

The Little Mermaid: A Fairytale of Individuation

Sherine Moustafa El Shoura^(*)

Abstract

Researchers that focus on the relationship between mythology, fairytales, and human psyche have been limited. Although theorists such as Jung, mythologist Joseph Campbell, and Jungian analysts James Hollis and Marie Louise von Franz contributed important theories about the importance of these archetypal stories to the field of psychology, this topic remains understudied. My study therefore focuses on how the use of mythology and fairytales helps one connect with one's deeper Self. This study is used to analyze Hans Christian Andersen's (1872-1974) fairytale *The Little Mermaid*. The story describes the process of individual psychological development in a metaphorical language that is accessible to many people and as well as contributive to their unique human life journeys. As a story of redemption, the little mermaid lost an essential part of her Self, the feminine principle, which she had to regain in order to attain an immortal soul. Psychologically speaking, she underwent a life-death-rebirth cycle that allowed her path toward individuation. The little mermaid had to sacrifice herself to the totality of the Self, which included both consciousness and the unconscious. This integration of consciousness and the unconscious allowed her to resume her spiritual path toward Selfhood. Therefore *The Little Mermaid* offers people guidance in their lives.

* Associate Professor at Benha University -Faculty of Arts - Department of English Literature and Language

" عروس البحر": قصة خيالية عن الذات
شيرين مصطفى الشوري
ملخص

تعتبر الأبحاث التي ركزت علي العلاقة بين علم الأساطير وقصص الخيال والنفس البشرية قليلة. وبالرغم من إسهام بعض المفكرين مثل جانج، جورج كامبل، ماري لويز فون فرنز في نظريات تتعلق بأهمية دورالقصص النموذجية في مجال علم النفس؛ فإن الموضوع ما زال تحت الدراسة. ولهذا فإن هذا البحث يركز علي كيف أن علم الأساطير والقصص الخيالية تساعد علي فهم العمق النفسي للشخص.

تحلل هذه الدراسة قصة هنز كريستين إرسون (1872-1974) الخيالية "عروس البحر". وتصف القصة عملية التطور النفسي للشخص في لغة مجازية سهلة المنال للعديد من الناس، ويسهم هذا البحث كذلك في توضيح رحلة الإنسان في الحياة.

تعتبر قصة "عروس البحر" قصة فدائية حيث أن عروس البحر فقدت جزء أساسي من ذاتها و هو المبادئ الأنثوية والتي كان يجب استردادها حتي تصل إلي الروح الخالدة. إما من الناحية الأنسانية فقد خضعت عروس البحر لدورة الحياة والموت ثم البعث من جديد والتي جعلتها تمر تجاه ذاتيهاز فقد ضحت عروس البحر بنفسها لتحقيق الذات والتي جمعت فيها بين الوعي واللاوعي. وقد سمح لها هذا الدمج إلي التخلص من أنانية هذه الذاتز ولهذا فإن هذه القصة تعتبر عرضا لما يدور في داخل النفس البشرية.

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Researchers that focus on the relationship between mythology, fairytales, and human psyche have been limited. Although theorists such as Jung, mythologist Joseph Campbell, and Jungian analysts James Hollis and Marie Louise von Franz contributed important theories about the importance of these archetypal stories to the field of psychology, this topic remains understudied. My study therefore focuses on how the use of mythology and fairytales helps one connect with one's deeper Self. This study is used to analyze Hans Christian Andersen's (1872-1974) fairytale *The Little Mermaid*. The story describes the process of individual psychological development in a metaphorical language that is accessible to many people and as well as contributive to their unique human life journeys.

As the central archetype, the Self subordinates all other archetypes such that "every archetypal image carries at least a partial aspect of the Self" (Edinger 38-39). Studying the archetypes is a process of looking at the mythical world, or the inner world of images inside oneself (Campbell 17). According to Campbell, the imagery of myth is a symbolic language system that communicates deep truths about humanity, and the symbols and deities in myths serve as models that remind people to consider the deeper, transpersonal aspects of life (21). The stories that occur in myths allow people to understand their own stories and function to bring people in contact with themes that resonate human values.

