



Disney

Everyone is familiar with the Disney cartoon experience.

Very many films use a similar sort of format designed to appeal to children and coincide with the child's world. For example, animals and toys can talk and have human personalities. Animals laugh and cry, are capable of love and subterfuge. Animals can lie and cheat as well as be loyal and caring.

The typical Disney story involves the establishment of a fleeting glimpse of an Edenic world in which the child is in a safe and secure, happy environment where it is loved and safe. Then some terrible event breaks the security of the child's life apart. A parent dies (Bambi, Lion King) or parent and child are separated (Dumbo, Nemo). This separation causes fear and anxiety and depression and hopelessness: what resources can be found to change the situation? There follows a period of exile, wandering in the wilderness, in which the child typically makes new friends, finds new sources of help and encouragement and gradually grows up. At the end of the film, there is a reconciliation process in which the lost one is found, unresolved issues are dealt with and the child emerges triumphant.

We may be so used to the Disney formula that we recognise its components without question. We expect to meet the dizzy companions who are daft and funny, or vulgar but loveable, but without whom the child cannot make it through, which these are Timon and Pumbaa, Dory, the gofer etc. These often come in pairs, the street smart wise guy and the idiot together.

The film *Shrek*, from the rival Dreamworks studio, perhaps highlights particularly well, the elements of the Disney fantasy that we have grown up with. In *Shrek*, the ideal fairytale world is satirised. Shrek is an ogre, a monster, who doesn't fit the fairy world of the good and the beautiful. He is bad tempered and ugly. He is teamed up with the fast talking idiot who is played for laughs, but instead of having a bit part, the talking donkey is integral to the working out of the plot. Only the idiot has the brains to work out what is going on. The ogre goes off on his obligatory journey, encountering a king, who far from being kingly, is tiny, ridiculous and unheroic. Shrek goes off to find and bring back the princess Fiona, who is not only unladylike, but in actual fact also an Ogre. There is a wonderful satirising of the Disney *Snow White* movie, when the Princess sings to a bird back and forth until the bird explodes. Finally the princess's shameful secret is revealed, she is not perfect, beautiful and good, but ugly and flawed as the rest of us. And Shrek loves her.

