

In the Blood Chamber: The Attitude of the Feminine to Evil

An Alchemical Analysis of the Fairy-tale Fitcher's Bird
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Introduction

I dreamed that I entered a dark room with walls covered with black rubber. In the room stood a male figure also clad in a black rubber apron, with a rubber club in his hand. I knew that he would now beat me to death, and I woke up, terrified.

This dream initiated my interest in the figures and configurations of the malignant animus complex that haunts and possesses the feminine psyche.

This fairy-tale essay is a direct expression and consequence of this interest. I will analyse the fairy-tale *Fitcher's bird* by the Grimm Brothers¹. In my reading of the fairy-tale, I will focus on the relationship of the Feminine with Evil. Put more precisely, with what the fairy-tale can tell us about how women (especially young women) shall deal with evil. What is the right attitude of young women towards evil?

There are more than one dimension to this question. The first one is specifically how the young woman, the heroine of this specific fairy-tale, approaches evil. Therefore, I focus on how the third of the three sisters deals with the sorcerer (aka Fitcher) as representing the evil in this fairy-tale. I will ask what we can learn from her example about dealing with evil in the real world.

However, the question points to further implications. Women do not only have to deal with evil in the outer world, but also in their own psyche. To address this aspect I view the sorcerer as an inner evil figure or as a dark animus figure. How shall women deal with that figure in whatever shape it takes in their own psyche.

The question of the attitude of the feminine towards evil points to a larger issue. There is still a lot of psychic and physical violence towards women in the world. Often this violence comes from people close to the women, the husband or the family, but also from the society. There is a lot of hatred, resentment and fear of the feminine and individual women experience this to varying degrees.

This is a delicate matter, for my aim is certainly not to blame victims. However, I do think that if women are better acquainted with and conscious about malignant forces in their own psyche, they are better fit to meet and deal with evil in the world. If they learn how to cope with their inner monsters, they will also be better suited to recognize, defend and protect themselves against outer dangers.

In this fairy-tale, there is a lot of symbolic material. Maybe even more in the related fairy-tale of Bluebeard², which is perhaps better known and a strong undercurrent in popular culture. I will analyse these symbols using my *alchemical imagination* and I will discuss how these symbols may illuminate theme of the essay: The feminine attitude toward evil. As I point out the symbols call for an alchemical interpretation. I have also chosen this approach because I do love alchemy as a symbolic imagery.

Primarily Asper [2017] and Kalsched [1996] have already written about this fairy-tale in the Jungian literature. Asper in her reading uses *Fitcher's bird* to illustrate the negative animus and the shadow in persons with narcissistic disturbances. Kalsched interprets it from the point of view of trauma, of psychic defences and as the sorcerer as something in the psyche that wants to be healed. I have used Kalsched for inspiration as reflected in my references.

¹ See Appendix A.

² See reference in Appendix A.

I have tried to do my own analysis standing on my own ground. I have chosen as above mentioned to look at the fairy-tale as a history about how to deal with evil inside or outside of the feminine psyche.

I agree with Asper that in *Fitcher's bird* the feminine is confronted with and has to cope with a negative animus figure. However, my analysis of the symbolic and alchemical material will hopefully uncover that he is also a trickster figure as Kalsched points to and thereby a herald of initiation and transformation.

I hope, with my alchemical analysis to add something new to the Jungian understanding of this fairy-tale specifically, as well as to the overall theme of the feminine and evil generally.

The Scene

First, I will define some of the basic elements of this fairy-tale to set the scene: The genre, the structure, the main characters, and the perspective.

Genre

This is not a coniunctio fairy-tale as described by Skogemann [Skogemann, a]. As for the coniunctio motive, we may see the wedding between the sorcerer and the heroine as a false coniunctio.

Using the AT-taxonomy as represented in Høgh [2002] I will rather define *Fitcher's bird* as a Tale of Magic with a supernatural antagonist. There is the element of the formula tale, because the formula ""You, Fitcher's bird, where are you coming from" is repeated twice.

This means that I will draw primarily on Marie-Louise von Franz [1996] in my initial analysis of the fairy-tale.

Structure

The initiating problem in the fairy tale is that the sorcerer disguised as a beggar is taking beautiful girls, and no one knows what has become of them. To any society, this would be a profoundly traumatic situation. The specific starting point in the fairy tale though, is the sorcerer's captivation of the two sisters. This is the complication, which the third heroic sister sets out to dissolve.

The peripeteia or turning point is when the third sister has passed the test, and the sorcerer "*now had no more power over her and had to do whatever she demanded*". Lysis is the burning down of the house of the sorcerer in a culminating fire.

The main characters

As for the *dramatis personae*, there are four characters: the sorcerer and the three sisters. The sisters can further be divided into two groups: The two older sisters, who are in my interpretation naïve. The sorcerer captivates them when he touches them. Then there is the third sister who is "clever and sly". She gets herself captivated in order to rescue her sisters.

