THE USES OF ENCHANTMENT

The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales

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derives partly from its manifold meanings on many different levels. The young child may respond mainly to the motif of sibling rivalry, delighted that Goldilocks must go back from whence she came, as so many children wish the new baby would do. An older child will be enthralled by Goldilocks' experimentation with adult roles. Children will enjoy her peeping and entering; some adults may like to remind their children that Goldilocks is expelled for it.

The story is particularly timely because it depicts the outsider, Goldilocks, in such appealing form. This makes it as attractive to some as it is to others because the insiders, the bears, win. Thus, whether one feels like an outsider or an insider, the story can be equally enchanting. The change in title over time shows how a story protecting the property and psychological rights of insiders—the bears—became one which concentrates attention on the outsider. What was once called "The Three Bears" is now known mainly as "Goldilocks." Further, the story's ambiguity, which is so much in line with the temper of the times, may also account for its popularity, while the clear-cut solutions of the traditional fairy tale seem to point to a happier age when things were believed to permit definite solutions.

Even more important in this respect is the story's greatest appeal, which at the same time is its greatest weakness. Not only in modern times, but all through the ages, running away from a problem—which in the unconscious means denying or repressing it—seems the easiest way out when confronted with what seems to be too difficult or unsolvable a predicament. This is the solution with which we are left in "Goldilocks." The bears seem unmoved by her appearance in and sudden disappearance from their lives. They act as if nothing had happened but an interlude without consequences; all is solved by her jumping out of the window. As far as Goldilocks is concerned, her running away suggests that no solution of the oedipal predicaments or of sibling rivalry is necessary. Contrary to what happens in traditional fairy tales, the impression is that Goldilocks' experience in the bears' house made as little change in her life as it did in that of the bear family; we hear nothing more about it. Despite her serious exploration of where she fits in—by implication, of who she is—we are not told that it led to any higher selfhood for Goldilocks.

Parents would like their daughters to remain eternally their little girls, and the child would like to believe that it is possible to evade the struggle of growing up. That is why the spontaneous reaction to "Goldilocks" is: "What a lovely story." But it is also why this story does not help the child to gain emotional maturity.

"THE SLEEPING BEAUTY"

Adolescence is a period of great and rapid change, characterized by periods of utter passivity and lethargy alternating with frantic activity, even dangerous behavior to "prove oneself" or discharge inner tension. This back-and-forth adolescent behavior finds expression in some fairy tales by the hero's rushing after adventures and then suddenly being turned to stone by some enchantment. More often, and psychologically more correctly, the sequence is reversed: Dummy in "The Three Feathers" does nothing until he is well into adolescence; and the hero of "The Three Languages," pushed by his father to go abroad to develop himself, spends three years in passive learning before his adventures begin.

While many fairy tales stress great deeds the heroes must perform to become themselves, "The Sleeping Beauty" emphasizes the long, quiet concentration on oneself that is also needed. During the months before the first menstruation, and often also for some time immediately following it, girls are passive, seem sleepy, and withdraw into themselves. While no equally noticeable state heralds the coming of sexual maturity in boys, many of them experience a period of lassitude and of turning inward during puberty which equals the female experience. It is thus understandable that a fairy story in which a long period of sleep begins at the start of puberty has been very popular for a long time among girls and boys.

In major life changes such as adolescence, for successful growth opportunities both active and quiescent periods are needed. The turning inward, which in outer appearance looks like passivity (or sleeping one's life away), happens when internal mental processes of such importance go on within the person that he has no energy for outwardly directed action. Those fairy tales which, like "The Sleeping Beauty," have the period of passivity for their central topic, permit the budding adolescent not to worry during his inactive period: he learns that things continue to evolve. The happy ending assures the child that he will not remain permanently stuck in seemingly doing nothing, even if at the moment it seems as if this period of quietude will last for a hundred years.

