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Appendix 1

The selection of the fairy tales will be based on the following criteria:

1. Length of the tale: Lengthy fairy tales will be avoided in view of the risk of enhancing the difficulty of content comprehension by the students.
2. Language: Fairy tales with many unknown words and phrases will be avoided, since students will have difficulty following the plot of the story.
3. Level of violence: For ethical reasons, fairy tales with high levels of gratuitous brutality and coarse language will be avoided.
4. Humour: Humour is regarded as a positive element for fairy tale selection because it captures the attention of the audience and provides pleasurable entertainment.
5. Narrative variation: Tales that exhibit variety in plot structure, characters and crisis resolution will expose children to a range of narrative types.
6. Eloquent melodic language: Repetition and aesthetically pleasing language is associated with Greek fairy tales and will captivate the listeners.
7. Authorship: Diversity of the selected fairy tales in terms of their authors: There will be an attempt to use fairy tales from male and female authors who come from different parts of Greece (i.e., from the Greek mainland as well as from the Greek islands).

Appendix 2

Nectaria Karagiozis

Title: Children's Reception and Uses of Greek Fairy Tale Narratives in a Second Language Learning Environment

University of Ottawa

Open-ended interview (draft):

1. How do you find this fairy tale?
2. What do you find most interesting about this fairy tale?
3. What is your favorite part of this fairy tale?
4. Who is your favorite character in this story? Why do you like that character?
5. Can you describe one act of the character that strikes you most?
6. What do you like or dislike in the protagonists' attitude, character, and ways of thinking and acting?
7. What would you do if you were the protagonist of this fairy tale?
8. How do you feel about the other characters of the story?
9. What are the roles of the characters of the story?
10. What are some of your feelings while listening to that fairy tale? When did you feel this way?
11. Do you find any magic in the fairy tale? What does magic mean to you?
12. Have you heard or read any other Greek fairy tales before? Who narrated them to you? When? How did you feel?
13. Do you find any elements that make you realize that this is a Greek fairy tale?

Do you find any differences between the Greek and other fairy tales that you have heard or read before? What do you find special or interesting about Greek or other fairy tales?

Appendix 3

Questionnaire 1

Session 4, third fairy tale, “Τα Ελληνάκια” [“The Greek Children”]

Nectaria Karagiozis

Title: Children’s Reception and Uses of Greek Fairy Tale Narratives in a Second Language Learning Environment

University of Ottawa

Questionnaire

Name: _____

Grade: _____

1. Did you like this fairy tale? Yes No

2. Who is your favorite character in this story? Give an adjective of him or her.

3. Can you describe an act of the character that strikes you most?

4. Is there someone that you dislike and what is from his attitude, character, or ways of thinking that you do not like.

5. What are some of your feelings while listening to that fairy tale? When did you feel that way?

6. Do you find any elements that make you realize that this is a Greek fairy tale?

7. Would you like to change something in the fairy tale and what is that?

Thank you!

Appendix 4

Questionnaire 2

Session 6, fifth fairy tale, “Το Χρυσοφεγγαράκι” [“The Golden Moon”]

Nectaria Karagiozis

Title: Children’s Reception and Uses of Greek Fairy Tale Narratives in a Second Language Learning Environment

University of Ottawa

Questionnaire on Children’s Responses to Greek fairy Tales

Nectaria Karagiozis, MA Candidate, University of Ottawa

Thesis title: Children’s Reception and Uses of Greek Fairy Tale Narratives In a Second Language Learning Environment.

Date: May 15, 1999.

Fairy tale: «Το Χρυσοφεγγαράκι».

Dear students,

To assist me in understanding more about your understanding of Greek Fairy Tales, please respond to the following questions. Thank you for your assistance.

1. How would you rate your level of engagement with the story?

1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

1. “I did not like the story at all”.
2. “I sort of liked the story”.
3. “I liked parts of the story but I didn’t like other parts”.
4. “I liked the story a lot”.
5. “This was one of the best stories I’ve ever heard”.

