

## Classical Fairy Tales and Contemporary Greek Literature. The case of Sophia Paraschou

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### Abstract

In Sophia Paraschou's text *Even the Bad People Have a Soul too* the villains of fairy tales, spurred by the bad wolf, attempt in a conference, to rid themselves of the accusation of being and representing evil people. The text gives the opportunity for further investigation into the theoretical issues of literature. Initially, we observe a feature of the 1970s, where there is a strong attitude of reversing opinions in familiar texts of conventional children's literature. The stories of the heroes constitute narratives which imprint the subjectivity of fictional characters, in an attempt to dispose of the stereotypes and the racist behavior attached to them and to the authors of fairy tales. The announcements in the conference (made by one of Cinderella's sisters in Cinderella's Syndrome, by Cinderella's step-mother in *Beauty Anxiety* and by Rubelstinskin in *The Curse of Differential*) depict fundamental issues of conventional children's literature. However, these announcements made by fictional characters, bring up issues on the theory of literature. Therefore, the views formulated here refer to skepticism regarding the source of the meaning or the power of the participants in the literary text (fictional characters, narrator and author). This skepticism, as to who is in charge, revolves around the literary characters and the author, whose "death" does not necessarily mean the "death" of the fairy tale or of any fictional characters. The whole discussion balances between the theory, which gives priority to the author's biography and the historical and social frame in which the author lived, while text-centered theories and the theory of the aesthetics and of the reading response, although projected, they are not opted for in the end. The whole discussion among the fairy tale heroes, who request that fairy tales be written again and the recorders of tales or authors of post-fictional texts with the intervention of readers, brought to light the power of conventional literature against innovation, although they were led to this decision by the intervention of readers, hence the reader's role as a meaning-giver of the text is indirectly indicated.

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### Brief introduction to Greek children's literature

Before we proceed to our subject, we consider necessary a brief report on Greek children's literature so that the not Greek reader may form a general image. Although, in the beginning of the 20th century there were important writers, like Penelope Delta, Greek children's literature

begins to flourish after the World War II, when its usual topics are replenished. Especially after the fall of dictatorship in 1974, didacticism is abandoned and in parallel to the old issues (family, nature, fatherland, religion) new ones begin to interest the writers, who belong either to the Women's Literary Association established in 1963, or to the Cycle of Greek Children's Book, a branch of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) and established in 1969. Such issues are ecology, urbanisation, technology, peace, energy, social pathogenesis (drugs, violence), fantasy and science fiction, immigration, AIDS, multiculturalism, the coexistence of national conscience with the global identity. Very recently certain books for children made their appearance that are differentiated in terms of content from several of the books published until this day due to their particularly close relationship with the Greek as well as the European folkloric culture. These are novels with literary characters from well-known fairy tales of Perrault, Grimms και Andersen or novels with stories inspired by the Greek folklore (fairies, lamias, etc) or fantastic texts with several of their elements referring to texts written by Lewis Carroll or C.S.Carroll. Although these texts are few, we believe that under the influence of these authors (mostly due to the adaptation for the cinema of plays pertaining to the global children's and youth literature) it is very likely that a new trend is established or a new era dawns. At all events, the Greek ideals that are lately harmonised with global conscience, mostly in science fiction, are distinct in all books for children and young people without any trace of didacticism. It is characteristic that horror texts are totally absent, possibly because they are incompatible with the Greek temperament.

In terms of literary genres, all types are cultivated contrary to the non-literary genres to which it appears that Greek writers attempt to give a new identity. Biography as well as informational books are not purely (clearly) biographies or books of knowledge because in both cases the element of literature is abundant; however, it does not predominate over the elements of biography or of knowledge that the writer aims to furnish to the children or teenagers. Consequently, it is a mixed genre with a view to keep children's book from becoming boring by simply providing knowledge. Although all styles of children's poetry (traditional, expressionistic and modern) are cultivated, poetry does not have the same range as prose nor is it read much. But even in terms of studies, as regards poetry there are fewer studies available.

In terms of creators, soon enough the situation will be as follows: with respect to the sex, women – writers are more than men; with respect to the preference of literary genre, none of the writers is specialised in only one literary genre, with the exception of Spyros Tsiros, who is the only one writing exclusively stories for children. In addition, none of the writers is specialised in only one subject; no one writes only texts with ecological content, historic texts or science fiction. In our opinion this is one of the reasons why it is hard for Greek children's literature to compete qualitatively with other literatures with tradition in this area of specialisation either with respect to the literary genre or to the issues treated. Moreover, during the last years, writers adopt more elaborated narrative methods and more complex plot models. In addition, there appears the diarial and epistolary genre, for which our opinion is that though considered as extraliterary genre in Anglo-Saxon bibliography (Porter 1984, Nikolajeva 1988, McGallum 1999), in the way it is used in Greek children's literature, it has aesthetic and structural function, fosters history, promotes action, provides informative material and represents a stylistic differentiation in not purely diary or epistolary texts. Therefore, we totally disagree with the scholars who believe that this novel of epistolary type belongs to extraliterary genres in terms of aesthetic as well as in terms of literary and pedagogical function and we consider epistolary genre in Greek children's literature to be clearly literary. Obviously, we do not refer to letters exchanged between writers (or to the diary they keep) and having a different target and function (personal views on various issues are exchanged, events are discussed, critical comments are set forth on their or others'

literary works, etc.).