After the period of inactivity which typically occurs during early

puberty, adolescents become active and make up for the period of passivity; in real life and in fairy tales they try to prove their young manhood or womanhood, often through dangerous adventures. This is how the symbolic language of the fairy tale states that after having gathered strength in solitude they now have to become themselves. Actually, this development *is* fraught with dangers: an adolescent must leave the security of childhood, which is represented by getting lost in the dangerous forest; learn to face up to his violent tendencies and anxieties, symbolized by encounters with wild animals or dragons; get to know himself, which is implied in meeting strange figures and experiences. Through this process the adolescent loses a previous innocence suggested by their having been "Simpletons," considered dumb and lowly, or merely somebody's child. The risks involved in bold adventures are obvious, as when Jack meets the ogre. "Snow White" and "The Sleeping Beauty" encourage the child not to be afraid of the dangers of passivity. Ancient as "The Sleeping Beauty" is, in many ways it has a more important message for today's youth than many other tales. Presently many of our young people—and their parents—are fearful of quiet growth, when nothing seems to happen, because of a common belief that only doing what can be seen achieves goals. "The Sleeping Beauty" tells that a long period of quiescence, of contemplation, of concentration on the self, can and often does lead to highest achievement.

Recently it has been claimed that the struggle against childhood dependency and for becoming oneself in fairy tales is frequently described differently for the girl than for the boy, and that this is the result of sexual stereotyping. Fairy tales do not render such one-sided pictures. Even when a girl is depicted as turning inward in her struggle to become herself, and a boy as aggressively dealing with the external world, these two *together* symbolize the two ways in which one has to gain selfhood: through learning to understand and master the inner as well as the outer world. In this sense the male and female heroes are again projections onto two different figures of two (artificially) separated aspects of one and the same process which *everybody* has to undergo in growing up. While some literal-minded parents do not realize it, children know that, whatever the sex of the hero, the story pertains to their own problems.

Male and female figures appear in the same roles in fairy tales; in "The Sleeping Beauty" it is the prince who observes the sleeping girl, but in "Cupid and Psyche" and the many tales derived from it, it is Psyche who apprehends Cupid in his sleep and, like the prince, marvels at the beauty she beholds. This is just one example. Since there are thousands of fairy tales, one may safely guess that there are probably equal numbers where the courage and determination of females rescue males, and vice versa. This is as it should be, since fairy tales reveal important truths about life.

"The Sleeping Beauty" is best known today in two different versions: Perrault's, and that of the Brothers Grimm.[70] To explain the difference, it may be best to consider briefly the form the story took in Basile's *Pentamerone*, where its title is "Sun, Moon, and Talia."*[71]

On the birth of his daughter Talia, a king asked all the wise men and seers to tell her future. They concluded that she would be exposed to great danger from a splinter of flax. To prevent any such accident, the king ordered that no flax or hemp should ever come into his castle. But one day when Talia had grown up, she saw an old woman who was spinning pass by her window. Talia, who had never seen anything like it before, "was therefore delighted with the dancing of the spindle." Made curious, she took the distaff in her hand and began to draw out the thread. A splinter of hemp "got under her fingernail and she immediately fell dead upon the ground." The king left his lifeless daughter seated on a velvet chair in the palace, locked the door, and departed forever, to obliterate the memory of his sorrow.

Some time after, another king was hunting. His falcon flew into a window of the empty castle and did not return. The king, trying to find the falcon, wandered in the castle. There he found Talia as if asleep, but nothing would rouse her. Falling in love with her beauty, he cohabited with her; then he left and forgot the whole affair. Nine months later Talia gave birth to two children, all the time still asleep. They nursed from her breast. "Once when one of the babies wanted to suck, it could not find the breast, but got into its mouth instead the finger that had been pricked. This the baby sucked so hard that it drew out the splinter, and Talia was roused as if from deep sleep."

One day the king remembered his adventure and went to see Talia. He was delighted to find her awake with the two beautiful children, and from then on they were always on his mind. The king's wife found out his secret, and on the sly sent for the two children in the king's name. She ordered them cooked and served to her husband. The cook hid the children in his own home and prepared instead some goat

*By that time it was already an old motif, as there are French and Catalan renderings from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries which served as Basile's models, if he did not rely on folk tales of his own time as yet unknown to us.[72]

kids, which the queen served to the king. A while later the queen sent for Talia and planned to have her thrown into the fire because she was the reason for the king's infidelity. At the last minute the king arrived, had his wife thrown into the fire, married Talia, and was happy to find his children, whom the cook had saved. The story ends with the verses:

> Lucky people, so 'tis said,
> Are blessed by Fortune whilst in bed.*

Perrault, by adding on his own the story of the slighted fairy who utters the curse, or by using this familiar fairy-tale motif, explains why the heroine falls into deathlike sleep and thus enriches the story, since in "Sun, Moon, and Talia" we are given no reason why this should be her fate.

