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Hidden essence and meaning of wonder stories

Abstact: It is difficult to tell fairy tales, because they are not ordinary stories. They are sacral multidimensional works bearing hidden sense and reflecting the stages of the human perception of the world through mythic imagination. That is why they are diverse and interesting. All great things in art and literature are nourished by the forms of images of this ancient mythic thinking, which is true of fairy tales, too. Wonder stories, in particular, originate from the mythos that shows how ancient humans perceived and had faith in the peculiarities of the changeable nature.

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Fairy tales tell us about the possibility of constant renovation and their heroes are not ordinary mortals - our ancestors. They are de-sacralised deities of mythic origin presented in the shape of humans. That is why after they travel across the three worlds of the universe or the four sides of the world - the countries of the living and the dead - they have sufficient force to return to their initial place. The death of a mythic hero is only his birth in a new situation. Therefore, it is about deities of mythic origin and relations between them, not ordinary everyday reality.

This means that in wonder stories, a hero of divine origin periodically travels across both opposed halves of our universe - the worlds of the living and the dead, finds his lost spouse "there", returns together with her, and marries her again, which is a precondition for the renovation of the whole universe that is put to sleep due to the separation of deities. This also means that fairy tales are about the possibility of the constant renovation of the universe. The paths of their heroes that are full of obstacles are the same as the road travelled by the deities of productivity - Tammuz and Osiris. All this serves to give listeners hope, calmness, and belief in the future.

This renovation and the resurrection of a hero, which a hero of divine origin is capable of, is only possible after his death. It is like the sun that cannot rise again unless it sets, a new day that cannot start unless the previous day ends in the night, and spring that cannot come unless winter comes. If such things were not happening periodically, the universe would come to a halt, which would be equal to its end. That is why Sun God Helios constantly drives his chariot. Heroes of fairy tales constantly move for the same reason. By moving constantly and travelling across the three worlds, they make a circle, establish cosmic order and prevent the cyclic nature of the universe from being violated.

This means that the main point in a fairy tale is not the hero's going away, getting lost, or dying (going down a well, climbing the sky, going through a ritual of initiation, or undergoing a metamorphosis). The main point is that he is victorious, he returns, revives, and is resurrected, being renewed by divine force.

According to ancient beliefs, a hero of a fairy tale, a de-sacralised mythic deity, can be resurrected only in one case - if he is killed in a violent manner, just like it is only mown grass that can grow again unlike rotten and flaccid grass. In the same manner, a living being (king, priest) regarded as equal to a deity is to

be killed before he becomes feeble in order to give the country an opportunity for future revival (Frazier 1980). Later, beating, cursing, insulting, ridiculing, and deceiving a hero replaced this motif and acquired the same function as killing in magic stories. Correspondingly, there is no fairy tale without confrontation between heroes, as the secret of the eternal nature of the universe is in the struggle of opposing forces.

It follows that according to ancient beliefs, periodical movement of a deity from this world to the "other" world, his killing and resurrection, going round the circle and constant movement make the universe eternal. Without deities constantly moving between the two worlds, which is reflected in myths and, correspondingly, fairy tales by their killing and resurrection, an end to the universe would be inevitable. It is to avert this that heroes of fairy tales periodically die and revive, which means that the death of a hero of a fairy tale is only a transfiguration. It is death in the old condition, which should be followed by birth in a new and more important condition.

In addition to other aspects, fairy tales had magic force. There were rituals, where souls of the dead were told such tales in order to facilitate their resurrection. This happened in the ritual of Lipanali in Svaneti (Bardavelidze 1953) and Sultaoba in Imereti and Kartli. Fairy tales were also told during night vigils with dead people, cooking korkoti (porridge of pounded wheat), and wedding parties. To correctly analyse the function and phenomenon of fairy tales, it is necessary to take into account the materials on the tradition of telling fairy tales obtained in field conditions by prominent specialist in folklore Ksenia Sikharulidze. It was forbidden to tell them in the daytime in Georgia, as well as in summer. This could be done only at night and in winter, which is similar to the traditions of various other nations (Sikharulidze 1958: 250-251). "Genuine myths" should also be told in sacral periods of time - at night and mostly in autumn and winter (Eliade 2009: 13). Sikharulidze also writes that there was a tradition of telling fairy tales before sleep and that every well-off family had a professional storyteller for this purpose. The aforementioned is true also of Russia and other countries. Sikharulidze saw the function of narration before sleep also in ancient literary works and fairy tales proper.