Sophia Paraschou's novel "Kai oi kakoi ehoun psyche" (Even the Evil People Have a Soul) published in 2004 in Athens that is structurally composed by letters and main narration and that we will treat further down is inspired by the fairy tales of Perrault, Grimms and Andersen and belongs to the category of epistolary novels.

### **The text**

It is an epistolary with polyphonic narration, in which the issue of racism and the stereotypes in children's fairy tales are developed on the plea of a conference organised by the big bad wolf. All the evil heroes of fairy tales are invited to the conference as speakers: Cinderella's mother and sisters, one of them discusses the issue "Cinderella's syndrome", Snow White's stepmother, who discusses the issue "The strain of beauty" and Rubelstinskin, who discusses the issue "The curse of being different". The conference's target is to acquit all the bad heroes in the traditional children's literature of the charge of being evil people. Thus, the wolf invites by letters all the bad to submit their topic of discussion. He also calls Oscar Wilde, Grimm Brothers and the Greek author Eugenios Trivizas because he delivered the wolf from evil by reversing the popular fairy tale "The big bad wolf and the three little pigs". On the contrary, he did not invite Jean Perrault and Christian Andersen that attended the conference uninvited. The wolf takes the floor in order to announce the conference's title and agenda and lays the blame to the writers that have assigned the role of the bad utterly arbitrarily to the wolves, the wizards, the dwarfs, the stepmothers, the bad sisters and thus they became the terror of millions of children that may no longer reach the right conclusions. Moreover, he focuses the interest on the stereotype of the bad wolf and enumerates the cases of his appearance in fairy tales laying emphasis on the Little Red Hood.

At the conference we follow the narrations of the evil people or ugly heroes or heroines telling their story and the reactions of the good heroes. Most of the writers are also present at the meeting and by taking the floor they pose questions on the literary theory regarding the power of the writer, the reader and the novel's hero, until the view that prevailed was that the novel's heroes are the most powerful because they continue to exist after the biological death of the writer and the reader. The presence of academic professors (Grimms) aims at the restoration of truth through research and academic instruction. At the conference it is decided through intense discussions that no change will be made; the good and the evil heroes become reconciled and little by little they all leave happy. However, when leaving, the wolf becomes himself again and exclaims "well, bless the author's hand that made me eat the granny". Thus, tradition subverses the effort of modernism to reign by proposing the retelling of texts from traditional children's literature and the transformation of bad heroes into good, and keeps pace with it.

### **The writer's authority and the writer's – heroes' limits of freedom**

The responsibility for the existence of evil characters in fairy tales is attached by the heroes to the story-tellers that write what serves their interests. Thus, the question of the writer or the narrator's limits of freedom is raised by a collector or author of fairy tales (by Perrault and Andersen); this point of view is supported by Oscar Wilde, who defends the literary men's freedom. At the same time, the issue of the heroes' freedom arises, that is if novels' characters are free to act and develop as they wish or if they fall prey to the writers. In the last case, literary characters die together with their authors, fact which is not true since literary characters never die. Subsequently, they are beyond their creators and they have the last word. Thus, ontological problems of the textual characters are posed that are harmonised with the literary theory, in parallel to the ethic of the relations between tales' characters and writers. Subsequently, ethical

– ontological issues are raised, since the existence of a literary character presupposes anyway the existence a priori of an author or narrator.