In Basile's story Talia is the daughter of a king who loved her so much that he could not remain in his castle after she fell into a deathlike sleep. We hear nothing more about him after he left Talia ensconced on her thronelike chair "under an embroidered canopy," not even after she reawakened, married her king, and lived happily with him and her beautiful children. One king replaces another king in the same country; one king replaces another in Talia's life—the father king is replaced by the lover king. Might these two kings not be substitutes for each other at different periods in the girl's life, in different roles, in different disguises? We encounter here again the "innocence" of the oedipal child, who feels no responsibility for what she arouses or wishes to arouse in the parent.

Perrault, the academician, doubly distances his story from Basile's. He was, after all, a courtier who told stories for the perusal of princes, pretending that they were invented by his little son to please a princess. The two kings are changed into a king and a prince, the latter somebody who obviously is not yet married and has no children. And

*Since Talia's children are called the sun and moon, there is the possibility that Basile was influenced by the story of Leto, one of the many loves of Zeus, who bore him Apollo and Artemis, the sun god and the moon goddess. If so, we may assume that, as Hera was jealous of those whom Zeus loved, the queen in this tale is a distant memory of Hera and her jealousies.

Most fairy tales of the Western world have at some time included Christian elements, so much so that an account of those underlying Christian meanings would make another book. In this tale Talia, who does not know that she has had intercourse or that she has conceived, has done so without pleasure and without sin. This she has in common with the Virgin Mary, as she, like the Virgin, in such manner becomes the mother of God(s).

the presence of the king is separated from the prince by a sleep of one hundred years, so that we can feel certain that the two have nothing in common. Interestingly enough, Perrault does not quite manage to extricate himself from the oedipal connotations: in his story the queen is not insanely jealous because of the betrayal by her husband, but she appears as the oedipal mother who is so jealous of the girl her son the prince falls in love with that she seeks to destroy her. But while the queen in Basile's tale is convincing, Perrault's queen is not. His story falls into two incongruous parts: a first which ends with the prince's awakening Sleeping Beauty and marrying her; followed by a second part in which we are suddenly told that the mother of Prince Charming is really a child-devouring ogress who wishes to eat her own grandchildren.

In Basile, the queen wishes to feed his children to her husband—the most terrible punishment for preferring Sleeping Beauty to her that she can think of. In Perrault, she wants to eat them herself. In Basile, the queen is jealous because her husband's mind and love are entirely taken up with Talia and her children. The king's wife tries to burn Talia in the fire—the king's "burning" love for Talia having aroused the queen's "burning" hatred for her.

There is no explanation for the cannibalistic hatred of the queen in Perrault's tale but that she is an ogress who "whenever she saw little children passing by, . . . had all the difficulty in the world to avoid falling upon them." Also, Prince Charming keeps his marriage to Sleeping Beauty a secret for two years, until his father dies. Only then does he bring Sleeping Beauty and her two children, called Morning and Day, to his castle. And although he knows that his mother is an ogress, when he leaves to go to war he puts her in charge, entrusting his kingdom and wife and children to her. Perrault's story ends with the king returning at the moment when his mother is just about to have Sleeping Beauty thrown into a pit full of vipers. On his arrival the ogress, who sees her plans spoiled, jumps into the pit herself.

It can easily be understood that Perrault did not feel it appropriate to tell at the French court a story in which a married king ravishes a sleeping maiden, gets her with child, forgets it entirely, and remembers her after a time only by chance. But a fairy prince who keeps his marriage and fatherhood a secret from his father-king—shall we assume because he fears the king's oedipal jealousy if the son also becomes a father—is unconvincing, if for no other reason than that oedipal jealousy of mother and father in regard to the same son in the same tale is overdoing it, even in a fairy story. Knowing his mother

is an ogress, the prince does not bring his wife and child home as long as his good father may exercise a restraining influence, but only after his death, when such protection is no longer available. The reason for all this is not that Perrault was lacking in artistry, but that he did not take his fairy stories seriously and was most intent on the cute or moralistic verse ending he appended to each.*

