Fairy Tale and Dreamwork Therapy Reveal Insights into Deep Seated Trauma.



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INTRODUCTION

This paper documents the case study of Ellen, a woman approaching her eightieth year who had had two memorable dreams. Perhaps the dreams wouldn't have seemed so significant had she not been collating studies of creative play sessions focusing on Fairy Tales. Ellen's dreams reminded her of two key aspects of the story of Snow White. Prompted by this insight, she believed that by exploring the Jungian symbolism of this particular fairy tale, she would uncover hidden shadows within her own personality. Self-reflection is something we often resist to avoid self-judgement but Ellen declared she was ready to process her own journey of self-actualisation.

In the first dream, Ellen was polishing two mirrors either side of the fireplace of her childhood home. In the second, she was with a child of about eight years old, who she believed to be her childhood self, who was asking her for an apple. As she pondered on the meaning of the mirror and the apple, the trials and tribulations of Snow White had immediately come to mind. She remembered the magic mirror belonging to the Queen, Snow White's evil stepmother and the bite from the apple causing the heroine's temporary

demise before the kiss of the prince had heralded her happy ending. (For those who may not be familiar with the narrative, Snow White's story is documented in the Appendix.)

From experience, I know that in studying fairy tales, we can discover a lot about ourselves. The narrative of these ancient tales handed down through generations, can prompt us to reflect on our inner processes and our shadow self, the darker suppressed parts of our personality. These stories resonate with aspects of the human experience. Themes of love, loss and transformation. The hero or heroine's ability to overcome adversity offers a salve for those suffering from anxiety and unreasonable fears.

In the story of Snow White, we are familiar with the Queen's demand for reassurance, '*Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all*?' On hearing her mirror's positive response, we are made aware of the Queen's desperate need to keep it that way. Ellen's dream of two mirrors is intriguing, perhaps one mirror symbolises truth telling, which could cause insecurity. The other mirror reflecting a mask projected to the outer world. Conscious identity versus unconscious soul identity. The concealed inner self in one and the revealed outer projection in the other. Throughout our life we may seek out positive reflections in order to shape a more worthy and solid sense of self.

ELLEN'S STORY

Together, we embarked on a deeply personal exploration in relation to the mirror and the apple, which are but two aspects of Snow White's story. As a young woman, Ellen was uncomfortable in her own skin and was aware that somehow her inside didn't match up with her outside. With a lively imagination and fond of pretending, dressing up was fun and at eight years old she was charging friends and family a three-penny-bit (1954 currency) to watch a performance of The Frog Prince in a friend's barn. Ellen was the princess with the golden ball and her childhood friend was the frog prince hoping for transformation. Her friend's two younger brothers doubled up to play any other roles required. As an adult, Ellen had played many parts, the attentive hostess at dinner parties, laughing too loudly, speaking too quickly; the alternative therapist with long earrings and flowered trousers; the magistrate in sombre dress and the foster mother with the ever- open door, a child on her hip and one in a cot! The proverbial swan, appearing calm on the surface and paddling furiously beneath, parading as super woman, armoured in a cloak of denial. Not so unusual you may say, many women

feel that way when forced to acknowledge that after much effort there is little to show for it and they are ageing out of the male gaze.

In her early years, Ellen's mother disallowed compliments with '*don't tell her that*'. At the age of eleven, she remembered her father, forgetting the unspoken law, telling her that she looked nice in her cream shorts. Her mother was visibly annoyed and swept out of the room. It didn't happen again. In her teenage years, Ellen's anxiety about her appearance was dismissed with '*who is going to look at you*?' She thought her mother beautiful with dark hair, olive complexion and green eyes. Ellen was sandy haired, inheriting her father's colouring. Her mother's relentless criticism and inability to give praise were underpinned by her unhappiness and depression which had caused her to withdraw from her daughter. This negative attitude prompted Ellen to seek external validation and approval until she could learn self-reliance and achieve internal sovereignty of her own feelings.

As a teenager, Ellen gravitated to the local youth club where boys would congregate. Her mother warned '*don't let me see you holding hands my girl*' and '*Be careful, it would kill your father*.' She was never actually told what would kill her father and didn't ask. Tempted by sexual risk and potential danger, her mother's warning sent her undercover. Believing it to be forbidden, it was therefore exciting to sneak out under the cover of darkness to experience her burgeoning senses**,** although any outward show of affection was suppressed in public. Snow White's punishment ends in her reaching the appropriate time or sexual maturity by going through a period of inner work as she lay within the glass coffin. Would Ellen's inner work be her salvation?