One of the Grimm brothers will disagree with these points of view and will object that the reader has the last word, thus setting forth the reading response theory and stressing the reader's role in the perception and assessment of a literary text. The conflict between the different literary theories and the transition from the authority of traditional literature to the subjectivity of modern literary theories are evident here. Thus, tradition is associated with modernism and the former, with Grimms as representatives, defends the latter, since it gives priority to the reader through a time jump of centuries. However, what takes place at the wolf's conference refers us to the ontological situation of the literary/fictional discourse (Waugh 72001: 87-114). Fictional heroes converse with their authors and either blame them for the way they moulded them or support their authorial fiction. Writers' condemnation by their heroes denotes their own condemnation too as well as the children's condemnation.<sup>1</sup> What is heard at the conference refers to theoretical issues regarding the role of the literary character and the reader, thus regarding the source of the meaning. The time jump between the years that the fairy tales' heroes "lived" (17th century) and the years that the literary theories appear (19th–20th century) discloses the diachronicity of fairy tales, while it assures the penetration of tradition into modern literary versions as well as its pacing with modernism. Divergent views dispute the pedagogical value of fairy tales. In the discussions that follow the bad deny the accusations. The witch from the fairy tale Hansel and Gretel (Paraschou 2004: 117) alludes to the social conditions (hunger - child-eating) in Western and Central Europe during the period of the fairy tale's commitment to paper or writing (Zipes 1993<sup>2</sup>: 24).<sup>2</sup> At this point fairy tales' heroes discuss with their writers, as one more transcendence and subversion of the established narrative structure that wants novels' heroes to be manipulated by their writers. Reacting to this accusation, Perrault makes two remarks. At first, he elucidates that his fairy tales are based on relative myths and respective traditions (Zipes 1993<sup>2</sup>: 17).<sup>3</sup> in combination with the real atrocities of life observed even in our times. The ideas that he supports give the impression that he summons the literary theory that attributes the validity of meaning to the literary text's time of writing and to the time of reading, a theory that was not yet propounded when he was still alive. This device also discloses the presence of an implied author, who attributes views and theories to a hero of his' that lives in an age, when these theories were still unknown: "The appraisal of old fairy tales with modern criteria is at least naïve because, as we are all aware of, the valid meaning of a text is always associated to its times. One cannot read a book written in the last century and expect to find what stands in their days. How could an author know what the readers will think after a hundred or two hundred years?" (Paraschou 2004: 119).

His second remark is relative to the reader's age. As he argues, when Perrault wrote the fairy tales he did not know that they were to be read by children. The famous story-teller used to write his stories for the ladies of the high society and brings as an example the Little Red Riding

1 We will meet reversals of this category in texts too, with the literary finding of the literary characters' revolution against the omniscience and the omnipotence of the narrator – author. The heroes disagree completely with the title under which their story will be brought out. With their intervention, the intention of all the text's factors (author – narrator – literary heroes) to rupture narrative conventions and, by extension, the author's sovereignty is expressed. Despite his "death" that makes him appear as a simple clerk on the front cover and on a few pages inside with the title, the publishing house and the text's date and place of publication (bibliographic data), quasi autobiographed, the author intervenes and converses with the other heroes like a novel character or gives guidelines like quasi director as he "directs" his own story.

2 Rumpf (Zipes 1993<sup>2</sup>: 19) comments that superstitious legends of werewolves unfolded mostly in France than in any other European country, during the period of early Christianity and the Middle Ages. There was a typical epidemic against people, who they used to accuse of being werewolves in the 16th and the 17th centuries that resembled to the trials of women accused as witches. Men used to be accused of devouring children and stood convicted of other sinful acts.

3 Perrault's literary myth (1697) is likely to originate from the stories on werewolves spread in Touraine, where his mother grew up (Zipes 1993<sup>2</sup>: 20).

Hood, a point of view confirmed by J. Zipes (1993<sup>2</sup>: 7).<sup>4</sup> The shift from the adult reader to the child – reader took place with the Grimms, who argue that their mission was to preserve tradition from obliteration. They admit their interventions in the stories they read or heard and attribute the diachronicity of fairy tales to exactly these interventions, through which they attempted to efface extremities without betraying the writer, namely the people. They dispute the accusation that they maintained the evil people with the arguments that children develop their imagination and incarnate their phobias. The condemnation of the authors is the condemnation of themselves and the children “because children live fierce situations in their real life, they have the need to develop their imagination and incarnate their phobias. This is the outlet offered by fairy tales. If you condemn the fairy tales’ authors, you condemn both yourselves and the children” (Paraschou 2004: 121). In disaccord with these points of view, Oscar Wilde’s opinion is that the legends and traditions adduced by the authors do not exist. All there is are their fairy tales. Subsequently, authors are responsible for their texts. Thus, the question of the author’s responsibility is posed, an issue that refers us to that literary theory, which takes under consideration in approaching texts the author’s biography, the time they live in and the social influences they have received. Consequently, the author does not die, which means that the opinions of Roland Barthes (1988: 138) regarding the author’s death are vitiated and the author remains master of the game.

This rupture of the traditional narrative fabric discloses on the one hand, the tiredness caused by traditional narrative forms and the established ideological– political and social frame and on the other hand, the need of the writers to communicate with their literary characters and the readers. It also denotes the need to upgrade the author’s role to which they now assign more substantial functions: apart from that of the simple clerk, that of the director and negotiator.