Mythology not only grounds one's personal story in a deeper layer of existence but also functions to provide understanding of one's inner psychic world. According von Franz, the characters and stories in mythology serve as symbolic motifs that reflect the basic patterns of the human psyche (1-12). According to Hollis, all mythology centers around a pattern he called "the cosmic drama" (53). The eternal return is a life-death-rebirth cycle, and the hero's quest is the movement from identification to individuation. Historically, said Hollis, the myth of the eternal return was associated with "[the] Great Mother archetype, which represented procreation and nurturance, the transformation through the many passages of life, and the weaver of fate" (54-55). On the other hand,

the hero's quest was associated with the Father archetype, the solar hero who represented "the capacity to rise to the challenge of life" (55) and take on the task of individualism.

Hollis illustrated that the Great Mother and Father give birth to the archetype of the divine which is synonymous with the Self in that the child is the entity within that undergoes the process of the psychological development and individuation (60). Donald Kalsched pointed out that, like Self the child, as a symbol, is "suspended between two worlds, one material, one spiritual, one inner, one outer; and this dual aspects of the child is part of what marks him or her as a symbol for that paradoxical unity or wholeness" (56) that is the Self.

The child can be seen as the symbol of the emergence of the Self that must undergo the cosmic drama. Hollis identified four parts of the cosmic drama: chaos, creation, separation, and going home (110). Chaos is "a metaphor of the time when the earth was without form and humans nonexistent" (110). Thus to the individual, chaos is like the womb of the great mother or "the fetal state where [individuals] float timelessly through the unconscious sea" (110). Creation is the making of something from nonexistence and corresponds to the coming together of the Great Mother and Father to create the divine child (111). Separation is the embodiment of the hero's quest in that one must become conscious and fully human. Lastly, going home refers to the process of returning to the source of the Mother and reclaiming the renew life one has lost along the way (112). The cosmic drama embodies both the life-death-rebirth cycle and the hero's quest, and that is the central theme in mythology. Although mythology is capable of leading to self-knowledge, fairytales are the preferred to the Self. In *Individuation in Fairytales*, von Franz points out that because the fairytale lacks cultural ties, its stories and motifs "seem to be the international language of mankind---of all ages and of all races and cultures" (27-28). She makes the point that, "the fairy tale is like the sea, and the sagas and myths are like the waves upon it; a tale rises to be a myth and sinks down again into being a fairy tale" (26). Thus fairytales

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ground people's stories and reflect the human psyche in a more universally understandable manner.

The archetypal images in fairytales are "the images by which consciousness are put in touch with the unconscious" (Campbell 87). By using the introductory words "once upon a time", fairytales refer to the archetypal stories that occur in the realm of the collective unconscious. The characters found in fairytales are "projections of ... [people's] own fantasies, [and their] own consciousness, ... [and their] own deep being" (Campbell 107). Because they put people in touch with their own deep, archetypal images, fairytales offer a medium by which consciousness and the unconscious communicate. Fairytales attempt to describe imaginably what the Self is. Although there are many variations of fairytales, they all point to the archetypes of the Self. Exploring different fairytales, then, allows one to get in touch with the essential properties of the Self and the archetypes that are related to it.

By studying the symbols, motifs, and archetypal patterns inherent in fairytales, one can gain a better understanding of one's deeper Self. According to von Franz, the fairy tale must first be divided into its various dramatic aspects (27). These aspects, according to the 19th century literary scholar, Gustav Freytag include the exposition, the complication, the climax, the falling action, and denouement (Dailey 211). After dividing the fairy tale into various dramatic aspects, one can focus on the fairytale's characters, the symbols, metaphors, and motifs that appear in the story. By enlarging the images that arise within the story, one can make a sound interpretation about what the fairytale seems to represent. Lastly, one can translate the enlarging story into psychological language in an attempt to bring the meaning of the images and the plot of the fairytale. As people translate the fairytale within their own psychological framework, they gain a better understanding of whether their own personal story fits with the archetypal story of the fairytale (von Franz 32). According to Clarissa Pinkola Estes

Fairy tales, myths, and stories provide understandings which sharpen our sight so that we can pick out and pick up the path....

The instruction found in story reassures us that the path has not run out, but still leads---[people] deeper, and more deeply still, into their own knowing. The tracks we are following are those of the wild and innate instinctual Self (4-5).

Like the beginning of many archetypal stories, Andersen (1974) located the fairytale in a distant, far off place. As translated by Haugaard, the tale begins:

Far, far from the land, where the waters are as blue as the petals of the cornflower and as clear as glass, there, where no anchor can reach the bottom, live the merpeople. So deep is this part of the sea that you would have to pile many church towers on top of each other before one of them emerged above the surface (57).