With two such incongruous parts to this story, it is understandable that in oral telling—and often also in printed form—the story ends with the happy union of the prince and Sleeping Beauty. It is this form that the Brothers Grimm heard and recorded, and which was then and is now most widely known. Still, something got lost which was present in Perrault. To wish death to a newborn child only because one is not invited to the christening or is given inferior silverware is the mark of an evil fairy. Thus, in Perrault, as in the Brothers Grimm's version, at the very beginning of the story we find the (fairy god)-mother(s) split into the good and the evil aspects. The happy ending requires that the evil principle be appropriately punished and done away with; only then can the good, and with it happiness, prevail. In Perrault, as in Basile, the evil principle is done away with, and thus fairy-story justice is done. But the Brothers Grimm's version, which will be followed from here on, is deficient because the evil fairy is not punished.

However great the variations in detail, the central theme of all versions of "The Sleeping Beauty" is that, despite all attempts on the part of parents to prevent their child's sexual awakening, it will take place nonetheless. Furthermore, parents' ill-advised efforts may post-

*Perrault, speaking to the courtiers he had in mind as his readers, made fun of the fairy stories he told. For example, he specifies that the queen-ogress wishes to have the children served her "with Sauce Robert." He thus introduces details which detract from the fairy-story character, as when he tells that on her awakening Sleeping Beauty's dress was recognized as old-fashioned: "she was dressed as my great-grandmother, and had a point band peeping over a high collar; she looked not a bit the less beautiful and charming for all that." As if fairy-tale heroes would not live in a world where fashions do not change.

Such remarks, in which Perrault indiscriminately mixes petty rationality with fairy-story fantasy, grossly detract from his work. The dress detail, for example, destroys that mythical, allegorical, and psychological time which is suggested by the hundred years of sleep by making it a specific chronological time. It makes it all frivolous—not like the legends of saints who awake from a hundred years of sleep, recognize how the world has changed, and immediately turn into dust. By such details, which were meant to amuse, Perrault destroyed the feeling of timelessness that is an important element in the effectiveness of fairy tales.

pone the reaching of maturity at the proper time, as symbolized by Sleeping Beauty's hundred years of sleep, which separate her sexual awakening from her being united with her lover. Closely related to this is a different motif—namely, that to have to wait even a long time for sexual fulfillment does not at all detract from its beauty.

Perrault's and the Brothers Grimm's versions begin by indicating that one may have to wait a long time to find sexual fulfillment, as indicated by having a child. For a very long time, we are told, the king and his queen wished for a child in vain. In Perrault, the parents behave like his contemporaries: "They went to all the waters in the world; vows, pilgrimages, everything was tried and nothing came of it. At last, however, the Queen was with child." The Brothers Grimm's beginning is much more fairy-tale-like: "Once upon a time was a king and a queen who said every day 'Oh, if we only had a child!' but they never got one. Once when the queen sat in the bath, it happened that a frog crawled out of the water on the land and told her 'Your wish will be fulfilled; before a year is over, you'll bring a daughter into the world.' " The frog's saying that the queen will give birth before a year is over puts the time of waiting close to the nine months of pregnancy. This, plus the queen's being in her bath, is reason to believe that conception took place on the occasion of the frog's visit to the queen. (Why in fairy tales the frog often symbolizes sexual fulfillment is discussed later, in connection with the story "The Frog King.")

The parents' long wait for a child which finally arrives conveys that there is no need to hurry toward sex; it loses none of its rewards if one has to wait a long time for it. The good fairies and their wishes at the christening actually have little to do with the plot, except to contrast with the curse of the fairy who feels slighted. This may be seen from the fact that the number of fairies varies from country to country, from three to eight to thirteen.* The good fairies' gifts of endowment to the child also differ in the different versions, while the curse of the evil one is always the same: the girl (in the Brothers Grimm's story

*In the *Anciennes Chroniques de Perceforest* of the fourteenth century (printed for the first time in France in 1528) three goddesses are invited to the celebration of the birth of Zellandine. Lucina confers health on her; Themis, angry because there is no knife beside her plate, utters the curse that while spinning Zellandine will pull a thread off the distaff and push it into her finger; she will have to sleep until it is pulled out. Venus, the third goddess, promises to arrange for the rescue to happen. In Perrault, there are seven invited fairies and one uninvited, who utters the well-known curse. In the Brothers Grimm's story there are twelve benevolent fairies and one malevolent one.

when she is fifteen) will prick her finger on a distaff (of a spinning wheel) and die. The last good fairy is able to change this threat of death into a hundred years' sleep. The message is similar to that of "Snow White": what may seem like a period of deathlike passivity at the end of childhood is nothing but a time of quiet growth and preparation, from which the person will awaken mature, ready for sexual union. It must be stressed that in fairy tales this union is as much one of the minds and souls of two partners as it is one of sexual fulfillment.