#### **The author’s role and the theory of literature**

Eugene Trivizas addresses the issue of time – culture – reader relationship and literary character: “The heroes of fairy tales neither age nor change. They have the privilege to remain unchangeable no matter how many years have gone by. Times however change, and so do beliefs and, mainly, readers” (Paraschou 2004:93). We discern once again a conflict of literary theories, which we have observed in the writer’s authority. The first theory is represented by Perrault and Andersen and refers to those theories believing that the text is a closed system that allows no intervention. Consequently, as a text-centred point of view no one can intervene and alter the plot, transform the fictional characters, and modify the story. The same category of literary theories that believe that the literary text is a closed system is also referred in the narrative of the sisters of the Beauty, that investigates the sense of “classic” in literature (Paraschou 2004: 97 /8), and defines it as something “perfect from every aspect” that cannot be changed by anyone. Therefore, provided that the literary text is a closed system, the stereotypes “promoted” by texts such as fairy tales are impossible to be subverted.

Eugenios Trivizas opposes this point of view and refers to an open text, in which the reader can intervene to convey meaning and read the text according to their own culture, while the writer can subvert stereotypes, change convictions and shape attitudes. Trivizas re-examines the role of writers who mould their heroes to their liking. These views bring back to light the role and the power of the writer, in a paradoxical manner, because Trivizas is a well-known modern writer, given that he adopts subversive versions of fairy tales in his texts or gives priority to the reader.<sup>5</sup>

4 According to Zipes (1993: 20), it seems that Perrault did not appreciate women and for the superstitious customs of the peasants he changed all that and adapted them to the version of the myth for the upper classes. This explains why he leaves the little girl of the lower class totally helpless in his version.

5 Indicatively, a text with a reversal of a well-known classic fairy tale Ta Tria mikra Lykakia (The Three Little Wolves), texts with open end and with reader involvement Ta 33 roz roubinia (The 33 pink rubies) and Ta 88 dolmadakia (The 88 small dolmas).

The expressed views refer to the first literary theory, which considers the creation of meaning in the text as depending on the biography of the author and the historical and social circumstances of one's time, that are believed to influence the creator or to emphasise the intentions of the author in the case of neocriticism.

We realise however from the views expressed in the conference, on the occasion of this particular proposal, that there are two categories of authors. The first one comprises the authors that remain faithful to tradition, and are characterised by mistrust, and are accountable to children, because they have created or maintained the fairy tales or literary order with stereotypes. They are influenced by the historical and social context of the times that the fairy tale was written. The second category comprises those authors that are innovative, that are characterized by audacity and subversive intentions. They wish to purify and thus clear the text from any stereotypical concepts and to intervene in the formation of attitudes, perceptions and convictions of the reader. They are influenced by sociopolitical ideologies of the time of the retelling. They envision a better world free from monstrous and repulsive human actions and the renewal of literary fiction. The bad is transformed into a good hero. Everything is embellished, as it is believed that this secondary narration, promoted as "more credible" or persuasive, is closer to the desired truth, as dictated by the times of the retelling. However, this embellishing is quite dangerous for the harmonious development and socialization of the child; therefore children react to it, insisting that the bad remain bad in fairy tales. From literary point of view, embellishment means abandoning realism and returning to romanticism or idealism.

### **Children-readers and the dominance of traditional writing**

The decision taken almost unanimously in the conference is going to meet unforeseeable and beyond expectations reactions from children who wish the fairy tales to remain unchanged. The Aristotelian adventure as a bad turn of developments and as an element of structure presents with the intervention of a pupil-reader demanding the writers not to proceed to any changes, rejecting the pedagogic censorship presented by the wolf as an argument "But we are not going to spoil them, sweetheart, we are just going to make them better. There will no longer be any bad guys to scare you. You will read Little Red Riding Hood without being afraid of the Big Bad Wolf" (Paraschou 2004:127). Persistence in old and recognized figures in the fairy tales with archetypal forms is owed to the fact that the presence of the bad hero projects even more the good character. Children's literature theory promotes similar positions as it supports that all minor heroes, stereotypical, static ones etc (Kenan 1983:40, Nikolajeva 2002, Russell 1997:60), contribute through their action in promoting the protagonist, on the matter the good heroes of fairy tales; therefore, as the little girl supports, "without the wolf, Little Red Riding Hood would be a mere foolish girl that did not follow her mother's advice" (Paraschou 2004:127). Of course this is the case only if the children have read the traditional versions.