2. Who is your favorite character in this story? Give an adjective or adjectives to describe him or her.

3. Describe an act of the character who strikes you the most?

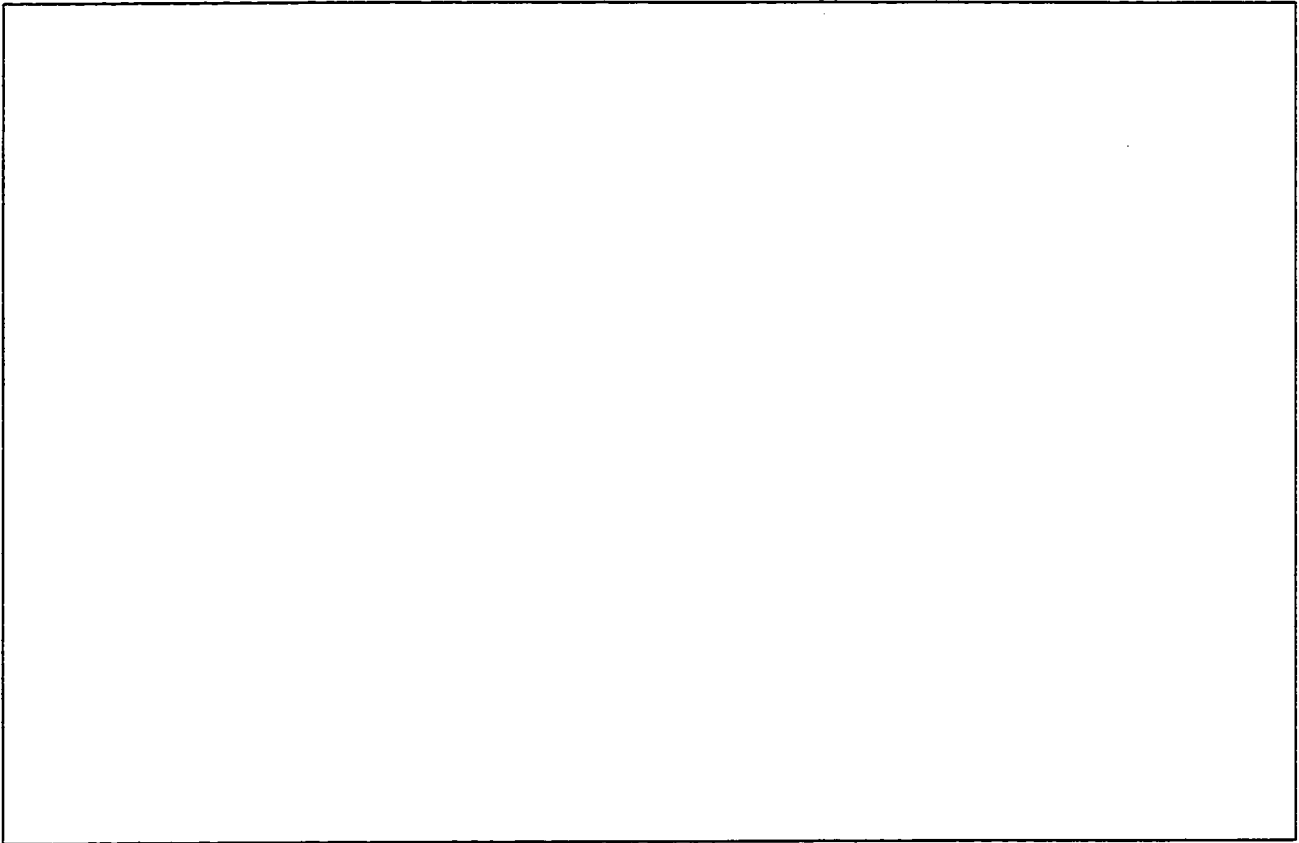
4. Is there someone in the story who you dislike? If so, explain what is about his or her attitude, character, or ways of thinking that you cannot stand.