In times past, fifteen was often the age at which menstruation began. The thirteen fairies in the Brothers Grimm's story are reminiscent of the thirteen lunar months into which the year was once, in ancient times, divided. While this symbolism may be lost on those not familiar with the lunar year, it is well known that menstruation typically occurs with the twenty-eight-day frequency of lunar months, and not with the twelve months which our year is divided into. Thus, the number of twelve good fairies plus a thirteenth evil one indicates symbolically that the fatal "curse" refers to menstruation.

It is very much to the point that the king, the male, does not understand the necessity of menstruation and tries to prevent his daughter from experiencing the fatal bleeding. The queen, in all versions of the story, seems unconcerned with the prediction of the angry fairy. In any case, she knows better than to try to prevent it. The curse centers on the distaff, a word which in English has come to stand for female in general. While the same is not true for the French (Perrault) or German (Brothers Grimm) word for distaff, until fairly recently spinning and weaving were considered as characteristically "woman's" occupations.

All the king's painstaking efforts to forestall the "curse" of the malicious fairy fail. Removing all the distaffs from the kingdom cannot prevent the girl's fateful bleeding once she reaches puberty, at fifteen, as the evil fairy predicted. Whatever precautions a father takes, when the daughter is ripe for it, puberty will set in. The temporary absence of both parents when this event occurs symbolizes all parents' incapacity to protect their child against the various growing-up crises which every human being has to undergo.

As she becomes an adolescent, the girl explores the formerly inaccessible areas of existence, as represented by the hidden chamber where an old woman is spinning. At this point the story abounds in Freudian symbolism. As she approaches the fateful place, the girl ascends a circular staircase; in dreams such staircases typically stand for sexual experiences. At the top of this staircase she finds a small

door and in its lock a key. As she turns the key, the door "springs open" and the girl enters a small room in which an old woman spins. A small locked room often stands in dreams for the female sexual organs; turning a key in a lock often symbolizes intercourse.

Seeing the old woman spinning, the girl asks: "What kind of thing is this that jumps about so funnily?" It does not take much imagination to see the possible sexual connotations in the distaff; but as soon as the girl touches it, she pricks her finger, and falls into sleep.

The main associations this tale arouses in the child's unconscious are to menstruation rather than intercourse. In common language, referring also to its Biblical origin, menstruation is often called the "curse"; and it is a female's—the fairy's—curse that causes the bleeding. Second, the age at which this curse is to become effective is about the age at which, in past times, menstruation most frequently set in. Finally, the bleeding comes about through an encounter with an old woman, not a man; and according to the Bible, the curse is inherited by woman from woman.

Bleeding, as in menstruation, is for the young girl (and for the young man too, in a different manner) an overwhelming experience if she is not emotionally ready for it. Overcome by the experience of sudden bleeding, the princess falls into a long sleep, protected against all suitors—i.e., premature sexual encounters—by an impenetrable wall of thorns. While the most familiar version stresses in the name "The Sleeping Beauty" the long sleep of the heroine, the titles of other variants give prominence to the protective wall, such as the English "Briar Rose."*

Many princes try to reach Sleeping Beauty before her time of maturing is over; all these precocious suitors perish in the thorns. This is a warning to child and parents that sexual arousal before mind and body are ready for it is very destructive. But when Sleeping Beauty has finally gained both physical and emotional maturity and is ready for love, and with it for sex and marriage, then that which had seemed impenetrable gives way. The wall of thorns suddenly turns into a wall of big, beautiful flowers, which opens to let the prince enter. The implied message is the same as in many other fairy tales: don't worry and don't try to hurry things—when the time is ripe, the impossible problem will be solved, as if all by itself.