The line of argument of the wolf actually stumbles on the pedagogy of fear, as expressed in fairy tales (Tatar 1992: 22) and as experienced by children – readers; although in our times fairy tale does not aim at disciplining children through fear, but at socialising them and making them independent individuals. It is characteristic that a vigorous reaction to the rewriting of classic texts of traditional children's literature emanates from children, young people, from whom one would expect essential subversions, as bearers of new ideas. Nevertheless we observe a desire and persistence in tradition. This attitude is due to the fact that they have been raised this way and the same convictions and stereotypical beliefs have been instilled in them and they have begun to shape the same life attitudes and mentalities. However, a more careful examination of their attitude and the theoretical answers they have begun to seek, leads to the assumption that they wish for reasons of enjoyment to restore themselves the legality of the disturbed fictional

social and moral order. Subsequently, they pave the way for a vague change that is certain to emanate from them as bearers of new ideas and which will be conform to their own criteria and their own reception. This intervention of children, which indicates their love for the bad heroes of fairy tales, shifts the problem of significance and emanation of meaning from exterior factors (times, culture, writer) to text-centred elements and in particular to the fictional characters, which are considered irreplaceable; consequently, from an ontological aspect they exist beyond their authors as well, and they are directly associated to the ideology of children's literary text "I would indeed say that they want you in the fairy tales even more than they want the so called good heroes. So instead of accusing the authors for ideological bad faith just think that children's favourite fairy tales are you yourselves! You are the irreplaceable protagonists! The fairy tales are you: So, stop asking for changes, because the only thing you will achieve is your self-destruction. What was written, was well written" (Paraschou 2004: 129), supports the teacher – representative of Pedagogy, addressing to the bad. This intervention also brought the final reconciliation of fairy tales' heroes and the acceptance of fairy tales written so far as they are. Characterization, ontological, ethical and structural changes will result from the writing of new texts. Thus, the value of tradition is accredited and no children's text neoteric writing is rejected either of the neoteric or the traditional literature.

However, despite the wider reconciliation and the decisions taken in the conference, soon enough the wolf realizes that the conference was a huge mistake, because he wanted to remain the bad wolf "in order to chase Little Red Riding Hood all day long and eat Grandma in the night, to cause fear and not to be taken lightly" (Paraschou 2004: 150). For this reason, in the end, he recovers its old stereotypical self. Thus, the conflict between the modern narrations and traditional narration favours tradition, because it comprises all those elements that render a narration high and classic. Likewise, the conflict between the theories prioritising either the author either the text or the reader, it is clear that lies with the author, provided that the ultimate phrase "God bless the author's hand that made me eat the Granny!!!" stresses the role of the author that was so much disputed by his/ her own fictional characters.<sup>6</sup>

### The role of letters

A basic feature of the text is its epistolary character. Letters with substantial structural function pave the way for the polyphonic narrations that will follow. The epistolary genre has drawn the attention of narrative theoreticians who have focused their attention on time differences between narration and story, and in the relations between the narrator and the narratee. The epistles, enchanting in children's books, have made their appearance in Greek children's prose only recently.<sup>7</sup> Thus, narrating parts of the story in the form of letters by a writer – narrator to a narratee is the means through which the story unfolds. Even though the epistolary novel is structured by an interaction between monolog and dialog, the function of the letters of the wolf only allows monologism, i.e. the use of the monolog – sentence. The monolog in Modern Greek children's and youth novels correlates with the tendency of the writer to exert authority and "to limit the narrative techniques and the ideological aspects structuring children's novel" (Hunt 1998: 163 - 182, McCallum 1999: 17).

The text we are examining is polyphonic and non antiphonic or at least somehow unusually antiphonic, because there are no formal answers to the letters but decisions and actions of the

6 For the big bad wolf: Marilyn Fain Apseloff "The Big, Bad Wolf: New Approaches to an Old Folk Tale". *Children's Literature Quarterly* 15.3 (1990): 135-135. Marilyn Apseloff refers to the text by Jon Scieszka *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs* (1989).

7 Greek children's fiction has very few texts with epistolary recordings only. In even less cases, a fictional text is structured combining an epistolary novel and a diary. In the remainder fictional texts, epistolary records vary with regard to their number or percentage. Usually, they alternate with the narration of a third-person omniscient narrator or even with other types of discourse (Papantoniakis 2006).

narratees that reveal their approval and a form of non-textual response to the letter, through the omniscient narrator. On one hand, it is the letters that play a most significant role and on the other hand, the narrations of fairy tales' characters, the different narrative contents of which are linked by a common feature stressed out in the title of the novel *Even the Evil People Have a Soul*. The direct epistolary first person narration, with multiple narratees is converted into direct communication between the "voice" of the author and the voice and conscience of the narratees of the epistolary narration (epistolary author/ narrator- narratees). Thus, the letter functions as "a narrative device and a plot element", in other words writing and narration are both subject of the story and narrative elements.