Therefore, we have a quarternity of three young women and one intruding malignant male figure.

According to von Franz [1996] a missing parent may indicate that some psychic element is missing or needs to be redeemed. Not all fairy-tales are structured like this, as von Franz points out, and in *Fitcher's bird*, no new quarternity is really established, apart from the older sisters returning to their parent's home. Nevertheless, I use this to observe that their father who is only briefly mentioned is not able to protect them. This indicates that a healthy masculine principle is not yet differentiated or developed. This makes them vulnerable to predatory forces. Thus, on the structural or symbolic level, we have three young women and one sinister sorcerer. One plus three – and in the end we have one family of four, and one outstanding solitary figure.

As for the symbolic meaning of the number three: I state that the three sisters could also be perceived as the feminine developing from a naïve to a clever or mature state of consciousness, since again following Von Franz three is the number of movement and time [Ibid. p. 8]. This has to do with process and development. Seeing the three sisters as aspects of the same feminine psyche, I note that developing a cautious and conscious relation to evil is something that takes time. A woman may make mistakes on her way. She may have to die psychologically and symbolically a few times before she is fully able to withstand evil.

As for the symbolic meaning of the number one: Von Franz defines one as a "unique thing – and therefore not yet a counting unit" [Ibid.]. In the beginning, there is one sorcerer. At the end of the fairy-tale, there is one young woman disguised as a bird in feather and honey. The sorcerer is killed in a fire. We have a deeper symbolical current that points to the myth of the bird Phoenix. But most important, here we have one unique thing disappearing and another unique thing appearing. However, there is still only one at the end.

This happens to all three of them, and therefore I refer to them as "the young woman" as a generic concept as representing the young feminine psyche.

One interesting aspect is the name of the sorcerer. In the beginning of the fairy-tale, he is only referred to as "a sorcerer". The beginning points to the classical beginning of the fairy-tale: "Once upon a time ..." The sorcerer is an archetypal figure, and the setting is the realm of the collective unconscious, the realm of timelessness and spacelessness. However, at the end of the fairy-tale he has a name: Fitcher. It is also at this point that the formula is repeated twice. However, he is only indirectly named as Fitcher as the wedding guests and he on his way home ask where the bird is coming from and it answers that it is coming from Fitcher's house, where his young bride is waiting in the window.

Now, again drawing on Von Franz [1996], there is a distinction between local sagas and fairy-tales. Local sagas often start out as stories about specific people whose names are still remembered, but in time they become enriched and amplified with archetypal material and thereby becomes a fairy-tale that migrates into other villages and localities [ibid. p. 19-20]. A cautious guess then is that this fairy-tale has an element of an old local saga in it, since the sorcerer has a personal name, and that this element has later merged into a fairy-tale.

Another point for consideration is the meaning of the name itself. By association, there seems to be a correspondence in meaning between the names Fitcher, Fischer, and Fisher so that Fitcher could point to a fisherman. That matches with his habit of "fishing young women" and taking them away in his basket. A basket is an ancient fishing tool. Another meaning of the word Fitcher is that it may be related to feathers or wings, which corresponds with the symbolic material of the egg and the feathers, in which she rolls herself³.

Perspective

In the beginning of the fairy-tale the emphasis in perspective is on the sorcerer, but when the third sister has arrived at his house there seems to be a slight shift in perspective from the sorcerer to the third sister. At this point, the power balance between the two is also changed. When the third sister can produce the egg and the key with no blood on them, and she has

³ My Danish translation by Villy Sørensen [Grimm, 2006] says, that "... satte hun sig i en tynde honning, sprættede sin dyne op and rullede sig i dens fjer, så hun kom til at se ud som en løjerlig fugl ...". The English text merely states that she cut open her bed and rolled in it, but that seems to depend on which translation one reads.

passed the test, she can be his bride and most importantly, he loses his power over her, while she now controls him.

Amplification

As stated in the introduction there is a lot of symbolical material in the fairy-tale, much of which calls for an alchemical imagination for amplification. Much of this also has to do with death and resurrection. I will now amplify and analyse the symbols, with my focus on the blood chamber and the basin of blood.

The touch

There is a connection between touching and power. The sorcerer's way of captivating the young women is by touch. As soon as he touches them, they are under his spell: *"He simply touched her, and she was forced to jump into his pack basket. Then he hurried away with powerful strides and carried her to his house, which stood in the middle of a dark forest"*.

What does this touch mean? Not all is explicit in fairy-tales. That makes room for my imagination in interpreting. There is no explanation as to *why* the touch can captivate her. Except that, he is off course a sorcerer. In the touch, there is relation. On a symbolic level, the enchantment has to do with relation, and it may be, since the father as a healthy masculine figure is not protective as mentioned, that the girls are vulnerable to becoming spellbound when touching, i.e. relating to, a masculine figure with foul intentions.