The long sleep of the beautiful maiden has also other connotations.

*The German name of girl and tale, *"Dornröschen,"* emphasizes both the hedge of thorns and the (hedge) rose. The diminutive form of "rose" in the German name stresses the girl's immaturity, which must be protected by the wall of thorns.

Whether it is Snow White in her glass coffin or Sleeping Beauty on her bed, the adolescent dream of everlasting youth and perfection is just that: a dream. The alteration of the original curse, which threatened death, to one of prolonged sleep suggests that the two are not all that different. If we do not want to change and develop, then we might as well remain in a deathlike sleep. During their sleep the heroines' beauty is a frigid one; theirs is the isolation of narcissism. In such self-involvement which excludes the rest of the world there is no suffering, but also no knowledge to be gained, no feelings to be experienced.

Any transition from one stage of development to the next is fraught with dangers; those of puberty are symbolized by the shedding of blood on touching the distaff. A natural reaction to the threat of having to grow up is to withdraw from a world and life which impose such difficulties. Narcissistic withdrawal is a tempting reaction to the stresses of adolescence, but, the story warns, it leads to a dangerous, deathlike existence when it is embraced as an escape from the vagaries of life. The entire world then becomes dead to the person; this is the symbolic meaning, and warning, of the deathlike sleep into which everybody surrounding Sleeping Beauty falls. The world becomes alive only to the person who herself awakens to it. Only relating positively to the other "awakens" us from the danger of sleeping away our life. The kiss of the prince breaks the spell of narcissism and awakens a womanhood which up to then has remained undeveloped. Only if the maiden grows into woman can life go on.

The harmonious meeting of prince and princess, their awakening to each other, is a symbol of what maturity implies: not just harmony within oneself, but also with the other. It depends on the listener whether the arrival of the prince at the right time is interpreted as the event which causes sexual awakening or the birth of a higher ego; the child probably comprehends both these meanings.

Awakening from a long sleep will be understood differently by the child depending on his age. The younger child will see in it mainly an awakening to his selfhood, the achievement of concordance between what had been his inner chaotic tendencies—that is, as an attaining of inner harmony between his id, ego, and superego.

After the child has experienced this meaning until he reaches puberty, in adolescence he will gain additional understanding of the same fairy tale. Then it becomes also an image of achieving harmony with the other, as represented by a person of the other sex, so that the two, as told at the end of "The Sleeping Beauty," may live enjoyably

together till their end. This, the most desirable goal of life, seems to be the most significant communication which fairy stories transmit to the older child. It is symbolized by an ending in which the prince and princess find each other "and they lived happily until their death." Only after one has attained inner harmony within oneself can one hope to find it in relations with others. A preconscious understanding of the connection between the two stages is gained by the child through his own developmental experiences.

The story of Sleeping Beauty impresses every child that a traumatic event—such as the girl's bleeding at the beginning of puberty, and later, in first intercourse—does have the happiest consequences. The story implants the idea that such events must be taken very seriously, but that one need not be afraid of them. The "curse" is a blessing in disguise.

One more look at the earliest known form of the motif of "The Sleeping Beauty" in *Perceforest* some six hundred years ago: it is Venus, the goddess of love, who arranges for the sleeping girl's awakening by having her baby suck the splinter out of her finger, and the same happens in Basile's story. Full self-fulfillment of the female does not come with menstruation. Female completeness is not achieved when falling in love, not even in intercourse, nor in childbirth, since the heroines in *Perceforest* and in Basile's story sleep all through it. These are necessary steps on the way to ultimate maturity; but complete selfhood comes only with having given life, and with nurturing the one whom one has brought into being: with the baby sucking from the mother's body. Thus, these stories enumerate experiences which pertain only to the female; she must undergo them all before she reaches the summit of femininity.

It is the infant's sucking the splinter out from under the mother's nail which brings her back to life—a symbol that her child is not just the passive recipient of what the mother gives to him, but that he also actively renders her great service. Her nurturing permits him to do so; but it is his nursing from her which reawakens her to life—a being reborn, which, as always in fairy tales, symbolizes the achievement of a higher mental state. Thus, the fairy tale tells parent and child alike that the infant not only receives from his mother, but also gives to her. While she gives him life, he adds a new dimension to her life. The self-involvement which was suggested by the heroine's long-lasting sleep comes to an end as she gives to the infant and he, by taking from her, restores her to the highest level of existence: a mutuality in which the one who receives life also gives life.