THE MIRROR AND THE APPLE

Does a mirror reveal all our secrets, the hidden shadows and blatant truths? Does our outer world reflect our inner world? Are we willing or able to see our reflection with all its faults? If our unhappiness is unprocessed it is internalised and skews our perception of the outside world, our shame and lack of self-worth causing us to project criticism and judgement on others, thus giving outward expression to that which is too painful to contain within.

What of the apple? In her story, Snow White was presented with an apple that was half red and half white. According to Jung, the apple was exhibiting both the good and the dangerous side of sexuality. The apple symbolises sexual temptation and we have the well-known biblical symbolism of the

temptation of Eve. Bettelheim believed that an apple represented the sweetness of sensual pleasure. Love and sex in both benevolent and dangerous aspects. The loss of innocence in the transition to womanhood.

UNDERSTANDING OUR PARENTS

It is said that fairy tales reflect our inner experience of father and mother. Throughout our life we build walls and defences to protect ourselves and we attempt to build bridges in an effort to relate to others. It is my understanding that we choose our parents in an attempt to learn the lessons required for the refinement of our soul. We come to this life equipped for whatever challenges we may face, if we have the courage to do so. Taking responsibility for our mistakes and forgiving ourselves and asking forgiveness in turn from those who have been hurt by our choices is a continual process. Ellen's parents were of a generation that faced hardship and unimaginable fear, who she felt did their best with the experience they had had. When they met at a village dance in 1945, the war had just ended. Her father had been recently demobbed from a harrowing five year posting in North Africa. After leaving school at fifteen, her mother had worked at an aircraft factory in Surrey until, at the outbreak of the second World War, she had joined the army, at the age of 18. She was eventually posted as a telephonist to a Canadian Army base in Hampshire**.** In 1943, she had a passionate relationship with an officer in the Canadian army who had complimented her on her voice. However, a few months later, when she told him she was pregnant, he said he was married and vacated the scene. His commanding officer offered money for an abortion which she declined. In 1945, after a brief courtship she married Ellen's father.

When Ellen's parents moved to the north of England, the little boy remained with her maternal grandparents. Her father's refusal to take the child had forced her mother into a painful choice. Once married, she had been forbidden to speak of her son. She kept her secret in lonely isolation and internalised her feelings to her own detriment. Had she been desperate to escape the constraints of home and imposed motherhood? Maybe she wanted the abortion. There are so many questions Ellen wished she had asked when the painful secret was finally revealed after her father's death so many years later.

At this juncture, Ellen was concerned lest her father be labelled a villain and hastened to add that in those bygone days, illegitimacy brought shame on both family and child. In her 60s, Ellen had explored her family tree and

discovered that her paternal grandfather was an illegitimate son and that her father's family surname was taken from his grandmother. This, she believed, was the reason that to her father, illegitimacy was abhorrent and shameful. Although by marrying her mother he hadn't seemingly condemned her but he had silenced her. Ellen's mother carried this anguish inside her for 57 years and Ellen was 57 when her mother told her stating '*you are my second not my first*'. From that time, Ellen was displaced as the eldest of two younger brothers. Without her mother's consent, Ellen's elder half-brother, had been adopted at the age of three by a couple in her grandparent's village. The disclosure was prompted by her mother's desire to find him and a request for her help. With the aid of an agency, there was eventually, in Ellen's presence, a happy reunion for mother and son and they shared quality time before her mother's death several years later. Ellen was fast approaching the age of her mother when the secret was revealed and she was ready to bring the light of compassion to eradicate the shadows lurking beneath.

MEMORIES AND REFLECTION

At home, as a child there had been atmospheres and tension. No rows, her parents didn't argue, her father's word was law and unshakeable. Her mother would either cry or withdraw hurt for several days. Her father, she said, was intransigent about many things; having been a Sergeant Major in the army he was used to giving orders and expected them to be followed. He never raised his hand or shouted. He didn't need to, the tone of his voice was enough. In her friend's households, their mother was a go between to plead a case but not so in Ellen's family. She rarely heard laughter and preferred to be out of the house rather than in. it.