The tool of the touch must be the hand. Therefore, I imagine that the sorcerer with his hand slightly touches the girl's hand when she gives him the bread. The hand is the part of the human body that is directly linked with creativity and our capacity to act in the world, to change and manipulate the world, and thereby to our *consciousness*:

"Hands signify the sovereign, world-creating reign of consciousness; they embody effectiveness, industry, adaption, invention, self-expression and the possession of a will for creative and destructive ends." [Book of Symbols, p. 380]

The intention of the use of the hand thus can be both destructive and creative. In addition, whereas we can conceive the intention of the sorcerer as evil, we can see the touch as starting a process of evolving consciousness. Without this touch, nothing will happen. The touch of the sorcerer is an initiation mark on the psyche of the young feminine, as the intruding masculine breaks the idyll of childhood and innocence and thereby starts a process of maturing and individuation.

The Basket

As stated previously the basket is associated with the name of the sorcerer if we think that it has to do with him being a fisherman fishing young women and abducting them to his house in the forest. As a symbol, the basket is also connected to the archetypal pattern of death and resurrection as told in the myth of Osiris and Isis, where she is collecting his limbs in a basket before she puts him together again [Ibid. p. 520].

The mythical motive of death and resurrection also has to do with the eternal return, and thereby with rebirth. The basket has to do with fertility and the womb [Book of Symbols, p. 520]. Like the touch, the basket has a double significance: It is a tool of entrapment but then again, the way to greater consciousness goes through being enclosed in the basket as in a womb, a room for hatching and maturing.

The Key

As in the original Bluebeard fairy-tale the young women are given a key. First, they are installed in the house, which is splendid. This has to do with the element of seduction, and it has a lot to do with the underlying Bluebeard motive, which I will return to later. The important thing is that

the young woman is being seduced, here mainly by the splendour of the house, but in the original Bluebeard-fairy-tale also by the man himself.

Anyway, the sorcerer tells her that: *"I have to go away and leave you alone for a short time. Here are the house keys. You may go everywhere and look at everything except for the one room that this little key here unlocks. I forbid you to go there on the penalty of death."*

The key as a symbol has to do with opening and closing and is linked to doors and gates, thresholds, boundaries etc.

According to Stevens [2001]:

"In our culture [the key] is associated with the symbolism of Janus, the god who looks in two directions, the inventor of locks and the god of initiations." [Ibid. p. 246]

Now, the emergence of the twofaced god Janus in the amplification is quite important for various reasons. Because he has to do with the concept of initiation, which I introduced earlier, and because he has to do with doors and thresholds. In fact, his name means door [Kalsched, 1996, p. 39].

Finally, he has two faces. According to Kalsched, Janus is a trickster figure, and like other trickster figures he embrace, a pair of opposites [Ibid.] I think it is safe to state that the mythical background or archetypal force behind the sorcerer is Janus. This makes the sorcerer a trickster too. The sorcerer is double-faced in two respects: He is posing as a harmless beggar, but he is in reality a sorcerer. In addition, he is an evildoer. However, he is also an initiator, a masculine figure that initiates the feminine psyche.

Janus seems to me sinister, dark and dangerous. My immediate thought is that it makes a difference that we meet Janus here, and not some other trickster figure like Mercury/Hermes, whom to me seems lighter. Alas, in this I am mistaken. According to Jung [CW14, § 148] Mercury as a trickster is also related to the evil and to shadow material, and as such is both the poison and the antidote. A characteristic that is true for the trickster as such as an figure of ambivalence and paradox, and to evil contents of the psyche, according to Kalsched [1996, p. 38].

For now, it is important to notice that we have to do with a figure connected to the twofaced god of Janus, and that he has to do with initiation. The next question is then, into what he initiates? My answer is that he initiates into to evil. That meaning not necessarily the capacity to do evil, but the capacity to stand, endure and fight evil. The ability to cope with evil.

He initiates into the consciousness of evil, or the state of being conscious that there is evil. Therefore, as mentioned above he starts an initiation process by touching and this initiation process is the process of individuation or maturing. However, it is a specific initiation process: It goes through becoming conscious of evil and death or dying.

It can state a serious danger to unlock this door before one is mature enough. That is why the concept of three is important. Seeing the three sisters as all representing the process of development of the same feminine psyche, it makes sense that only the third has the necessary level of maturity to do this. Only the third sister goes into the blood chamber without losing her composure and control, or the egg. The two first sisters cannot endure evil and drop the egg and the key. In consequence, they are killed and dismembered.

In alchemy, the key is connected to the operations of opening and closing, of solutio and coagulatio [Cooper, 1979, p. 90-91]. I will return to coagulatio later, when I discuss evil.