5. What are some of your feelings while listening to that fairy tale? When did you feel that way?

6. Do you find any elements that make you realize that this is a Greek fairy tale?

7. Would you like to change something in the fairy tale and what is that?

8. Would you like to draw your favorite scene of the story?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for drawing a favorite scene from a story.

Appendix 5

Letter to parents/guardians

Dear Mr. and Mrs. _____

I am Nectaria Karagiozis, the teacher of the Third Grade of a Second Language Heritage School. I have taken my undergraduate Teacher Degree from the University of Thessalia in Greece and I continue my studies in the Master of Arts program, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa. My graduate Thesis involves Greek Children's Literature and more specifically, Greek traditional fairy tales.

Researches conducted in this field have come up with findings that support the argument that fairy tales provide a world of enchantment for young and grown-ups, attracting their interest and attention. Fairy tales have been used expansively in language lessons for the teaching of grammar and syntactical phenomena and the teaching of organizing thoughts and structuring stories and ideas. Teachers and educators who use fairy tales in order to teach second language to students come up with worthwhile results. Through their engagement with fairy tales, children start appreciating fine art, acquire cultural awareness, develop creative fantasy and become familiar with the customs and part of their tradition.

My research involves the use of traditional Greek fairy tales as learning material for students who learn the Greek language as a second language. To my knowledge, this research is going to be a unique project in this field and apparently a very interesting one. The purpose of this study is to have students of our school become familiar with the Traditional Greek fairy tales, which have been narrated by Greek storytellers from all over Greece. These fairy tales have been collected by researchers and University professors who had the zest and the courage to visit remote villages, write down the narrations of the storytellers and save our cultural heritage. More specifically, the focus of the study is on student's interpretations of the content of the Greek tales, the degree of the interest they exhibit to this narrative genre and the impact of this genre to their cultural and national identity.

Part of the study aims to benefit the students of the Enriched program and has been scheduled in co-operation with the Director of the School and the teachers of the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth-Seventh grades. The study will take place during the Enriched program and will cover up to the three quarters of an hour, approximately. The students-participants will have the chance to: i) listen the narration of five different fairy tales, ii) read the text, practicing reading skills, iii) participate in discussions – interviews in groups, practicing their oral skills, and iv) write their own fairy tales –compositions, practicing their writing skills in Greek language.

Your approval is necessary for your children's participation in the research. I would appreciate if you sign the enclosed Consent Form and have your child return it on next Saturday-school day, March 27, 1999.

For further information you could contact: a) the teacher of your child, b) me, personally, at the phone number (613) 233 3937, or at the e-mail address: nectaria@cvberus.ca, or c) Dr. Judith P. Robertson (Principal Researcher, University of Ottawa) at: 562 5800 / 4111.

I would like to assure you that I respect yours and your child's choice regarding his/her participation in the research. I would like also to thank you, in advance, for your time and consideration on this subject matter.

With regards,
Nectaria Karagiozis

Appendix 6

Consent Form

(to be completed by parents/guardians)

Principle Investigator: _____

Affiliation: _____ **Telephone no:** _____

Whenever a research project is undertaken with human participants, the written consent of the participants (or representatives of the participants, for example, parents or guardians) must be obtained. This does not imply, of course, that the project in question necessarily involves a risk. In view of the respect owed the participants, the University of Ottawa and the research funding agencies have made this type of agreement mandatory.

The purpose of the study is to investigate children's reception and uses of fairy tale narratives in a Greek second language learning environment.

If I agree to allow my child to participate, this participation will consist essentially of the children's attending five Greek fairy tale sessions during which observation sessions have been scheduled for approximately forty-five minutes. **My child will also be asked to participate** in group interviews lasting for twenty to thirty minutes. **I also allow my child to provide** written responses twice during the research project. **I understand that the contents will be used only for** this research purpose and that my child's confidentiality and anonymity will be respected.

I understand that since this activity deals with very personal information, it may induce emotional reactions which may, at times, be negative. **I have received assurance** from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these occurrences.