Ellen expressed a feeling as a child of suppressing exuberance or excitement and tiptoeing on eggshells. Noise was unwelcome. Her mother was anxious and depressed, therefore boisterous behaviour would cause alarm or irritation. Injuries to Ellen, however small, instilled panic. Ellen stoically kept them to herself. With hindsight, her mother was a tender flower, personal pain had caused her to be oversensitive to life, traumatised by gossip and the opinions of others. By keeping her secret a secret for so long, it had become a much bigger secret. Hers was a generation trapped in hypocrisy. As a child, Ellen accepted things as they were and adapted accordingly. Feeling ignored, rejected or criticised destabilises us emotionally. Wanting attention can become the dominant theme of our lives.

Ellen found ways of managing these feelings. Her father was closed and distant but his attitude taught her resilience in adversity.

'SANS TEETH, SANS EVERYTHING'

In the Summer of her eighteenth birthday, following a regular visit to the dentist, Ellen was told that her teeth were chalky and would crumble easily. It would therefore be better to remove them all. In the early 1960s, it wasn't unusual to have all your teeth removed to save dental costs. In relating these events Ellen was alarmed at her compliancy in agreeing to this seemingly barbarous procedure at such a young age. Nevertheless, in one appointment, her teeth were removed and upper and lower dentures were placed in her mouth. Following the extraction, Ellen stoically persevered through pain and discomfort, keeping the teeth in her mouth apart from brushing because the thought of being without them horrified her. She remembered placing a towel over the bathroom mirror when brushing to avoid seeing her toothless self. Her secret was kept to a chosen few for many years. She was reluctant to smile for photographs. Until chewing was mastered, sitting opposite someone at mealtimes was avoided where possible.

In the October of that year Ellen left home for London to train as a speech and language therapist. She vividly remembers one morning, in her first year before leaving for lectures, she dropped her bottom set of teeth in the wash basin of her lodgings while brushing. The dental plate split in half. Mortified, she rang home, hoping to catch the next train back to Lincolnshire, to find help to fix them. Her father, on answering the 'phone told her not to come home but to find help in London. Ellen spent a desperate morning searching for a technician to mend her teeth, stating that this experience had taught her resourcefulness, having to deal with her own problems in a strange city. The adverse reaction to Ellen's cry for help, reminded me that in Fairy tales, the king or father of the main character in distress (symbolically representing the soul) is usually dead, weak or absent. This symbolises the soul's connection to the divine or primary creative source may be weak or absent. Was this so for Ellen? I enquired further. At the age of seventeen she had attended the local church and had taught at Sunday school but one day had challenged the local vicar by vociferously querying the discrepancies between the punishing, jealous God of the old testament and the message of love and forgiveness in the New. No satisfactory answer was forthcoming and disillusioned, she left the church never to return.

ARCHETYPE OF THE HAG

As a young woman, Ellen was despondent about her lack of teeth and in her darker moments, she thought of herself as 'a toothless hag'. She actually voiced this humorously to those who knew her secret. Was this another clue? Wasn't the hag the guise of the Queen when she discovered Snow White's whereabouts? The hag archetype in Jungian psychology is said to be a figurative representation of subconscious fears of the unknown and when Ellen's teeth were removed, she was preparing to move to the city of London alone.

On a metaphysical level, teeth relate to making decisions and symbolise power, strength, and the ability to bite back. Lack of teeth can be interpreted as a loss of conventional power, a rejection of societal expectations and a call to focus on inner strength and wisdom. This certainly resonated. The hag is often associated with the shadow self, the unconscious part of the personality containing aspects we reject or repress. The shadow could represent Ellen's rejection of parental expectations, her father had wanted her to be a teacher, which she rejected. Choosing instead to work with those who struggled with communication was a move toward a more authentic self. The anima is often associated with beauty, nurturing, and creativity. The hag's lack of charm and physical attractiveness may represent a rejection of these traditional anima characteristics, or a stage where the anima is not yet fully integrated. Ellen didn't feel that she was rejecting physical attractiveness but that this had been lost along with nurturing and creativity which she felt she lacked.