The egg

One interesting characteristic of *Fitchers' bird* is that the young women are not only given a key. They are also given an egg. It is important that it is the egg, which is not blood stained on the sorcerer's return. Only the third sister is wise not to take the egg with her into the blood chamber. How is she supposed to know not to take the egg with her? "*She was clever and sly. After he had given her the keys and the egg, and had gone away, she carefully put the egg aside, and then examined the house, entering finally the forbidden chamber*".

She has the ability to be considerate enough to protect the egg, to keep it out of the horrific blood chamber. Alternatively, she knows that she has to protect a part of herself, and that makes her able to enter the blood chamber, i.e. to endure evil as discussed above.

The egg is a symbol worth an entire essay in itself. On a symbolic level, it makes sense that the sorcerer in his capacity of *initiator* gives an egg to the initiates, because the egg is a symbol of creation and cosmos. The egg also indicates renewal and new beginnings. Therefore, what he is offering is life, which means that he is not only the initiator into evil and death. The message this conveys must be that you have to be careful with your life to survive. In addition, the message that life and death are intimately interwoven. With life comes also death, and vice versa.

The egg also symbolizes fertility and as such, it is a symbol of womanhood: of being able to reproduce and give birth, and of the womb, an association I mentioned in relation to the basket. This brings to mind the maturing of the young girl into woman with the first menstruation, i.e. the staining of the egg after stepping over the threshold.

The egg is a symbol of resurrection [Cooper, 1979, p. 60] and resurrection is an important element in this fairy-tale. In alchemy, the egg is both the *prima materia* and the philosopher's stone:

First as the *prima materia*:

"In alchemy the eggs stands for the chaos apprehended by the artifex [i.e. artist, alchemist], the prima materia containing the captive world-soul. Out of the egg – symbolized by the round cooking vessel – will raise the eagle or the phoenix, the liberated soul, which is ultimately identical with the Anthropos who was imprisoned in the embrace of physis." [Jung, CW 12, §306]

Then as the philosopher's stone:

"In alchemy the egg plays a tremendous role. It is equated with the philosophers stone because as the alchemists said, it contains everything in itself, and it need no addition, except some slight amount of vital warmth or even temperature. Given birth out of itself without addition it symbolizes the innermost nucleus of the individual, the Self to which we cannot add or take away" [von Franz, 1995, p. 265]

As the quote by von Franz indicates, the most important aspect of the egg may be that it symbolizes the Self. As such, the egg points to wholeness. The young woman must be clever or wise enough protect it, and by doing so avoid being killed and dismembered. That is *the first part* of the test, as much as not entering the blood chamber. The egg is, due to the connotation with birth and fertility, a symbol that points to the great feminine, to the very principle of the feminine.

On the surface, it is paradoxical then that it is offered by the dark animus figure. My interpretation is that it is exactly by encountering and dealing with this foreign and unconscious part of the psyche that young women are able to connect to the Self and to the great feminine. Doing this she is able to develop a mature feminine psyche that is protective of herself.

The blood chamber and the basin of blood

When I began writing about the blood chamber and the basin of blood, I felt a rush of anxiety. These images are indeed difficult to deal with, also on an intellectual-analytical level, without being affected by them emotionally.

As stated earlier it demands a certain level of maturity to enter and endure being in the blood chamber. The two first sisters do enter, not from a developed level of consciousness but out of simple curiosity. *"What did she see when she stepped inside? A large bloody basin stood in the middle, inside which there lay the cut up parts of dead girls. Nearby there was a wooden block with a glistening ax lying on it".*

The blood chamber points symbolically to a burial chamber and to an ancient motive of death and resurrection.

According to Edinger:

"The alchemical vessel has been equated with the sealed tomb of Osiris containing all the limbs of the god. The Egyptian mortuary symbolism is the first great witness to the reality of the psyche. I is as though the psyche cannot come into existence as a separate unit until the death of the literal, the concrete and the physical". [Edinger. 1994, p. 168-169]

Moreover, in this chamber there is yet another alchemical vessel: the blood basin. I interpret this as an alchemical basin, or an alchemical vessel or *vas*, the very vessel wherein transformation takes place in the alchemical work, the opus.

Here I see a twisted parallel to the alchemical bath and to baptism. Twisted because water rinses whilst blood is sticky and viscous. Hence, this "bath" has a certain quality. According to Jung [CW16, §453], in alchemy there is a lot of variations to the theme of the bath, and I would sum this up on a more general level and state that the bath is about entering into the night sea journey, i.e. entering into the unconscious and therefore it is about transformation.

It is also about *solutio*:

"The immersion in the sea signifies the solution – dissolution in the physical sense of the word and at the same time, according to Dorn, the solution of a problem. It is a return to the dark initial state, to the amniotic fluid of the gravid uterus. The alchemists frequently point out that their stone grows like a child in the mother's womb; they call the vas hermeticum the uterus and its contents the foetus." [Jung, CW16, §454]

So, symbolically, ending up in the blood chamber, and in the basin of blood, means that the young woman is entering into to the unconscious, and by this is being transformed like the alchemical stone, i.e. that the psyche is being dissolved in the alchemical process of *solutio*.

