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Fairy Tale—from Chaos to Order

Children love to immerse themselves in the world of fairy tales, whether through reading a tale or watching a cartoon. Magical worlds, exciting adventures, and great heroes entertain children and even teach them practical wisdom. Yet asking if fairytales contain something else, something more grandiose and important that makes children listen to them so carefully is fair and reasonable. A psychoanalytical approach claims that the overall (and probably the most useful) goal of a fairy tale is to help children master their anxieties and fears, bringing some peace into their chaotic minds. This work will analyze *Alyosha and Sea Dragon* from a psychoanalytical perspective and learn how the story helps children cope with internal fears, conflicts, and desires.

Before going to specific cases, it is important to mention that there is not a clear difference for children between people, animals, and objects; they are yet to develop their rational abilities to differentiate reality from fantasy (Bettelheim 46). Therefore, everything that seems unbelievable in a fairy tale is ordinary for children and is easily relatable to their everyday experiences – sibling rivalry, a lack of love and attention. Moreover, having a simple structure and often a clear division of characters into good and evil, fairy tales encourage children to externalize their fears and internal conflicts and cope with them (White 721).

Having mentioned this, the first scene of *Alyosha and Sea Dragon* can be analyzed. Alyosha is a son of a priest, a profession often associated with a mundane, strict, and boring

lifestyle. Furthermore, despite his strength, Alyosha does not have any friends. Having experienced loneliness, boredom, or isolation at a certain moment of their lives, children can easily relate to Alyosha. Like Alyosha, despite their assumed good qualities, they may not have friends. Subsequently, the story mentions that the hero grows fast and reaches maturity instantly, the scene depicting children's desire to grow up sooner, enter adult life, and embark on exciting adventures.

After reaching maturity, Alyosha leaves his home, does not know where to go, and ultimately, he should choose the right direction. This aspect of the tale symbolizes children's (potentially unconscious) fears of growing up and choosing their path in life. They might fear getting lost and a lack of direction or an abundance of good choices and choosing the right one of them (Alyosha had to go to don't-know-where but later was required to make a choice between three paths.).

On his way, Alyosha meets a gray wolf, which symbolizes children's contact with their unconscious side. According to Bettelheim, contact with an animal is a dive into the unconscious—contact with children's animal nature and good facets of their inner person (100-110). Alyosha is eager to give and receive help from the wolf, and they become friends. It is thanks to the help of the wolf Alyosha manages to trick Baba Yaga and find the way to Sea Dragon. With the help of the wolf and his bravery, Alyosha kills the dragon, helps the city, and finds a sexual partner. The scene implies that one reaches adulthood with the 'authentic contact with unconscious emotions', and the acceptance of aid from others is a normal part of growing up (White 722).

Lastly, looking as a whole, the fairy tale is a quest. The events of the quest – growing up, leaving home, getting lost, finding helpers, winning the competition, and marrying—mirror unconscious conflicts children experience, yet help them consolidate their own identity and accept themselves (White, 119-120). Being able to relate to the hero, children overcome the

quest with the hero, experiencing the moments of up and down, confronting many of their unconscious fears, yet every time overcoming them. Bettelheim argues that this experience of emerging from despair and achieving success helps children to form their identity, serving as a path to maturity and self-confidence (143).

Thus, Alyosha and Sea Dragon, like many other fairy tales, help children to address their anxieties and fears, creating an order between their conscious and unconscious identities, ego and id. It takes children's existential worries and desires seriously and encourages the children to engage with them by stimulating their fantasies. Most importantly, they show children a step-by-step satisfactory solution, which they can grasp easily, giving them self-confidence and bright hope for the future. This is the very reason why fairy tales like Alyosha and Sea Dragon exist.

Word count: 743.

Works Cited

1. Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment : The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. 1st ed. New York: Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 1976. Web.
2. White, Robert S. "Fire in the Dragon and Other Psychoanalytic Essays on Folklore, An Introduction to the Psychology of Fairy Tales and The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales." *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 65.4 (2017): 705-28. Web.