The time positioning of individual narrations is in the background, in order to come later in the foreground with conflicts and disagreements between the fictional heroes and the writers, when the bad converted into narrators narrate; a conflict actually between the literary theories. This occurs as the differences between the story and the narrative discourse that the letter anticipates emerge through the difference between the narrative order and the story, as structured retrospectively by the heroes/ narrators and the readers. A narrator may recount the main events of the story. "The components of the story are revealed progressively by sending letters without replies, or narrating the personal story of each narrator – fictional character", (McCallum 1999: 218). In other words, as partly epistolary novel it structures a future "dynamic textual role for the narratee" (Porter 1984: 10) of the epistolary recordings that can take various forms, on the matter a narrated Self as a distinct type of the Self that narrates and implied as a nascent narrator in the letter.

These narrations represent an act of expiation. And here the hero tries to "buy out" the inherited fame disclaiming the stereotypical beliefs and converting consolidated narrations into subversive retellings of stories, through a means that is internationally considered as valid and acceptable, namely a conference. Consequently, the epistolary narration of the wolf implies that every narration is a type of expiation. As a structural element of the story, it prepares for polyphonic narrations that follow but also for an indisputable action of communication, which is found "beyond any implied reader" (Martens 1985: 33, McCallum 1999: 227). As it usually happens in every text, the implied reader is typically identified with the narratee of the epistolary narrative as a narrative device, with which the epistolary narrator seeks to secure the goodwill (*captatio benevolentiae*) not as much of the narratee of the epistolary narration as of that of the reader by disclosing his/her identity and his/ her objectives, and to communicate, provided that there are common imprints in their conscience.

The integration of letters, which, in our opinion are unfairly considered as extraliterary narrative stories by critique (invitation to conference) with specific functional role, articulates a relationship among the Self, the world and the others, a relationship it seeks to restore. The Self here is meant not as much as an individual Self (Self of the wolf-writer and narrative subject) as a collective Self (all bad - nascent narrators). The wolf anoints himself its representative as a narratee, author and sender of the letter that seeks to impress the unspeakable, though desirable, will of a more collective Self - Narratee of the epistolary narration that it coils in order to transform it from a passive into a dynamic subject and into a polyphonic narrator. Thus, the narratees of epistolary narrations are transformed into characters with social roles and specific behavioural codes.

These epistolary texts, with the almost identical content and with a degree of sincerity that totally depends on the intentions and the skills of the letters' writer (Nikolajeva 2001-2002: 173-187) have also an interesting function in the ideological construction of the subjectivity of



fairy tales' characters, provided that they imply that each one of them bears within a specific ideology (e.g. racism, stereotypes, sovereign ideology), which is revealed by the narration of the epistolary narrative's narrate transformed into a narrator. Despite their fragmentation, they comprise a structural integrity and independence, while maintaining their own linguistic and stylistic peculiarities. In other words, through the narratees the letters virtually construct not only specific literary characters required for the development of the plot, but also narrators who occupy, even temporarily, as long as their narration lasts, a dominant and sovereign status, which opposes the status and the role of their primary author and now narratee, who is disputed and rejected. As a narrative device, the letters include a first-person narrative voice, which performs a rupturing function in the central third-person narration, directs and organises the story, and, when as a narrative voice it reappears, it is integrated as a major determining factor in the dialogic function. The short first-person narrations are necessary for two reasons. Firstly, because there is consistency and continuity between the epistolary narration – invitation and the conference and secondly, because the author by demonstrating his/ her writing authority seeks to instil into their readers the ideological system he/she wishes. Besides, the oral discourse – lecture is part of the story. Mike Cadden supports that “A popular convention for setting up a narrative context for first-person narrative is for the author to have the protagonist speak through that character’s own writing, in which case the “speaking” (2000: 148)

Each narrator tells what is happening, to whom and under which circumstances. The narrator-secondary character, though of determining significance, in the primary fairy tale text and instantly (or temporarily) protagonist-central character in the short narrations of the polyphonic story of Sophia Paraschou filters the events through his/her own personal perspective and his/her subjective perception of events. The narrator as a covered orchestrator – author of the story is omniscient and reveals the perspectives that favour the appearance of a variety of characters. Thus, the choice of narration by the author influences the information presented to the readers on the actors and the events (Golden 1990: 55). The identity of the narrator and the narratee is known. The narrator is interposed as a chain ring and has a directing and orchestrating role. It is characteristic that the narratee of each epistolary narration does not participate in the action initially. He/she is therefore heterodiegetic and the narration is heterodiegesis. Gradually, the directing function of the epistolary writer - narrator unfolds the narration in such a way as to transform the narratee of the epistolary narration into a narrator and involve him/her in the action, even with a short protagonist role (homodiegetic autodiegetic narrator). As a narrator he/she is a secondary, and never emerges as primary, narrator, because the directing and organisational intentions of the writer do not allow this.