Von Franz in *Corpus Alchemicum Arabicum* said, “The sea is the symbol of the unfathomable depth of the unconscious, or in mystical language, of the depth of the Godhead” (155). By situating his fairy tale in the deep sea, Andersen situated the story in the realm of the collective unconscious, the chaotic phase of the cosmic drama, from which the whole story can unfold. The sea is the symbol of the dynamism life and therefore a representation of the Great Mother archetype.

Held within the motherly sea are the merpeople—mermen and mermaids. Taking on both masculine and feminine forms, these beings are half human and half fish. According to the psychologist Gillian Pothier, the merpeople live between two worlds – human and fish – that connects the upper body of spirit and consciousness with the lower body of the soul and unconscious (21-30). Fish have also been said to symbolize human’s “lost participation in the archaic, unconscious world” (“Fish” 202). As integrated being that fuse consciousness and the unconscious, mermaids thus participate in both the external and internal worlds, and symbolizing this paradoxical unity and wholeness, they are associated with the coming together of disparate elements of the self. Pothier proposed that “the symbol of the mermaid remains an essentially unwavering mythological, intrapsychic, and cultural figure precisely because she carries transcendent meaning” (33). She added that the transcendent

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meaning of the mermaid is shown in how she unites the dual aspects of the Self, essentially acting as a bridge between consciousness and the unconsciousness (36).

In the process of psychological development, ideally, uniting opposing elements or forces in the psyche is the goal (Edinger, 1972, 3-7). However, the merpeople in *The Little Mermaid* do not have souls and that indicates that they are incomplete and not whole. According to von Franz (1997), it is important to take into account who or what is missing in the exposition of a fairy tale, because it offers the opening psychological situation (36). This missing piece of the self, the soul, is one thing that must be redeemed in the story.

In the exposition of *The Little Mermaid*, the merpeople include the Sea King, his six daughters, and the grandmother who takes care of them. The Sea King is the dominant spiritual content in the collective psyche. He is a widower, which suggests that although the daughters are held by the Great Mother, symbolized by the ocean, they are lacking a personal mother and a queen. Because the story is missing a mother and queen, which is not representative of the complete fairytale family, it can be assumed that the story revolves around redeeming the female principles represented by these archetypes.

According to Birkhauser-Oeri, “the archetypal mother in both her light and dark aspects, ultimately represents the urge toward transformation with the psyche” (47). In her positive aspect, she represents transcendental love, which has the ability to join what is divided within the psyche and therefore make it whole. Along with her life-enhancing qualities, the archetypal mother also represents the destructive aspects of the self that aim to compensate for imbalances within the psyche. Jung (1990) explained the dark aspect of the mother archetype as “anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate (27). In *The Little Mermaid*, the dark mother is presented as a witch. The mother archetype, as both life-enhancing and destructive force within the psyche, is the root of all change and growth. In the exposition of a

fairytale, a figure lacking a personal mother suggests that these archetypal qualities have not been integrated into the psyche.

Another archetypal quality is missing in the exposition of *The Little Mermaid*- that of the queen. According to von Franz (1977), “if we take the king as representing a central and dominant symbolic content of collective consciousness, then the queen would be its accompanying feminine element” (39). The missing queen within the story, then, suggests that the principle of eros, which is also the positive aspect of the mother, has been lost. Associated with spontaneity, feeling, instinct, and intuition, this lost feminine principle keeps the little mermaid from developing a relationship between consciousness and the unconscious.

The Sea King without the feminine ruling principle of the queen, rules the kingdom of the merpeople alone. Missing the mother and queen within the fairytale, then, suggests that the feminine principle in its entirety has not been integrated in the story. The opening psychological situation thus suggests that *The Little Mermaid* is a story about redeeming the feminine principle and the soul.

Because the archetypes of the Great Mother (the Sea) and Father (the Sea King) give birth to the divine child archetype, all of the mermaid sisters can be considered divine. Of the six mermaids, the protagonist is the youngest, and as a divine child that lives in the depths of the collective unconscious, she represents the archetype of the self that will undergo the process of individuation. The little mermaid, a symbol of the unity of consciousness and the unconscious, is therefore, the child-hero of the story who undergoes the process of the self-realization.

