

Archetypal analysis of “Cinderella”

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Abstract. Psychologists often use the name of the protagonist of the fairy tale “Cinderella”, which is famous thanks to the brothers Grimm and Charles Perrault, for a sacrificial girl prone to dissociation, illusions, and waiting for a prince. This is typical for psychoanalysis. However, such an idea of Cinderella’s character does not fully reflect the essence of the matter. Moreover, it is generally not true. From the perspective of C.G. Jung’s analytical psychology, Cinderella is not a victim or an infantile dreamer and is not a real girl at all. Any tale represents an archetypal process of individuation. This is a collective natural constant of the psyche that excludes individual problems. Cinderella cultivated in herself what the ancient Greeks called “paideia” – the integrity of the personality and inner strength, influence on others. The purpose of the article is to describe the process of Cinderella’s individualization from the position of C.G. Jung’s archetypal approach based on the amplification method. The most relevant sources of recent years on the archetypal analysis of fairy tales are the works by M.-L. von Franz, H. Dieckmann, and C.P. Estés. The novelty of the study consists in the description and analysis of the archetypal images of the collective unconscious, which underlie the process of Cinderella’s individuation and determine her life path. These archetypal images are Persona, Self, Shadow, Anima/Animus, and the symbolic levels of the individuation process can be represented by such alchemical terms as “separation”, “multiplication”, “calcination”, “initiation”, “transformation”, “conjunction”, “solidification”. The levels testify to the character’s inner transformation and, as a result, lead to a happy woman’s destiny. The result of understanding the deep essence of the tale is a psychologist’s analytical work with modern young women, which will lead to positive changes in thinking and behavior.

Keywords: individualization, unconscious, Self

1 Introduction

1.1 Prerequisites for the study

Psychologists often use the name of the protagonist of the fairy tale “Cinderella”, which is famous thanks to the brothers Grimm and Charles Perrault, for a sacrificial girl prone to dissociation, illusions, and waiting for a prince. However, this view does not fully reflect the essence of the matter. This circumstance prompted a study, the *theoretical framework* of

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which is C.G. Jung's analytical psychology. According to analytical psychology, any fairy tale represents an archetypal process of individuation, a collective natural constant of the psyche [1: 18]. Cinderella, therefore, is not a victim and is not a real girl at all. The *novelty* of this study lies in the identification of archetypal images of the collective unconscious and symbolic levels of Cinderella's individuation. *Hypothesis*: Cinderella cultivated in herself what the ancient Greeks called "paideia", and alchemists "philosopher's stone" – the integrity of the personality and inner strength, influence on others.

The purpose of the study: is to describe the process of Cinderella's individualization from the position of C.G. Jung's archetypal approach [2]. *Research objectives*: analyze the symbols and stages of the process of Cinderella's individuation. *Research methods*: C.G. Jung's archetypal approach of and analysis of the fairy tale based on the amplification method. *The criterion for selecting sources* for analysis is compliance with the approach and method, combined with the depth of psychological analysis. These are the works of the undisputed authorities in the field of psychological interpretation of fairy tales M.-L. von Franz, H. Dieckmann, and C.P. Estés [1, 3–7]. *The result* of understanding the deep essence of a fairy tale is a psychologist's analytical work with modern young women, which will lead to positive changes in thinking and behavior.

2 Methods

Due to her mother's death, Cinderella's separation from maternal care and love occurs earlier [4: 122, 7]. The area of feeling, Eros, is destroyed. Cinderella's father withdraws from the relationship with her and marries a woman with two daughters. The father, who must embody the principle of spirituality and order for the girl, Logos, does not fulfill his function. The authoritative stepmother (the dominant of the collective consciousness) tasked Cinderella with hard housework. Cinderella fetched water, stoked the stove, cooked and washed. The labor of the washerwoman, who was likened to Cinderella, in the language of alchemists, metaphorically signified one of the aspects of the Great Work –cleansing the soul from dark layers [3: 199, 8: 22].

Water as a symbol indicates the unconscious principle of the psyche as a creative and compensatory basis for life. The unconscious corrects various conscious prerequisites [3: 26, 9: 76–77] and can create something new from the spirit of life itself. This is the sphere of feelings in the female psyche that Cinderella lacks [1: 35, 7]. The fire kindled in the furnace expresses the Logos, the rational masculine principle, that creates and arranges images, strengthens the soul – calcificatio. Symbolic cooking in fairy tales is analogous to an alchemical laboratory in which elements are mixed to create the philosopher's stone (*lapis*). The Philosopher's Stone, or Self, can be created from any element because its secret matter is the unconscious.

At Cinderella's request, her father brought her from the fair a hazel branch which almost knocked the hat off the father's head on the way. The symbol of the hat in fairy tales indicates a person's social status. A knocked-off hat indicates the father's misbehavior and the loss of his paternal qualities. Planted on the mother's grave and watered with Cinderella's hot tears, the branch grew and became a beautiful tree, and a bird settled on its branches.

The tree is an archetypal image of the individuation process, as well as the connection of worlds. Starting from the most ancient Indian texts (Atharvaveda), the cosmos is presented as a giant tree [4: 111]. In the Upanishads, the branches of the tree are air, fire, water, earth, and space. The tree is also the source of life for all living things due to its fertility and is associated with the Great Goddess. The tree was also perceived as a symbol of the resurrection. This image was reflected in myths and fairy tales, in particular, in "Cinderella".

The bird is the guardian and epiphany of the creative forces of life, the mediator between the unconscious and consciousness, life and death. The mystical incarnation of the mother is

expressed through the tree and the bird. Death is a change in the form of existence, a transformation. The unconscious constantly creates, “is reborn and renewed, reveals itself in an infinite and inexhaustible variety of forms” [4: 178]. Hazel, as well as the *cinder* of burnt trees, which will be reborn as seeds, belong to the general circle of this cycle. The name of Cinderella indicates not so much the dirt that accompanies the cinder, but rather the rebirth and connection with the Great Goddess.