It should be taken into account that in fairy tales, night in its mythic sense is a period, when the Sun moves to that world, the world of the dead. Sleep is equivalent to death and even wedding means the death of the bride and bridegroom in their old status. The tradition of telling fairy tales at that time definitely has a sacral function. It must be reinforcing the opinion that a second renewed wedding of the heroes of a magic tale promotes with its magic force the coming of day after night, the coming of spring and the revival and prosperity of the universe.

The tradition of telling fairy tales before sleep may also be interesting for one part of our society, who categorically demand prohibition of telling children fairy tales in general and before sleep in particular. In the meantime, the death of a hero in fairy tales is just a transfiguration, which means that fairy tales are about events important for humankind, not everyday reality. However, some view violence and aggression precisely in such passages of fairy tales, ascribing them only to Georgian tales and demanding that children should not be told such tales. In the meantime, fairy tales of all nations in the world have the same structure. They all have the same level of development, including that of the German fairy tales by Brothers Grimm. Main plots and motifs in fairy tales are similar typologically, which means that they reflect historic memory common for the whole of humankind. As an example, I would like to refer to several passages from the fairy tales by Brothers Grimm that are believed to be non-aggressive (Translation into Georgian by D. Tserediani):

"The words were hardly out of her mouth when the godless crew returned, dragging another young girl along with them. They were all drunk, and paid no heed to her cries and lamentations. They gave her wine to drink, three glasses full, one of white wine, one of red, and one of yellow, and with that her heart gave way and she died. Then they tore of her dainty clothing, laid her on a table, and cut her beautiful body into pieces, and sprinkled salt upon it. ... One of them now noticed a gold ring still remaining on the little finger of the murdered girl, and as he could not draw it off easily, he took a hatchet and cut off the finger" (Brothers Grimm 1992: 206-207).

Another passage: "He threw her down, dragged her by her hair into the chamber, cut off her head on the block, then cut her up into pieces, and her blood flowed out onto the floor. Then he threw her into the basin with the others" (Brothers Grimm 1992: 226). The fate of the other sister was the same. In the fairy tale called *The Juniper Tree*, the stepmother persuades her stepchild, a boy, to open a chest. "'Take out an

apple for yourself'. And while the little boy was leaning over, the Evil One prompted her, and crash! She slammed down the lid, and his head flew off, falling among the red apples. ... 'We will cook him into stew'. Then the mother took the little boy and chopped him in pieces, put him into the pot, and cooked him into stew" (Brothers Grimm 1992a: 7). At the end of the tale, a millstone is thrown on the head of this evil stepmother and she is crushed to death (Brothers Grimm 1992a: 14). There are many other such examples.

Yet another example: "The wicked step-mother was taken before the judge, and put into a barrel filled with boiling oil and venomous snakes, and died an evil death" (Brothers Grimm 1992: 57). European researchers view the function of making children accustomed to stresses in passages like these in fairy tales. The stories described in these German tales are much closer to everyday life and can evoke stronger horror. The main plots and motifs of fairy tales of other nations throughout the world are similar, which means that they are part of common historic memory of humankind.