It is also a return to the primordial waters of the womb and thereby the theme of birth is emerging once more by association. The question is, what is that is being dissolved in this basin? It is the naïve and childishly curious attitude of the first two sisters, i.e. the less mature state of the feminine psyche.

Edinger writes that:

"Baptism in blood, like the encounter with fire, refers psychologically to the ordeal of enduring intense affect. If the ego holds, the ordeal has refining and consolidating effect, this will be one of the reasons for primitive initiation ordeals that often generated intense anxiety" [Edinger, 1994, p.38]

Symbolically going into the blood chamber and being baptised by blood requires that your ego is strong, and if not so, you fall apart.

However, in this fairy-tale there is not only the experience of sinking into a bath of blood. No, in fact the two sisters, and the women before them, are not only killed, but also dismembered. On the psychological level, this means that the ego falls apart. They are not yet mature enough to endure the ordeal, the process of initiation.

However, in the fairy-tale they need to be put properly together again, which the third sister does seemingly with no further ado: *Her two dear sisters were lying there in the basin, miserably murdered and chopped to pieces. In spite of this, she proceeded to gather their parts together, placing them back in order: head, body, arms, and legs. Then, when nothing else was missing, the parts began to move. They joined together, and the two girls opened their eyes and came back to life. Rejoicing, they kissed and hugged one another.*

As stated earlier, not all elements in fairy-tales are explained, which gives room for imagination. How is it possible for the sister to gather their limbs and reanimate them? The sorcerer could enthrall them because he is a sorcerer, but the third sister has no magical powers.

Apparently, it is the fact that they are placed back *in order* that does the trick. I also think that touch and relation has something to with her being able to bring them together and back to life. She is able to reverse the spell because their relation is genuine and loving.

Yet another explanation is that she is able to do this puzzling the pieces back together *because* she is not afraid to get blood on her own hands, to do the dirty work of touching dead and rotten limbs. I fantasize that this process of sorting and placing takes a while and she needs to know which hand, legs and arms that belong to each sister. She must literally manage livers, hearts and bones, heads and hands without fainting or puking. Well, maybe she does that, still she goes on working. Over all she must be able to do this somewhat confined: Without losing her own head, she has to hold herself together while gathering the limbs together. Moreover, because she can hold herself she is able to make her sisters complete again. She is able to endure death and evil. That is *the second part* of the test on the psychological level.

This motive of recollecting dismembered body parts again points to the myth of Osiris and Isis where Isis assembles Osiris' dead body and brings him back to life.

Overall, the symbolical theme of the blood chamber and the blood basin are connected not only to *solutio*, but also to the alchemical processes of *mortificatio* and *putrefactio*, which according to Edinger are overlapping and refer to different aspects of the same operation and are closely intertwined with the alchemical nigredo state. *Mortificatio* may best be translated to killing and *putrefactio* to rotting [Edinger, 1994, p. 147].

"Mortificatio is the most negative operation in alchemy. It has to do with darkness, defeat, torture mutilation, death and rotting. However, these dark images often lead over to highly positive ones – growth, resurrection, rebirth, but the hallmark of mortificatio is the color black" [Ibid. p. 148]

I do imagine that the colour of red from the blood basin, from the limbs and from blood spilled over the on the floor is the most dominant in this scene, but I also imagine that the wall of the chamber is black, and that some of the decaying flesh is black or dark blue. Anyway, the process that the feminine psyche is going through is the process of *mortificatio*.

In the alchemical imagery this is done to many different objects; the sun, the king, the dragon, the lion, and the toad [Ibid. p. 155]. In this context most relevant is that also purity and innocence can be transformed and sacrificed in the process of *mortificatio* [Ibid. p. 156]. Not only is the naïve and childishly curious attitude of the two first sisters dissolved, but as representations

of the immature phases of the feminine psyche they are killed, dismembered, recollected [remembered] and reanimated.

On the psychological level this means that the feminine psyche although it has to sacrifice innocent and naïve parts of itself to be able to mature and develop, paradoxically must "re-collect" these same parts of itself. The maturing woman has to let go of her innocence, but at the same time be able to remember it, hold it, and take care of it, within herself. While developing she has to recollect the missing parts.

Thus, when in the fairy-tale the third sister is reassembling her sisters the feminine psyche is making herself whole; healing. If she just lets them remain in the blood chamber, she would not be able to become whole.

The paradox is that on one level, the fairy-tale tells us that we have already to be strong and mature to enter the blood chamber, and on another level, we are maturing and healing in the very process of piecing the limbs of our less mature egos together.