I am free to decide upon my child's withdrawal from the project at any time, before or during an interview. My child can refuse to participate and/or refuse to answer questions without penalty.

I have received assurance from the researcher that the information my child will share will remain strictly confidential. My child, in turn, assures other participants that he/she will treat in the same confidential manner any information he/she may obtain in the context of this project.

Any information, requests, or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project may be addressed to the Secretariat of the Ethics Committee (562-5800, ext. 4057). **If I have any questions**, I may contact Professor Judith P. Robertson, Tel: 562-5800, ext. 4111. **There are two copies of the consent form, one of which I may keep.**

Participant's signature

Date

Researcher's signature

Date

Thesis Director

Date

I, _____, am interested in allowing my child to collaborate in the study of children's reception and uses of fairy tale narratives in the Greek second language setting conducted by Nectaria Karagiozis under the supervision of Professor Judith P. Robertson of the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa.

Optional: I wish to receive a summary of the findings of this study which will be available on _____ (approximate date) at the following address:

_____.

;

Appendix 7

Consent Form

(to be completed by participants / students)

Principle Investigator: Nectaria Karagiozis, M. A. candidate.

Affiliation: University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education. Telephone: (613) 233 – 3937.

Whenever a research project is undertaken with human participants, the participants (or representatives of the participants, for example, parents or guardians) must sign a written consent form. The University of Ottawa and agencies that fund research have made this type of agreement mandatory because they respect the participants.

The purpose of the study is to investigate children's reception and uses of fairy tale narratives in a Greek second language learning environment. In other words, this research looks at children's understandings and meanings of Greek fairy tales as they study their Greek heritage language.

If I agree to participate, this participation means that I will attend five Greek fairy tale sessions during which five different Greek fairy tales will be presented. I have to attend those sessions, lasting 50 minutes each, and contribute to the discussion that will follow, regarding the content of the fairy tales. I will also be asked to participate twice in group interviews lasting for twenty to thirty minutes. During two additional sessions, I will also be asked to write my own fairy tales. I understand that the contents will be used only for this research purpose and that my confidentiality and anonymity will be respected.

I understand that since I will have to express my ideas and feelings, there might be emotional reactions which may, at times, be negative. The researcher has assured me that she will take measures to minimize such reactions.

I am free to decide if I want to withdraw from the project at any time, before or during an interview. I can refuse to participate and/or refuse to answer questions without penalty.

I am assured from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential (that no one else, except for the researcher, will have access to my written and oral responses). I, in turn, assure other fellow students who participate in the research that I will treat in the same confidential manner any information I may obtain during this project.

Any information, requests, or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project may be addressed to the Secretariat of the Ethics Committee (562-5800, ext. 4057). **If I have any questions**, I may contact Professor Judith P. Robertson, (562-5800, ext. 4111), or Nectaria Karagiozis, (613 – 233 3937). **There are two copies of the consent form, one of which I may keep.**

 Signature of participant / student

 Date

 Signature of Researcher

 Date

I, _____, am interested in participating in the study of children's reception and uses of fairy tale narratives in the Greek second language setting conducted by Nectaria Karagiozis under the supervision of Professor Judith P. Robertson of the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa.

Optional: I wish to receive a summary of the findings of this study which will be available on _____ (approximate date) at the following address:

Appendix 8

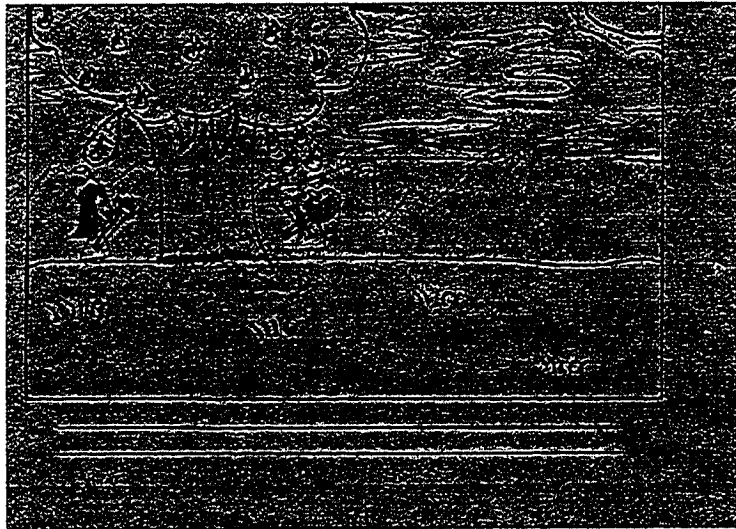


Figure 1: drawn by a fifth grade girl

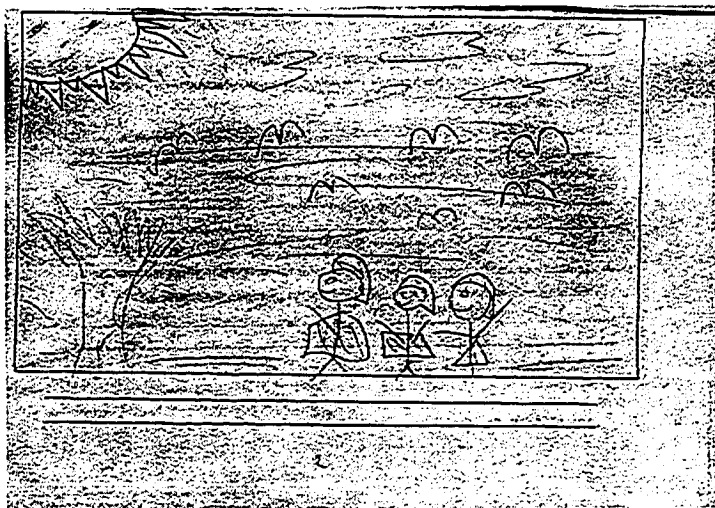


Figure 2: drawn by a sixth grade girl

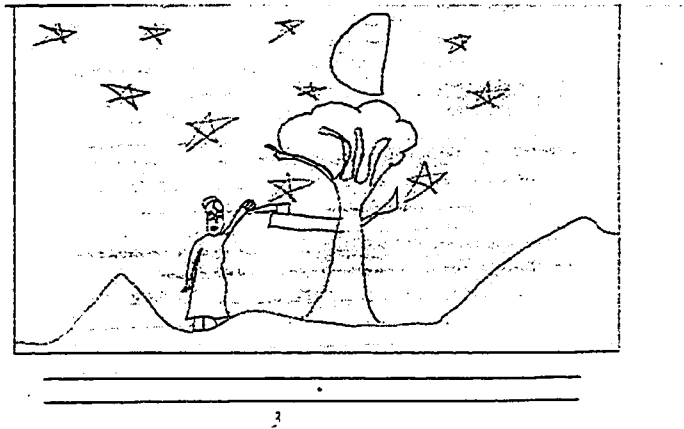


Figure 3: drawn by a fourth grade girl

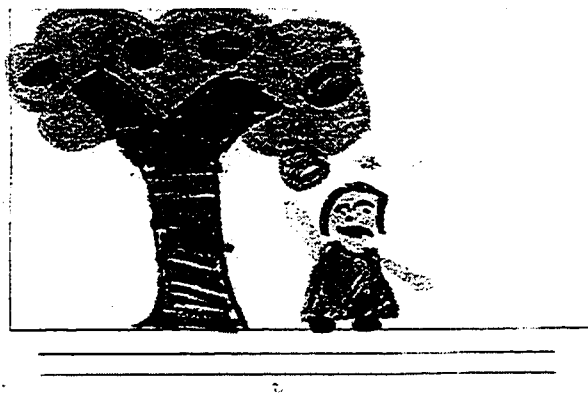


Figure 4: drawn by a fourth grade girl

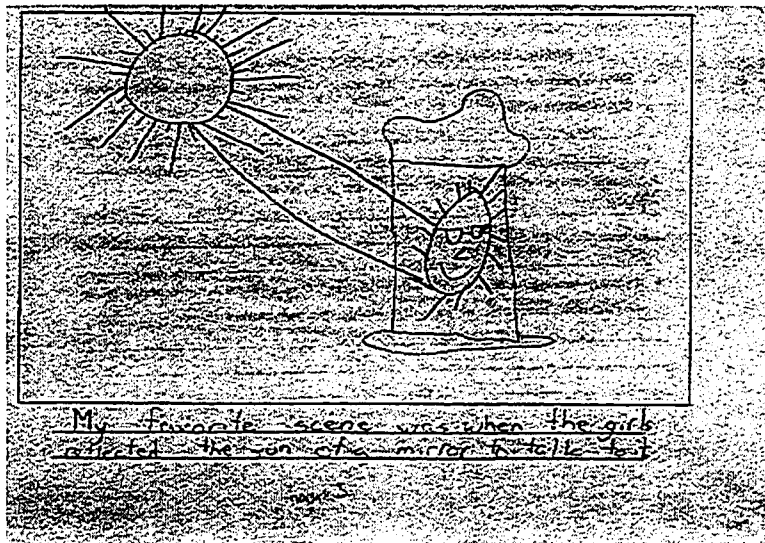