This young female mermaid is very happy tending her garden, which was round “like the sun” (Andersen 58) and held a red weeping willow and a marble statue of a boy that was cut out of stone. The garden can be considered as the Pure Land and Western Paradise that reflect “an idealized inner space of potential wholeness and hidden design” (“Garden” 146). The garden could be a symbol of the self. The little mermaid has planted red flowers in it so it will

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look like the sun, which alludes to her longing for consciousness of the Self.

Significantly, within the garden stand a red weeping willow tree and a stone statue of a boy. According to Birkhouser-Oeri, the tree is a symbol for a higher version of the mother or female principle (143). Jung said that the tree also symbolizes the Self in that it “signifies a psychic center beyond the ego reconciling such opposites as above and below, or heaven and earth; its branches reach into the sky and its roots penetrate deep into the earth” (270). The fact that the tree is a willow tree is also significant since the willow tree and weeping willow, in particular, are associated with water, tears, and sorrow, “specifically for lost love” (Alisoun Gardner-Medwin 240-241). The weeping-willow tree, then, can be considered a symbol of the Self that is essentially mourning the loss of the feminine principle. It also suggests that redeeming the feminine element of eros may require suffering, and the healing element of tears and water.

A marble statue of a boy that was cut out of clear stone stands in the garden. Sandra Burke found this statue to be a representation of the internal masculine principle that carries the internal masculine spirit of the self that “gives to woman’s consciousness a capacity for reflection, deliberation, and self-knowledge” (113). Utilizing the symbols of the garden, the red weeping willow tree, and the marble statue of the boy, Andersen’s tale suggests that wholeness may be attained by tending to the lost feminine principle and by redeeming the soul, which, in the little mermaid’s situation, is personified by the internal masculine principle and is represented by the statue.

On her 15th birthday, the little mermaid rises to the surface of the water to see the human world she so yearns to see. Therefore the little mermaid is ready to undergo the process of transformation that leads one on the path to individuation.

Rising to the surface of the water, the little mermaid sees a handsome young prince on a ship, who reminds her of the marble statue she has in her garden, and she falls in love with him. The prince represents the positive male counterpart to the feminine eros

principle. Birkhauser -Oeri explained that “[the prince] embodies a new, liberating, spiritual attitude to life, embracing thoughtfulness, religious seriousness, courage and a genuine understanding of one’s own and others’ natures” (40). The fact that he looks like the marble statue in her garden alludes to the idea that the little mermaid’s attraction to him is based on projection, a psychological term that, according to Jung (1983), means that the inner masculine spiritual principle has been cast upon an external male object (92). Therefore, the little mermaid’s attraction to the prince is an unconscious means by which the internal feminine principle seeks totality. She falls in love with her own internal image, the masculine image of her soul, which has been projected onto the prince.

A storm blows after the mermaid sets eyes on the prince. The storm represents the inner conflict inside herself. A storm is a “natural metaphor for spontaneous upheaval in the ordinary affairs of life that can annihilating or transformative” (Ronnberg and Martin 66). The projection that the little mermaid makes on the prince, then, is symbolically what causes the storm in the story, and it is yet to be revealed if it is annihilating or transformative for her.

After this incident, during which the little mermaid saves the prince from drowning, she cannot focus on anything else but going to the human world so that she can be with the prince. She lets her garden wild and dark, which suggests that she has given up tending to her Self in order to chase the projection of her soul. The little mermaid, yearning to live beyond the soulless world that mermaids are resigned to, essentially decides to give her Self up in order to attain the prince’s love and earn an immortal soul.

Realizing that human beings find mermaids’ fishtails ugly, she laments the fact that she does not have legs. According to Pothier, the tail represents the shadow, or unintegrated, aspects of the self and alludes to the primitive feminine realm of the unconscious (27-28). Along with the dark and shadowy aspects of the tail, the fishtail as an aspect of the fish, is a revealer of wisdom, therefore, the fishtail can be seen as the unconscious aspect of the Self that, like the shadow, offers wisdom.

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Another source of unconscious wisdom comes from the mermaid's voice. Her singing voice, as the most beautiful of all, can be considered the wind of the soul. The voice and song represent the meaningful utterance of the unconscious and those parts of the self that are worth bringing into the world. When the little mermaid trades her voice and tongue to the sea witch in order to obtain legs, she can be seen as essentially giving up both of her ties to her unconscious self. In order to take a stand in the world, literally and figuratively, the little mermaid gives up a significant part of herself.