This points to one last reflection on the meaning of the blood chamber, namely that we can see it as the place of trauma in our own lives. In a rather broad sense of the word trauma, it points to what Hollis [1996] has called the "dismal places" of the psyche; it can be traumatic experiences in childhood and adolescence, our experiences as adults of loneliness, grief, guilt, loss etc. Alternatively, as the theme of this essay points to, it can be experiences of abuse or violence in a society of hostility toward women.

The blood chamber thus represents the traumatic places in our psyche, the places that are most difficult to enter. Only the third sister as the matured level of the feminine psyche has the resolve. It can take many years of despair and failed attempts to go there. If we are able *not* to fall apart, we must then do the job of staying there for a while, we cannot leave without soaking our hands in the basin, looking at and touching the dead rotten parts, putting the pieces together, remembering, and taking these reassembled former parts of ourselves out again.

After dismemberment and remembering, a new level of consciousness arises:

"The fruits of dismemberment are both a broader and transcendent perspective and a deep connection to unconscious processes. As archetypal process dismemberment is an "undoing", which affects transformation on a different register than rational understanding" [Book of symbols p. 766]

This new understanding may be why the third sister is now able to turn the table on the trickster and become one herself. After having passed the test of entering the room without having the egg stained with blood, the sorcerer will marry her, and so she gains control over him and is now able to deceive him.

I see the marriage, or the intention there of, not as a coniunctio the way Skogemann [Skogemann, a] uses it in her method of analysing fairy-tales, since in this fairy-tale the marriage never takes place. Rather, I see it, and the fact that she is now gaining control over him, as an indication that a new state is reached where the conscious psyche has integrated a dominant complex. The feminine psyche has developed to a mature level, where she is now in control of a sinister animus complex.

This also means that the feminine psyche has now access to some of the resources that was until now bound in the complex. This may imply creative resources originating in the unconscious. In the fairy-tale, that manifests in her now performing as a trickster, she has gained access to some of the qualities and characteristics of the sorcerer, and as we shall see, she is able to use them creatively.

Gold

She sends her sisters back home in a basket, and tells them that on returning home they must ask for help.

She forces the sorcerer to carry them on his back and tells him that he is carrying gold back to his in-laws as a gift. Though she has covered the sisters in gold, the real gold, the true gift, is the sisters themselves. This is a reversal of the abduction. Keeping in mind that the basket signifies the womb, being carried back in the basket points to a rebirth.

Gold, like the egg, is a symbol with a multitude of meanings. For now, I simply see it as signifying the end of the transformation process as described above. On one level, the gold signifies that the transformative process is completed, that the sisters can go home. On a deeper level it points to gaining self-knowledge on a spiritual or psychological level. In alchemy, gold signifies that the opus is completed:

"The physical goal of alchemy was gold, the panacea, the elixir of life, the spiritual one was the rebirth of the (spiritual) light from the darkness of Physis: healing self-knowledge and the deliverance of the pneumatic body from the corruption of the flesh." [Jung, CW14, §104]

The skull

The third sister then proceeds with her game of deceiving both the sorcerer and the wedding guests: *At home the bride was making preparations for the wedding feast, to which she had had the sorcerer's friends invited. Then she took a skull with grinning teeth, adorned it with jewelry and with a wreath of flowers, carried it to the attic window, and let it look out.*

There seems to be two different ways to interpret the skull, pointing to death as well as to life.

The skull is taken from the blood chamber, from one of the previously slaughtered women. According to Kalsched the idea of using a skull implies that becoming a bride to the sorcerer means death [1996, p. 198]. This points to the theme of the demon lover that I will briefly discuss later.

According to Edinger [1994, p. 166-167] also the skull or the death head is connected to the process of mortificatio and to transformation. Beheading seems to have to do with a symbolical separation of understanding from suffering and grief, and of freeing the soul. Using the skull as part of the deception points to my earlier interpretation that she has reached a new level of consciousness and thereby gains access to new creative resources.

We must consider the fact the head/skull is not the place of reason and, this being a modern idea:

"Ancient peoples considered these to reside in the heart and chest, while the head contained psyche, fertile essence and incorruptible life. [...] The head symbolizes the vessel and substance of life's eternal re-creation" [Book of Symbols, p. 242]

So if beheading points to a process of setting free, using the skull could be signifying the freeing of psyche or soul from the experience of death and the ability of using the psyche creatively by adorning the skull with jewels and flowers.

Honey

She then rolls herself in honey and feathers. In this fairy-tale, honey is an opposite of the blood in the blood basin. Honey is like blood viscous and sticky, but also sweet and golden, and thereby pointing to the gold as the goal of the opus major, and to another version of the alchemical bath. An interesting aspect of honey is its association with coagulatio and with its characteristic of being the prime materialized matter, according to Edinger quoting Paracelsus [Edinger, 1994, p. 90].