The motif of sorting grains is work that requires patience and calmness, sensory comprehension (*eros*). Cinderella separates wheat and peas, followed by lentils and cinders. At the psychosomatic level, Cinderella understands their different qualities, cultivates sensual subtlety in herself, develops intuition [3: 206]. The bird that helps the girl to separate grains from cinders and sends her dresses also supports the “feathering” spirit of Cinderella. In the fairy tale “Cinderella” by Charles Perrault, the archetypal content of the mother appears in an almost human form – Cinderella’s godmother, a fairy. On the one hand, this suggests that the archetypal content has reached the level of the girl’s consciousness [3: 152, 6]. On the other hand, the godmother is a sorceress and therefore represents the transforming divine power of the Great Goddess.

Grains, wood, and cinders keep the sacred secret of rebirth and multiplication of life [4: 178, 10]. Until the time comes, the grains and roots of trees are in the dark earth, then they are strengthened and saturated with water. For the tree to turn into ash, the tree must be exposed to fire. The counterpart to this is the *multiplicatio* of alchemists. When a philosopher’s stone is created in an alchemical vessel, “several days pass in extreme agony”, the stone disintegrates in the darkness of the secret substance (the unconscious). Then the stone is exposed to fire, heated up strongly and for a long time, and after that, it is enriched with philosophical mercury (the spirit). Then the stone is repeatedly moistened, for it hardened more than necessary. “Now the Stone ripens to its perfection and resurrection” [5: 56]. The time comes, the vessel is opened and the light (consciousness) that touches the stone restores it. “The spirit and soul have now completely penetrated the body... the fleeting formation and death have lost their power” [5: 57]. The stone itself becomes a source of transformative influence.

The education of Cinderella’s soul is similar. In a depressed state of mind, Cinderella shows humility, patience, and conscientiousness. Among the ash and dirt, dividing the grains, the heroine fully realized all the connections and qualities of things [3: 211]. Having experienced resentment and disappointment during monotonous work, Cinderella changes. The heroine develops the subtlety of intuition, active imagination, feels the living and dead energy of transformations. Cinderella has nurtured in herself a “philosopher’s stone”, the core of the spirit, and can now have a transforming effect on her own life, perform miracles.

Thanks to the changes in Cinderella’s soul, feelings (*Eros*) awakened and the girl wants to go to the ball. However, Cinderella has no dresses, slippers, or carriages, but there is a magical power of transformation. The miraculous phenomenon of a dress and a carriage is the release of the magical energy of the collective unconscious, a suggestion of a higher order (a bird or the magic of a fairy godmother). Cinderella’s carriage is the numinous aspect of her Self. Animals transformed into horses and coachmen are a transformation of the shadow aspect of the soul that endures suffering. Embroidered with silk and silver, and then made of pure gold (Grimm) or crystal (Parro), Cinderella’s slippers are positive symbols of enlightenment and inherent vitality, libido. This is also a symbol of the Self in the aspect of independent movement towards the goal. Gold and silver dresses indicate, respectively, the light of the sun (consciousness) and the moon (the unconscious).

Cinderella knows the boundaries of what is happening – when the clock strikes midnight, everything will disappear. The period of sacred time is limited by the mystery, because any forces, even divine ones, acting within the confines of profane activity, dissipate and disappear [4: 294]. In other words, if Cinderella continues to dance after midnight, her

“transformation”, magic suggestion will end and everyone will see the old dress and wooden shoes. At the ball, the prince immediately noticed a beautiful stranger (Cinderella) and invited her to dance. An ancient, deep meaning is hidden in the dance pattern. Dance was one of the main elements of ancient cultures and was part of rituals. It was believed that celestial bodies in a vast space are moved by some force around the deity, and the ritual dance seemed to synchronize the earthly and cosmic energy [3: 81]. The dance of Cinderella and the prince, if one drew a parallel with ancient rituals, is a dynamic expression of the mandala, in the center of which dancing figures of different sexes represent the supreme union of man and woman, the coniunctio, who are spiritually and sensually united.

However, as a magician who was overwhelmed by a wave of transformation, Cinderella did not keep track of time at the second ball. At midnight, while fleeing, one of Cinderella’s slippers stuck to the stairs. Once in the prince’s hands, the slipper serves as a bridge between the sacred and profane worlds. The prince personifies the active masculine energy of the unconscious – the archetypal impulse of will. The prince must recognize Cinderella by her slipper (by the magical energy of libido). The failed fitting of a slipper to Cinderella’s sisters is highlighting the protagonist as the One for the prince. This is the end of the phase of the formation of a new structure of Cinderella’s identity [3: 211–213, 11]. The highest form of union of opposites arises – the alchemical union of the King and Queen or Mysterium Coniunctionis. It means solificatio – the achievement of the Self by Cinderella.

Over the past 5 years, psychology, including Russian psychology, has shown considerable interest in the analysis of fairy tales and practical work in the field of fairy tale therapy. This theory and practice are complemented by this study and its findings.

3 Conclusion

Understanding the archetypal foundations of a fairy tale will allow psychologists to develop tactics for correcting modern heroines. It is necessary to help girls understand that in real life there is not always an equivalent reward for work. It is necessary to develop the stability of the soul, the capacity for sincere human relationships regardless of gender and social status, collect and multiply positive impressions. *Results and prospects*: Elimination of projections will allow one to focus on oneself and discover inner strength and desire to change, reveal the potential of the Self.

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