Figure 5: drawn by a fifth grade boy. At the bottom he wrote: "My favorite scene was when the girls reflected the sun of a mirror to talk to it".

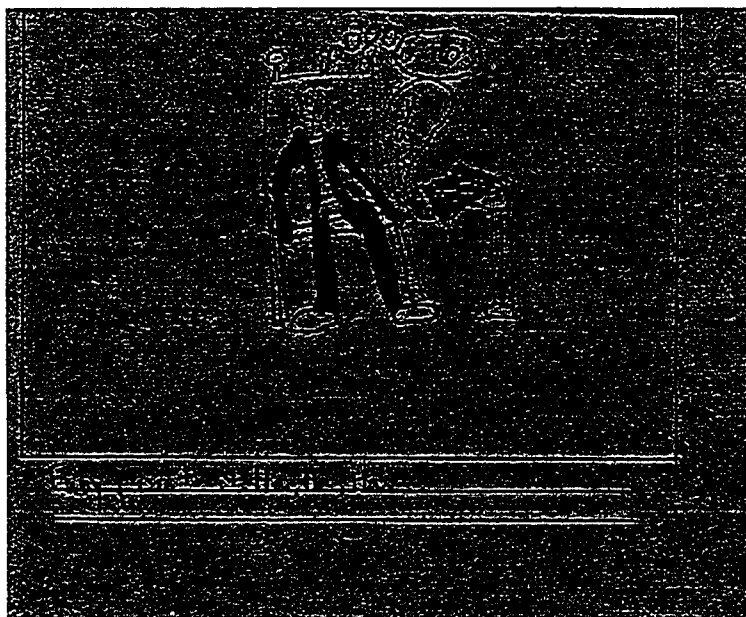


Figure 6: drawn by a fourth grade boy. He also wrote "Funy, isn't it. Ha, Ha, Ha!"



Figure 7: drawn by a fourth grade boy. He also wrote down: "Grose isn't it".