Therefore, with its association to coagulatio and the materialized matter, the young woman soaking herself in honey points to the fact that the psyche has been hardened and grounded.

In ancient Egypt, honey represented the process of transforming the sun's rays into golden sweetness [Book of Symbols, p. 228]. Honey is via the honeybee associated with the great mother goddess in that the bees is one of her animals. The honey bath indicates that the psyche is now in contact with or touched by the great mother goddess. In addition, the association between the words matter and mater and the great mother, signifies that the archetype of the positive mother has subtly been constellated through dealing with and overcoming the negative animus figure.

This is also significant in respect to the fact that the fairy-tale does not specifically tell us anything about the sisters' mother. Sometimes a woman needs to mother herself, to constellate in her own psyche the great and good mother by her own virtue and strength.

The bird

She now starts going home pretending to be a bird. Out of the egg comes a bird. Symbolically the potential of the egg is now manifest.

Even though the emerging bird associates to the image of the Bird Phoenix, Kalsched [1996, p. 198] specifies that she is *not* magically transforming into a bird. She is merely *pretending* to be a bird, disguising as a bird, and deceiving Fitcher and his guests on the way to the wedding. According to Kalsched, she is now a transitional figure: At the same time human and bird, participating in both reality and fantasy [Ibid.].

It makes me think of the feather cloaks of the Norse trickster-god Loki, lend to him by the goddess Freya. That association combined with the characteristic of her being now transitional signifies that she has overtaken the trickster powers of Fitcher. The bird on a more general level symbolizes spirit, transcendence, Logos. Also in the Norse mythology Odin sends out his raven in the world to bring back information. In Bluebeard, birds too are sent out to watch out for the bride's brothers. The bird thereby hints at the configuration of a positive logos-bound animus.

The Fire

The fire is the lysis of the fairy-tale. The brothers and relatives of the girl are arriving at the wedding, locking up the bridegroom and his guests and setting the house on fire. This signifies too the constellation of a positive and mature animus figure, being able to terminate the ferocious dark animus, and to use aggression in a positive manner, to protect the psyche.

He is cremated, or to use the alchemical imagery, we now witness the process of calcinatio, which is associated to the vast symbolism of fire [Gazel, 2019]. It is not enough to kill him he must be burned. The locking up also points to the Janus figure, and to the need for closure.

What must be calcinated in alchemy imagery is often egocentered and compulsive desirousness [Edinger, 1994, p. 19] symbolized by the wolf or the dismembered king. In this fairy-tale this desire is represented both by the desire of the sorcerer in his abduction of young girls and by the covetous curiosity of the first two sisters when exploring the house and mindlessly entering the blood chamber. This desire must burn to the ground in order for something new to emerge.

The product of calcinatio in alchemy is ash [Edinger, 1994, p. 40]:

"This corresponds to the so called "white foliated earth" of many alchemical texts. It signifies the albedo or whitening phase and has paradoxical associations". [Ibid.]

In the discussion of mortificatio I mentioned that the innocence and naivety of the feminine psyche needs to die. According to Edinger this can be seen as a preliminary albedo state

[Edinger, 1994, p.156]. I mention this shortly to underline that not only do I see several processes of the alchemical opus present in the fairy-tale. I see the phases of nigredo, albedo and rubedo as well. Rubedo is traditionally the end of the opus. However, the phases can interchange and repeat themselves. Rubedo is the stage of coming to life, of Eros, warmth, light and of consciousness. The confrontation with the blood in the blood basin could also be read as undergoing the rubedo phase. The climaxing representation of the rubedo stage is the fire though.

The fire thus is the culmination of the work. In addition, as such the fire is both the end and the new beginning for the young woman disguised as a bird, and on the psychological level, for the feminine psyche that has undergone the transformational process of which the fairy-tale tells us.

The feminine and evil

As much as I wish, within the framework of this essay, I cannot elaborate on the concept of evil from a Jungian perspective, since it has many aspects and implications. I will boil it down to stating that according to Jung evil exists and we have to accept our own shadow to be able to deal with it.

Nevertheless, sticking to my alchemical interpretation I will quote Edinger on evil:

"[E]go development is associated with the experience of evil [...] Thus consciousness of one's own evil – that is, awareness of the shadow – coagulates. [...] It is necessary to leave room for evil if one is to contribute to the real world." [Edinger, 1994, p. 93]

As shown above in dealing with the symbolical meaning of honey, coagulation has to do with hardening and grounding, with the development an ego that is robust and able, for example to enter the blood chamber without coming undone. It has to do with the ego being and becoming able to look at the evil both in the psyche and in the world. I find it difficult to ascertain what comes first, though. Is the process of accepting evil coagulating the ego, or is the ego already coagulated enough to deal with evil?