The sea witch, willing to take away the mermaid's tail and voice, represents a missing or dead parent within the story. According to von Franz (1997), the mother figure in the little mermaid has died, which signifies that the positive mother aspect of the maternal archetype has moved into the unconscious, and her absence in consciousness activates a negative figure to take her place (128-129). Although she was afraid of the witch, the little mermaid went to her willingly, which suggests that she is both afraid of her own physical and instinctual experience and also drawn to it. Also, her willingness to go to negative mother suggests that the little mermaid is capable of bringing the negative aspects of the mother to consciousness.

The sea witch lives in strange forest. The forest symbolizes an untamed, natural place where one may meet terrifying things like the evil and uncontrolled drives. Thus going into forest to meet the sea witch is both an opportunity and a dangerous trip. According to Birkhauser-Oeri (1988) the forest is as a symbol of the unconscious to which the positive principle has retreated, the forest also carries the lost positive aspects of the self that can produce a life-enhancing effect for the little mermaid (134).

In Andersen's tale, the sea witch gives the little mermaid a draught that will make her human so she will have the chance to make the prince fall in love with and marry her. If he does not fall in love with the little mermaid but decides to marry another, her heart will break, and she will become foam on the ocean (69). By trading essential aspects of herself to the sea witch in order to win the prince's love, the little mermaid acquires into the negative aspect of

the mother archetype, which is destructive and dangerous. Even though the little mermaid can walk and dance more gracefully than any person on earth (68), the sea witch robs her of her wholeness. Lacking wholeness, the little mermaid lives on land, in great pain.

Although the little mermaid would be able to take a stand in the world and be the most beautiful of all humans, no matter how hard she tries, she cannot make the prince fall in love with her. With every step she takes, and every dance she dances, she is thus in terrible pain. Just as the witch warned, “every step felt as though she were walking on sharp knives. But she suffered it gladly” (Andersen 70). This suffering suggests that the little mermaid has been willing to make a great sacrifice to earn the prince’s love, but the prince, being merely a projection of her own soul and therefore not her soul itself, cannot truly love her. Her love has been in vain, for even though he thought she had “the kindest heart of them all” (72), she could not make him love her. The complication arises because the little mermaid, having lost the feminine principle within, enlists the sea witch’s help to attain the prince’s love and an immortal soul. Driven by the negative aspect of the mother and lacking the eros principle, she cannot make the prince fall in love with her.

The prince falls in love with another, whom he thought had saved him, and decided to marry her. Although the little mermaid saves the prince from the storm, it is to the woman from the holy temple, the future queen, that the prince exclaims, “you are the one who saved me, when I lay half dead on the beach!” (73). He was essentially half dead until he found his other half, the queen. Even though the prince did not marry the little mermaid, it must be noted that a marriage between the prince and a holy princess occurs in the fairytale. Thus marriage symbolizes the union of opposites male and female and alludes to the fact that the missing eros principle has been revived within the story. Even so, it seems as though the little mermaid cannot earn an immortal soul.

In an attempt to save the little mermaid from death that the marriage would bring, her sisters visit the sea witch and trade their hair for a knife. According to Birkhauser-Oeri, hair is symbolic of one’s unconscious thoughts and fantasies (37), and the knife is

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symbolic of the capacity for discrimination and judgment and acts as an instrument of liberation (104-105). However, because the knife was offered by the sea witch, it can be considered a means by which the little mermaid continues to be trapped by the negative mother. The shadow quality of the knife represents an internal masculine principle that discriminates and judges oneself incessantly. According to Marion Woodman, the witch sets this type of self-judgment in motion, and the only way to get rid of the attachment to the negative mother is to disappoint the witch herself (68). The little mermaid does this by ridding herself of the knife within the tale, which allows her to relinquish her bond to the sea witch. Instead of plunging the knife into the prince's heart to kill him, which would allow her to live the rest of her life as a mermaid, she tosses the knife into the sea. Even though she knows she will die as a result, the little mermaid decides to sacrifice herself instead of taking the prince's life. According to Woodman, sacrificing herself in this way is essentially sacrificing the aspect of the Self that has been tied to the witch (161). By sacrificing herself instead of killing the prince, the little mermaid symbolically kills the projection she has had of the prince. In doing so, she allows the holy marriage and the eros principle that it embodies to remain. By surrendering to her imagined death in the ocean, she essentially sacrifices herself in the name of love.