### **Polyphony**

The text proves one more Maria Nikolajeva, who is the first in children’s literature critique (1988, 1996) and extended the application of Bakhtinian ideas, such as chronotope and polyphony, to children’s literature. So, techniques like multiple narrative strands, narrational voices, the mixing of literary and non literary genres and discourse styles are widely met today in contemporary Greek fiction (McCallum 1999: 9/10).

The text of Sophia Paraschou is particularly characteristic for one to comprehend Bakhtinian heteroglossia. There are three strategies regarding the presentation and organisation of polyphony: 1) the use of multiple characters – focusers or narrators (recipients of the letters as narratees of epistolary narrations and narrators of side narrations), 2) the implicit or explicit forms of intertextuality (reference to the popular fairy tales) and 3) the use of multistranded narrations (the narrations of epistolary narratives’ recipients).

The true author, when writing his/ her story as a simple clerk, integrates more stories than one that in essence compose the true story. The story of the author – clerk is simply the writing framework in which the other stories evolve narrated in first person by a new narrator, former eye witness and narratee of the epistolary narration, at first potential and then active fictional character with the disjointed linear narrative technique and thus narration becomes polyphonic; that is, with a technique according to which the main narrator, while narrating the story piecemeal, communicates through letters with tales' heroes and authors that are nascent narrators. It is a form of rupturing the narrative fabric that denotes the true author's desire to overstep the mark in writing, to subvert structures and narrative techniques since as narrator he/ she seeks his/ her heroes that will be transformed into narrators so that his/ her polyphonic text be composed by epistolary texts, side narrations and the main narration. This polyphony, as heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1980), builds, establishes and reflects subjectivity in the works of children's literature to which belong the novels of epistolary and diary type,<sup>8</sup> narrative genres that Abbot Porter considers as non literary.

If we accept that monologism as perceived by M. Bakhtin is related to the author's authority, then short monologic narrations of the epistolary narratives' narratees, and later narrators, aim to remove the author's sovereignty, to manipulate him/ her and to impose their own hegemony as fictional heroes as well as to have a nascent or dictatable or imposed authorial control and the limitation of narrational texts in a future retelling or rewriting. In the short retellings that follow we find fundamental differences in the narrator's attitude towards known fictional characters. The author takes steps backwards, while allowing his/ her fictional characters to take steps forward. The events described are filtered through the memory of each narrator – character before they are presented to the reader. As readers, we learn more this way about the feelings of the fictional character produced by the events than we would learn by the very events. Agreeing with M. Nikolajeva, we would name this technique subjective realism or carnivalized realism. The term signifies that we perceive reality afterwards, after it has been reflected in the convex mirror in the fictional character's memory.

### Conclusions

The text examined reflects the intense thinking about the exaggerations in fairy tales. The issue of "classic" in children's literature advocates futility of subverting accepted versions of fairy tales or fictions and reflects the possibly vain effort to change children's opinion on the bad heroes in fairy tales. Thus, it is a text that, since the side stories composing it reject contemporary literary theories (text-oriented approach, reading response, metafiction), adopts the approach of a text based on its historical aspect that examines the information about the life and the work of the author, the period he/ she lived in and its culture and how all these elements penetrated into a literary text. As a first version, we would say that the text in question promotes this aspect. However, a more attentive reading discloses the agony of almost all the factors of a text (author, characters, reader) to impute the liabilities corresponding to each one of them in terms of writing as well as of reading and directly related to the period and the conditions of writing.

The device and the way of developing epistolary texts indicate that "epistolary" novel as a subcategory has a double substance. It is a novel and, at the same time, a historic document in the sense that it records part of traditional literature's history, with the entire historic and social context and with the criterion of classification being the qualities of fictional heroes. The narrator knows the heroes and their adventure and gives them the right to narrate their story, quasi partial autobiography, in first-person narration.

8 In Greek children's literature we discovered only two purely epistolary texts: Maroula Kliafa O dromos gia ton Paradiso einai makrys (The way to heaven is long) and Nena Kokkinaki Margarita (Daisy).

Every narrator tells his/ her story as he/ she believes it is impressed on his/ her conscience and which formed a specific action that took place in the distant past and it is recalled to mind during the time of the narration. So, we have the present moment of narration (= narrative time) of the events as impressed on the narrator's conscience in the past (= historic time). These strategies draw the reader's attention not only regarding the retrospective narration and the appropriate use of language for the presentation of the events that occurred in the past (past or dramatised present) but also because a need of the letter-writer to force the fictional heroes to narrate the events that concern them with the limitations imposed by their retelling and through which the events obtain cultural importance is externalised.

