Sleeping Beauty in Never-Never Land: Fairy Tales and the Formation of the Autistic Child’s Emotional World—A Psychoanalytic Exploration

This psychoanalytical and literary analysis explores how autistic children use fairy tales to face their distinctive challenges and conflicts, to assist in their self-formation, and to develop and articulate their subjective emotional worlds. The paper utilizes approaches that address the illusory reality of fairy tales (Bettelheim, 1976; Jones, 1954) and which present autism as a survival mechanism employed in response to early, traumatic threats (Tustin, 1994) – precisely as fairy tales work. It discusses current psychoanalytical theories on mental-development processes reflected in fairy tales from the perspective of the language of the soul (Yigael & Raufman, 2016). It examines how fairy tales’ literary features and grammar echo and reflect autistic children’s world (Orlik YEAR), accompanied by supporting clinical examples and scenes. Proposing a novel psychoanalytical mode of approaching literature in general and the use of fairy tales in the treatment of children on the spectrum in particular, this article will interest theoreticians and practitioners. By using fairy tales to help shape their subjectivity, these children are better able to create an emotional world in which they can interact with their social environment.