MARRIAGE AND RELATIONSHIP

After taking her second-year exams and two weeks after her 20th birthday Ellen married a lawyer 12 years her senior, who she had first met on holiday at the age of 13. She delighted in the company of children and endeavoured to redeem her own skewed perception of being mothered by becoming a foster parent of newly born babies after the birth of one biological son and before the adoption of her second son. With her husband, she later fostered and adopted three more children, two older sisters and a little boy of fourteen months. Her fostered children had their own insecurities, having been abandoned by their own mother in early childhood to be housed with well-meaning strangers. Ellen's parents in law also lived with the family for 11 years until in old age, they passed away. Life was therefore not without its dramas. She continued to be involved in the world of theatre, claiming

that she sometimes prioritised her own enjoyment over that of her children. She subjugated her own personality in that of another in a fantasy world of pretence and artificiality. Theatre work provided an outlet for expression. Within the confines of a script she was safe to express multiple identities in the hope of finding her own before discovering that they were all her mirror. She finally left her marriage after 24 years.

James Hollis tells us that there is a dragon in everyone's subconscious, which is the legacy of being dependent on the judgement of others. When people are tired, stressed or under the influence of alcohol, it comes roaring out of the basement. Believing this to be true, Ellen perceived the dragon as a woman devoid of her senses crouching in a bag that Ellen dragged behind her, knowing that this woman could spontaneously explode from her confines at any moment.

Ellen's second marriage partner had his own troubles, which, mixed with hers became a toxic cocktail of triggers and reaction until Ellen embarked on a spiritual healing journey and gained autonomy over her internal processes. With insight, she began to regulate her emotions and gained detachment, becoming indifferent to disempowering taunts. At which point, the landscape of her second marriage lost its colour and the relationship fizzled out like a 'damp squib.'

THE AWAKENING

In her fifties, Ellen became disillusioned with the symptom focused approach of her profession and decided to train in the principles and practice of metaphysical healing. Metaphysics equates with the non-physical basic cause and nature of things and healing remedies that are not physical. This involved a commitment to her own healing which prompted Ellen to work in a more intuitive, playful way. Music, sound and creative play began to lift the heavy cloak of control that enveloped her.

After her father's death, Ellen joined a guided spiritual community founded by her healer and mentor. This was surely the kiss of awakening by the prince, her higher intuitive self? For the first time she became aware that her life had purpose. In 2.000, through an experience of non-local communication with a stream of higher consciousness she received guidance on her life work of expression through voice and was given the image of her logo. Through the guidance, Ellen was taught a system of 8 chakra vocal tones to cleanse and balance the chakras and the subtle energy system. She knew nothing of toning prior to this profound experience but

discovered that it was a powerful and ancient system of healing through voice.

As spiritual beings in a physical body we are enveloped and permeated by vibratory layers of accelerating frequencies of energy which emanate from a higher primary creative source. The chakras are a system of seven energetic hubs situated along the spine that metabolise this incoming life-giving energy. For her own healing, Ellen has sustained her practice of the chakra tones to this day and has travelled extensively for many years to pass on this teaching.

THE DWARFS AND CORRESPONDENCE TO THE CHAKRAS

In Marianne Murdock's non -traditional approach to Snow White's story, the seven dwarfs are symbolically associated with the chakras of the body. In this symbolisation, we recognise synchronicity in the nature of Ellen's own healing. The dwarfs represent different aspects of life which Snow White is required to process and overcome. This interpretation incorporates the archetypal patterns demonstrated in myths and spiritual traditions, emphasising the importance of feminine values and a woman's search for wholeness. (Murdock M 1990).

Grumpy represents the base or root chakra which is associated with identity and survival, stability and security. Defensiveness, resistance to change and acting on impulse is indicative of an unbalanced base chakra, whereas a positive and flowing base would be expressed through loyalty, a willingness to delay immediate gratification and a strong sense of self preservation. Snow White lacked discernment, as did Ellen on many occasions acting impulsively and courting danger in her earlier years.

Dopey represents the emotional expression of the sacral chakra, displaying playfulness, innocence, spontaneity and joy. When this chakra is unbalanced, we are caught up in the push and pull of relationship. Ellen began to love the joy and spontaneity of her work once she was free of the controlling constraints and precepts of her former beliefs.

Happy is associated with confidence and personal power which he demonstrated through warmth and optimism, reflecting a balanced solar plexus, the gateway to the heart and the junction box of the nervous system. When this chakra is unbalanced, we have difficulty regulating our emotions and we are caught up in jealousy, fear and anxiety which we may endeavour to repress through cigarettes and alcohol and other addictive substances.