In "The Sleeping Beauty" this is further emphasized because not only she but her entire world—her parents, all inhabitants of the castle—returns to life the moment she does. If we are insensitive to the world, the world ceases to exist for us. When Sleeping Beauty fell asleep, so did the world for her. The world awakens anew as a child is nurtured into it, because only in this way can humanity continue to exist.

This symbolism got lost in the story's later forms which end with the awakening of Sleeping Beauty, and with it her world, to a new life. Even in the shortened form in which the tale came down to us, in which Sleeping Beauty is awakened by the kiss of the prince, we feel —without it being spelled out as in the more ancient versions—that she is the incarnation of perfect femininity.

"CINDERELLA"

By all accounts, "Cinderella" is the best-known fairy tale, and probably also the best-liked.[73] It is quite an old story; when first written down in China during the ninth century A.D., it already had a history.[74] The unrivaled tiny foot size as a mark of extraordinary virtue, distinction, and beauty, and the slipper made of precious material are facets which point to an Eastern, if not necessarily Chinese, origin.* The modern hearer does not connect sexual attractiveness and beauty in general with extreme smallness of the foot, as the ancient Chinese did, in accordance with their practice of binding women's feet.

"Cinderella," as we know it, is experienced as a story about the agonies and hopes which form the essential content of sibling rivalry; and about the degraded heroine winning out over her siblings who abused her. Long before Perrault gave "Cinderella" the form in which it is now widely known, "having to live among the ashes" was a symbol of being debased in comparison to one's siblings, irrespective of sex. In Germany, for example, there were stories in which such an ash-boy later becomes king, which parallels Cinderella's fate. "Aschenputtel" is the title of the Brothers Grimm's version of the tale.

*Artistically made slippers of precious material were reported in Egypt from the third century on. The Roman emperor Diocletian in a decree of A.D. 301 set maximum prices for different kinds of footwear, including slippers made of fine Babylonian leather, dyed purple or scarlet, and gilded slippers for women.[75]

The term originally designated a lowly, dirty kitchenmaid who must tend to the fireplace ashes.

There are many examples in the German language of how being forced to dwell among the ashes was a symbol not just of degradation, but also of sibling rivalry, and of the sibling who finally surpasses the brother or brothers who have debased him. Martin Luther in his *Table Talks* speaks about Cain as the God-forsaken evildoer who is powerful, while pious Abel is forced to be his ash-brother *(Aschebrüdel)*, a mere nothing, subject to Cain; in one of Luther's sermons he says that Esau was forced into the role of Jacob's ash-brother.[76] Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau are Biblical examples of one brother being suppressed or destroyed by the other.

The fairy tale replaces sibling relations with relations between step-siblings—perhaps a device to explain and make acceptable an animosity which one wishes would not exist among true siblings. Although sibling rivalry is universal and "natural" in the sense that it is the negative consequence of being a sibling, this same relation also generates equally as much positive feeling between siblings, highlighted in fairy tales such as "Brother and Sister."

No other fairy tale renders so well as the "Cinderella" stories the inner experiences of the young child in the throes of sibling rivalry, when he feels hopelessly outclassed by his brothers and sisters. Cinderella is pushed down and degraded by her stepsisters; her interests are sacrificed to theirs by her (step)mother; she is expected to do the dirtiest work and although she performs it well, she receives no credit for it; only more is demanded of her. This is how the child feels when devastated by the miseries of sibling rivalry. Exaggerated though Cinderella's tribulations and degradations may seem to the adult, the child carried away by sibling rivalry feels, "That's me; that's how they mistreat me, or would want to; that's how little they think of me." And there are moments—often long time periods—when for inner reasons a child feels this way even when his position among his siblings may seem to give him no cause for it.

When a story corresponds to how the child feels deep down—as no realistic narrative is likely to do—it attains an emotional quality of "truth" for the child. The events of "Cinderella" offer him vivid images that give body to his overwhelming but nevertheless often vague and nondescript emotions; so these episodes seem more convincing to him than his life experiences.

The term "sibling rivalry" refers to a most complex constellation of feelings and their causes. With extremely rare exceptions, the emo-