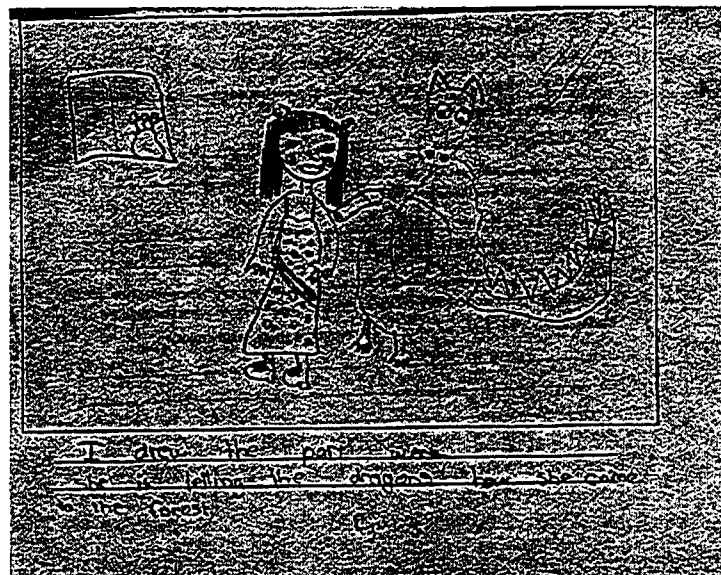


Figure 8: drawn by a fifth grade girl. She wrote: "I drew the part where she is telling the dragons how she came to the forest".

Notes

¹ 'Fairy Tale', which corresponds to the widely used term 'Folktale' does not only refer to 'magic tales' but also to simple narratives such as the 'nouvelle', 'religious jokes' and 'anecdotes'. The need to include under the general frame the various genres of folk literature is based on the fact that all these genres have common elements (popularity, oral transmission from generation to generation) and they also have the same problem regarding their origin. 'Fairy tales' and 'traditional fairy tales' also refer to 'folk tales'. An operational definition of the terms used is: a traditional fairy tale is any imaginary story created by unknown Greek folks and maintained in the oral tradition from generation to generation. This story might reflect values, manners and customs from the Greek homeland, it has prosaic style and its content classifies it as mythical or fictitious, narrative or social, religious or humorous and satirical. The definition is derived from: Loukatos, S. (1988) Τα Ελληνικά Παραδοσιακά Παραμύθια [The Greek Folk Tales], In Επισκοπή της Ελληνικής Λογοτεχνίας: Το Παραμύθι και οι Παραμυθαδες [Review of Children's Literature: The Fairy Tale and the Storytellers]. Athens: Kastaniotis Edition.

² Alasutari (1996) argues that Cultural Studies can also be formulated as an 'antidisciplinary' field because "disciplines are seldom, if ever, carved out of wood" (p. 23). Richard Johnson agrees on this characterization of Cultural Studies (1983, p.19).

³ Cultural Studies depends on certain important ideas, research methods, and assumptions derived from a wide range of other disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology, literary criticism, psychology, philosophy, art and media studies, feminist and anti-racist movements (Grossberg, 1997; Davies, 1995; Green, 1990; Turner, 1989; Johnson, 1983;).

⁴ Robertson (1997a) emphasizes the need to acknowledge that "investments in particular images allow individuals to construct something for themselves out of the semiotic material at hand, something having to do with need, demand, habit, hope, pleasure and even profit" (138).

⁵ Koelle (1981) studied the exposure of children to violence and cruelty in the folk fairy tale and argues that there are few empirical studies examining the effects of this particular genre on children, and studies of children's responses to these books.

⁶ Phantasies: mental representations that emanate from unthought and unrecognized instincts, for example the instinct for love, for death, for hate, for food.

⁷ Piaget studied these beliefs and recognized them in four types. For the child, magic occurs because: (i) an object or place can have an influence on another; (ii) children can participate in an action that has an influence on the event they long for, they are concerned about or they are afraid of; (iii) they can use their thinking to make something happen or avoid it, and (iv) they can manifest magic by commandment, by the meaning that "the will of the object can act of itself on that of the other" (Favat, 1977, 25-29).

⁸ Favat (1977) supports this argument based on the findings of various studies conducted by Becker, Hadas, Frank, Larrick, Eaton, and others.

⁹ Favat (1977) suggests that educators who read fairy tales to the children “enhance the fundamental appeal that these stories have on the audience” (p.58). Additionally, Koelle (1981) cites Gardner’s study findings which suggest that children hearing a fairy tale had stronger memory capacity for the story and could be more “likely to balance its effect with personal experience” (16) than children who watched the same story filmed.

¹⁰ This is my translation from Greek to English.

¹¹ The use of square brackets is to indicate that the specific phrases are translated phrases and words of the participants from Greek to English.