Bashful is associated with love and the emotional openness of the heart. He is shy, representing tenderness and vulnerability as he seeks unconditional love and connection that is not transactional. Once we are able to love ourselves we are able to extend this love to others without expectation.

Sleepy demonstrates the throat chakra –When the throat chakra is out of balance, communication is quiet, weak, unclear and sluggish. Toning began to clear this chakra for Ellen, reducing ambiguity and reactional response. A healthy throat chakra facilitates the expression of our spiritual purpose and emotional intention. It is a powerful tool of expression. The willingness of the heart is expressed through the throat.

Doc demonstrates the positive expression of the third eye chakra, through wisdom, intuition, discernment and mental clarity. Snow White's sleep-like state in the glass coffin allowed time for inner work to strengthen these qualities. Sneezy represents the crown chakra, the spiritual connection to higher consciousness, activated by the kiss of the prince, the higher-self-connection. Sneezing symbolises an uncontrollable opening of energy due to sensitivity to higher energies.

CONCLUSION

Change is a painful process. We have held onto the baggage we carry for many lifetimes. To truly look into the mirror and see our reflection is not easy for we are faced with a choice to either change and move forward or stay still and stagnate. Understanding our patterns and releasing the negativity held within the chakras and within our cellular memory is a requirement unless we sustain damage through prolonged holding. For many, the heart is not open and our planet holds a massive manifestation of closed hearts. A release could angrily manifest as lava not love. We come to earth to put the heart first, to achieve unconditional love and return. If we fail to live in the heart we are held in the denser vibration of physicality. The material world, consumerisms and mechanisms of control magnify the weakness and fear of heart connection. Ellen's ability to reflect on periods of her life proved cathartic. She did not blame her parents for the difficulties she experienced because they were born out of her innate patterns of relating and fired in the furnace of family dynamics. Ellen felt that much of her suffering was self-inflicted, finding humour is key to any difficult transition, letting go of the need to be right, the need to be liked and the need to be in control. We must embrace ourselves and each other and claim the higher ground

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APPENDIX

Snow White

'Snow White' is a German fairy tale, first written down in the early 19th century. The Brothers Grimm published it in 1812. Initially, there are three women in the story, the young queen who dies in childbirth, the child bereft of her birth mother and the wicked stepmother who endeavours to kill the heroine. The story opens on a winter's day as a young Queen embroiders on an ebony frame. She pricks her finger and seeing the red blood, makes a wish that her unborn child has skin as white as snow, lips as red as blood and hair as black as ebony. Her daughter is born with these gifts but the Queen dies in childbirth. A year later, her husband, the king, remarries but his new Queen although beautiful, is vain and proud. She relies on her magic mirror to reassure her that she is the most beautiful in the land. However, when Snow White is 7 years old, the mirror tells the Queen that the child surpasses her in beauty. Enraged, she sends for a huntsman to take the child into the forest and kill her. He is told to return with the child's heart. The huntsman feeling sorry for the child abandons her in the forest rather than killing her and returns to the queen with the heart of a deer.

Alone and frightened, Snow White wanders through the forest and discovers a cottage, the home of seven dwarfs who are out at work mining for precious minerals in a nearby mountain. On their return home they discover Snow White asleep on one of the beds. The dwarfs allow her to stay in return for housekeeping. They are concerned for Snow White's safety and warn her not to allow anyone into the house while they are away. Meanwhile, back in the castle, the mirror informs the Queen that Snow White is still alive and therefore still the most beautiful. The Queen makes three more attempts to kill her by interacting with Snow White through an open window. In the first attempt she presents a laced corset in the hope of stopping Snow White's breath, in the second attempt she appeals to her vanity with a poisoned comb and in the third attempt, she seemingly succeeds with a poisoned apple. The dwarfs return and believing Snow White to be dead place her in a glass coffin so that she remains beautiful for all to see. A prince comes by on his horse and falls in love with her. As he lifts her from the coffin to kiss

her, the piece of apple falls from her throat and her life returns. The happy pair returned to the prince's palace to be married amidst great rejoicing. The step mother is invited to the wedding but dances herself to death in red hot shoes.