However, the present time of the narration of the decisions that came to maturity in the narrator's conscience, with the past (= historic time) as point of departure, is in indefinite time distance from the stories that used to circulate. Strategies as those through short epistolary narrations create the expectation of retrospective narrations that are prepared and planned for the presentation of events that occurred in the past from the point of view of a narrator and a fictional hero, in a subjective way. In addition, they draw attention to the need that the reader places "historically" these events with the limitations of a retelling through which fictional events are recorded in a retelling that involves almost all the theories of literature. Each mention that refers to a relative theory presupposes a narration. Thus, the novel is thematically centred on the desire for an unstrained appreciation of polyphonic narrations, without stable subjective position of narration leading to an apparent appreciation and hegemonic domination of a literary theory. Author – narrator – reader – text flounder in a conflict between the fictional characters and their creator raising ontological issues and moral dilemmas as regards fiction.

In particular, on the basis of the text we approached we conclude that literary theories, into which students can be initiated through the teaching of these texts, can be impressed on a literary text. Contemporary trends debate seriously through literary narrations on who is the master of the literary game, the author or the narrator? Fictional characters also intervene in this debate disputing domination.

Through the conflict for the domination of fictional characters or authors, ontological issues arise. Apart from the "author's death", the "fictional character's death" or even the "reader's death" is brought forward since the non writing of texts does not allow the reading of texts. However, the "fictional character's death" is a literary deception because "the author's death" does not necessarily entail the "death of fictional characters" that may only have symbolic or allegoric function. The "reader's death" (in other texts we encountered the preparation textually for the publisher's literary death) as a literary device is mostly due to the literary mention of the "fictional characters' death". However, even if the novel is based on the plot and not on the characters, even then the characters with their role of secondary importance do not cease to exist. Thus, the "death of fictional characters and the reader" is an ostensible device functioning as a medium or as a threat to the effort of the heroes to take away from the authors the text's control and they dominate with their authority.

The conflict of the fictional character and the literary man – creator in the very text, or in other literary texts, represents a new conflict that has not yet been noted by the theory and critique of children's literature. A possible allegation that this conflict is part of the conflict of "fictional character/ protagonist with another co-hero" refers to what appears to be and not to what is true because the author – creator is not just any literary hero. Apart from the metafictional character that the literary text obtains with the presence of both literary men – creators and their fictional characters, with whom they are not simply in dialogic relation but in conflicting

relation, this conflict is differentiated because the one is the maker – former and the other is the creation – operational instrument. The presence of this dialogic conflicting relation obtains great importance, denotes the responsibility and hegemonic domination of the author on the heroes and the story, while it implies tiredness of the traditional, the desire for modern fiction writing, however without losing authorial control and hegemonic authority on the heroes and on their story.

Despite the conflict between the creator and the creation – fictional character and the nearly agreement to rewrite the fairy tales, in which racist views and prejudices against the heroes presented as bad are abundant, eventually the triumph of traditional literature is proven. This is also endorsed by a representative of the change and the rewriting of fairy tales as well as by the children – readers, who enjoy the punishment of the bad. In fact, the readers demand and enjoy the restoration of the disturbed social and ethical order, exactly as it has been written by the fairy tales' collectors or authors in their traditional texts. Their rewriting by the authors does not imply restoration because it is likely that the social and ethical order is not disturbed. The possibility that the children – readers attribute meanings to the text favours different approaches, others exciting with the presence of the bad heroes and others provoking fear.

Holding a critical position towards all these who consider letter an extraliterary genre, we attribute this "marginalisation" to the deep influence consolidated by classic traditional literary genres (poetry, legends, myths, fairy tales, short stories and novel) thus limiting letter to an extraliterary category, perhaps influenced by the personal letter-writing of the literary men, from which one can deduce interesting information on the writing of their literary texts (influences, writing conditions, writing stages, etc). However, the barring of literary forms by other genres contributed to the integration in purely literary genres and the assimilation of epistles. The prominence of epistolary novel, as a type of novel promoting myth and projecting the interiority and the subjectivity of the writing's subject being as a rule the story's protagonist, at least in children's literature contributed to this integration.

Therefore, the text of Sophia Paraschou is proven a fictional place, where the literary theories are wrestling. And this is exactly what one obtains from it. The conference and the effort to re-establish socially and morally the fairy tales' bad heroes are the pretext for the presentation of the conflicting literary theories and the wrestle between tradition and modernism. It is a game between being and appearing to be true. The former raises more substantial issues, issues of writing and reading, of responsibility for the literary heroes, while the latter refers to the cause leading to their onset.

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