Fairy tales comprise a lot of protective mechanisms to prevent children from identifying such motifs with real horror. They may include expressions like "Glory to God! Peace on us!" and "God is high, man is low" (Kotetishvili 1961: 312). Georgian fairy tales start with the following words: "There was and there was not", which makes the action indefinite in time and space, pointing to its eternal and universal nature and the internal rhythm of the tales is indicative of the same fact. N. Berdyaev noted that every era has its own rhythm (sic!). The main aspect that distinguishes fairy tales from myths is the idea that becomes visible at the end: Victory that crowns the virtues of this world: "Trouble there, feast here; bran there, flour here", which is the ending of Georgian fairy tales.

The main aspect of fairy tales is not the existence of evil forces, but the heroes' victory over the forces, which is followed by the revival of the heroes and their move to a new status. Heroes achieve victories due to their loyalty to traditional faith, while those defeated are not loyal to it. The main thing is that the victory of the hero of a fairy tale has a great magic force, as it leads the universe to renovation, which becomes a reason or common joy. This is true even of our time. This means that the heroes are not ordinary mortals. Their victories are due to their divine origin and the victories serve to strengthen the faith of the nation that created the fairy tales (Cholokashvili 2004: 182).

In general, substantial changes are to take place in creative thinking to transform a living person into a fictional hero and this did not happen in one moment (Freidenberg 1978: 296).

Today, only children can understand works of this genre correctly. They help them to comprehend the diverse world just like they helped ancient people, because children pass in a short time the stages of the cognition of the world that human perception has passed (G. Barbakadze). This means that children painlessly accept confrontation between heroes that unfolds in fairy tales. Therefore, it is not at all justified to believe that children should not be familiarised with fairy tales without simplifying and adapting the latter. This new vision that has affected works by renowned authors and has been accepted by publishing houses is based on the ignorance of the essence of fairy tales.

Works of this genre have not survived 21 centuries after Christ and probably the same amount of time before Christ to be forgotten now. Fairy tales are works that have the right to select people, who appreciate them. This means that fairy tales are works with particular rhythm and we should take care of them and protect them from violence just like we do in case of paintings, musical and literary works and other kinds of artistic works.

The use of alliterative words, repetition of motifs, and the steady observance of the principle of triplicity create the rhythm of fairy tales. This is the rhythm of the movement of round dances and deities, which was communicated through rotating swastika in ethnographic life and had a positive impact on children's mentality. The distortion of fairy tales is going to transform them into ordinary stories, which are definitely going to give children the feeling of horror.

Rhythm is a most important factor for a work, because as adepts of mysterious wisdom thought, it is the most powerful force that has an impact on the internal feelings of humans (Surguladze 2000). Children can feel everything very well, even better than adults, and we should not deceive them, as this is going to bring really bad results. A victory won by the hero of a fairy tale in a most acute confrontation makes children confident of their potential, helps them to overcome the stifling feeling of fear, and brings

spiritual calm to them. Children view heroes of fairy tales not as desirable personalities. They view themselves in the heroes and it is easy to imagine how elevated they feel realising their own beauty and power.

People should become familiar with fairy tales from their early years in order to maintain ties with ancestors and obtain all the good things that fairy tales can offer: Develop their imagination, ethic and aesthetic feelings, philanthropy, love of work and learning, aspiration for victory, respect for adults, the sense of justice and humour, loyalty to faith, artistic thinking, and figurative speech, high morality, and purposefulness; enrich their vocabulary, learn how to express thoughts laconically, have firm belief in a better future, obtain spiritual calm and so forth. Fairy tales have never had didactic purposes. Their function has always been cognitive.

It is a fact that Brothers Grimm, I. Gogebashvili, and other publishers produced non-adapted fairy tales in collections of works meant for children. It is also noteworthy that the public wants to read precisely traditional fairy tales, as they carry great faith in the victory of virtue.

Fairy tales are multidimensional. I have studied them from another angle and published them for public at large in the Omega magazine: *Fairy Tales Have Always Existed and Will Continue to Exist*, Omega, No 8 in 2001. The work is also included in my work *Fairy Tales and Reality* published in 2009. Given the fact that problem is topical, I had to revert to a couple of problems from the studies in this work.

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