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Notes about Fairytales

The classic oral tradition fairytales now known world-wide came into being primarily in Europe, Scandinavia, and the Slavic countries in the centuries after Christianity was implemented.

These stories are composed in-part of re-cycled pre-Christian Goddess lore (note the fairy godmothers, and the old women who live in the forest and who have special powers).

Fairytales tend to concern the need for the feminine principle (feelings, fertility, nature, love, connection) to join the masculine principle in order to create mature individuals and cultures.

Fairytales take place in a magical realm in which all matter can be transformed instantly. This realm is the opposite of the laborious, mechanical, scientific realm. In fairytales, just wishing can make it so (sometimes).

The principle of reciprocity is paramount in these stories: Mother Nature rewards kind and generous characters; while greedy characters come to bad ends.

Fairytales are mostly coming-of-age stories. Early in a fairytale, the protagonist may seem to be a failure. The protagonist often can't do things like everyone else can -- often due to being dense and/or authentic. This sometimes leads to the protagonist being sent away from home.

Fairytales present the adventures of young people struggling to make their ways in the world. In spite of obstacles and pitfalls, fairytale protagonists may accomplish tasks, and gain wisdom and wealth. The protagonist may undergo trials which may lead to inner and/or outer transformations. These stories often portray suffering and renewal, and loss and finding of fortune -- and of self.

Protagonists of fairytales often move to the next stage of life with help from magical allies -- friends and teachers found along the way are often essential to the protagonist's success. The fairytale protagonist often has a deep connection with the natural and supernatural worlds. For example, this character can often understand animal languages.

Fairytales typically end with the protagonist's marriage. Having earned a treasure and a wonderful life-partner, the protagonist is now on track to "live happily ever after".

Some Psychological Interpretations of Aspects of Fairytales

All elements of a story can be seen as representing aspects of the teller's (and the listener's) psyche.

1) Characters, especially men, who have their heads cut off and placed on stakes. This can represent that the beheaded individuals were arrogant, and needed to be "cut down to size".

2) Marriage.

One's new spouse can represent an aspect of oneself that one has discovered and developed recently. Taken this way, marriage represents awareness and integration of previously unconscious aspects of one's psyche. Carl Jung called this "individuation" (becoming a mature individual).

3) Being under a wicked spell.

Being cursed to sleep, to be an animal, or in any other way can represent a lack of psychological development in one's self. That is, a development that has not yet occurred. Breaking the spell can represent re-starting the development.

4) "True love's first kiss"

This can represent human contact, relationship.

5) A long deep sleep, and dreaming.

This can represent a process of self-learning, integration, and healing. This can also represent a shamanic journey to divine realms.

6) Physical destruction and death of wicked characters

What happens to these characters can represent discontinuation of negative personality traits in oneself.