Returning to the watery realms of the unconscious, the little mermaid feels as though she is dying and turning into foam. Having relinquished her attachment to the sea witch and withdrawn her projection of the prince, however, the little mermaid is able to reconnect with the positive aspects of the mother. Finding herself once again in the womb of the Great Mother, the little mermaid can accept the grief of losing her stand in the world, and reconnect with her instincts. Woodman described this process as "jumping into water releases the instincts: they swiftly rise to the surface...where [they cease] to be rigid and [begin] to flow, as if in the depths of the waters of the unconscious the answer resides" (75). By willfully returning to the waters of the mother, the little mermaid essentially becomes conscious of the positive mother, and within the Great

Mother's womb, she can be purified for rebirth. The little mermaid is reborn from the sea as the child of beginning. Remembering the wholeness of being, which occurred through the life-death-rebirth cycle, the little mermaid has been reborn with a divine purpose, the seed of individuation.

According to the fairytale, because she had a pure heart, the little mermaid finds herself up in the clouds among the daughters of the air (Andersen 75). Being an air spirit with an ethereal body (and no tail), the little mermaid finds herself among the clouds. Flying between heaven and earth, like angels do, she can earn an immortal soul by doing good deeds (76). She can "fly to the warm countries, where the heavy air of the plague rests, and blow cool winds to spread...[and] carry the smell of flowers that refresh the heal the sick" (Andersen 76). The little mermaid can therefore earn a human soul not from something or someone external, but from the love she now finds internally, and that she can offer to the world. As a child of the air, she is essentially the divine child that can undergo the process of individuation and help heal the world around her. By redeeming the feminine principle within herself, and offering her love to the world, the little mermaid can earn her immortal soul.

The fairytale ends on a hopeful but cautionary note---the little mermaid's time of trial, or the that time would take her to earn an immortal soul, would be shortened if she encountered a good child in the homes of human beings, and it would be lengthened if she encountered a bad child in the homes of human beings (Andersen 76). Andersen's ending the story in the human realm suggests that it is the human being's duty to heed the call of individuation. Having been reborn in the womb of the Great Mother, a good child would follow the path that is represented by the hero's journey. According to Birkhauser-Oeri, however, the heroic child, the one that undergoes the process of individuation, is always in danger because it embodies a new way of being in the world (85). Therefore, it is a human being's choice that shortens or prolongs the attainment of an immortal soul.

Von Franz (1970) indicated that fairy tales provides a variety of typical scenarios of different phases of the individuation journey

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(20). Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* can be considered a tale of individuation that illustrates the life-death-rebirth process that people may need to undertake before they undergo the hero's quest, or the process of individuation.

The story, in its most basic form, illustrates the process of psychological maturation and transformation that begins the path to Selfhood. Reflecting on the process of psychological maturation, the little mermaid's journey is moved from psychological immaturity. The fairytale begins with the little mermaid in the watery realm of the Great Mother, which is synonymous with the psychological state of the ego being completely merged with the Self and represents the original psychic state present in infants and young children (Edinger 6). In order for children to develop psychologically, they must emerge from this identification with the Self and adapt to the world around them. Like the little mermaid, adapting to the world requires the child to lose contact with aspects of the Self. These aspects of the Self sink into the unconscious and must be redeemed if the child is to continue the process of individuation. In order to redeem them, the individual, like the mermaid, must sacrifice his or her conscious standing in the world so that the totality of the self can be realized. Only then can he or she be reborn psychologically with a sense of true meaning and purpose and the ability to undertake the hero's quest.

Developing the ego-Self connection requires that one be able to integrate the conscious and unconscious aspects of the Self. Like the little mermaid, people can redeem lost aspects of the Self by willingly surrounding to the motherly womb of the unconscious, and by redeeming the feminine principles of spontaneity, feeling, instinct, and intuition (Baring & Cashford xii). Integrating the feminine principle requires that people look at the shadow aspects of themselves, both positive and negative; that they cut ties with the negative mother; that they remove their projections from the external world; and that they stay true to the divine child within themselves.

As a story of redemption, the little mermaid lost an essential part of her Self, the feminine principle, which she had to regain in order to attain an immortal soul. Psychologically speaking, she

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underwent a life-death-rebirth cycle that allowed her path toward individuation. The little mermaid had to sacrifice herself to the totality of the Self, which included both consciousness and the unconscious. This integration of consciousness and the unconscious allowed her to resume her spiritual path toward Selfhood. Therefore *The Little Mermaid* offers people guidance in their lives.

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