That too goes for the process of developing the feminine psyche. Is the third sister already wise enough to withstand the sorcerer? On the other hand, is she developing in the process? That is why we must look at it on two different levels. On the level of the narrative of the fairy-tale, she is already clever and sly, but viewing the three sisters as different phases in the development of the feminine psyche, the psyche is developing through repeating the trials of entering the blood chamber multiple times. Thus, the answer is that both views are valid, both concerning coagulating the ego, and the process of developing the feminine psyche.

The Demon Lover

A double view goes for the interpretation of the sorcerer as well: On the level of the fairy-tale, the sorcerer represents the outer danger of evil towards women. On the psychological level, I read the sorcerer as a malignant animus figure. These two perspectives do not rule each other out. Both the malignant animus figure and outer violent dangers towards women from a still too patriarchal society are true and presents dangers that modern women must cope with.

As mentioned, using a skull as stand-in for Fitcher's bride signifies that being married to him equals being married to Death or to a demon lover. I have previously discussed the concept of the demon lover [Gazel, 2012], and clearly the sorcerer (aka Fitcher) is in my view a variation on the theme of the demon lover.

The demon lover is an aspect of the animus. Animus can shortly be defined as:

"The Archetypal images of the eternal masculine in a woman's unconscious that forms a link between ego-consciousness and the collective unconscious and potentially opens a way to the self" [Stein, 1998, p. 233]

I do see the The Demon Lover as a negative aspect of animus, though. He is connected to the dark side of the Self, to the shadow side and to chaos. This is how figures as the sorcerer/ Fitcher at first is experienced in the feminine psyche. However, as I have shown the sorcerer can be seen as a trickster figure that initiates into the process of developing consciousness by entering the blood chamber.

The Demon lover can enthrall us in compulsive and obsessive behaviours, in addiction to food or drugs, in longing for an ideal, non-realistic love, in a longing for perfection that holds no real life. Nevertheless, this fairy-tale tells us that on the psychological level accepting the invitation into the blood chamber can lead to higher consciousness. As much as sinister this figure is, he actually wants something from us and he is handing us the very tools that, if we have slyness and the guts to use them properly, may lead to healing.

This may be one reason why the theme of Bluebeard to which the sorcerer is related runs as an undercurrent in contemporary culture as Tatar has demonstrated in her book on the subject [2004]. In this book she treats the figure of Bluebeard, and his wives not to forget from the perspective of literature and culture criticism, and shows how novels, films and art has treated this subject in a variety of ways. One of the interesting questions she raises is whether the story belongs to Bluebeard or to his wives and she also deals with the wife as a figure being both a victim, a trickster and a survivor [Ibid. p. 6].

The story of Bluebeard and its "elasticity" as Tatar calls it teaches us to sharpen our own wits:

"If Bluebeard's wife is scared out of her wits, her story also teaches listeners and readers how to take the experience shared through the folktale and how to use it to sharpen their own wits" [Ibid.]

What can we learn from the variation of the story given us in *Fitcher's bird*? What instructions do we get in regard to sharpen our wits, or to deal with evil?

Dealing with evil

Before I venture into this discussion, I will mention that von Franz [1995] discusses whether we can discern an ethical rule of human behaviour in dealing with evil from the archetypal material of fairy-tales. Her answer is that it is difficult because there is frustratingly many contradictions in the overall material. The interesting issue she points to is that exactly the contradictory and archetypal nature of the material paradoxically points to the conscious attitude of the individual:

"For if collective material is completely contradictory, if our basic ethical disposition is completely contradictory, only then is it possible to have an individual, responsible, free, conscious superstructure over those basic opposites. Then we can say that in human nature it would be right to do this or that, but I am going to do this the tertium⁴, the third thing, which is my individuality" [Ibid. p. 145]

As I read her von Franz makes room for the fairy-tale guiding the reader or the listener to create an individual and conscious interpretation of the fairy-tale, and a conscious mode of action: On the basis of what this fairy tale tells me I will behave in this or that manner. Not only do fairy-tales tell about individuation, at the same time they demand an individuated position of the reader.

⁴ The quote says tertium – but I guess the right word is tertium meaning the third.

On the level of the fairy-tale we can tell from the behaviour of the first two sisters that in dealing with evil it is absolutely necessary *not* to be naïve, innocent, too curious and unconscious.

From the behaviour of the third sister we can tell, that it is necessary to be “clever and sly”, self-protective, non-afraid of getting blood on ones hands, be able to cope with fear and disgust, having the stomach to move on and not falling apart. Then there is creativity and trickery. Finally, the ability to be aggressive.

In this regard, the fairy tale gives us some hints about attaining “the right attitude” in dealing with evil when confronted with it.

In the above-mentioned characteristics, especially three is interesting to me for further discussion. It is the problem of being too naïve, and the double-edged sword of curiosity. In addition, there is the ability to be aggressive.

We can read the blood chamber too on two not mutually exclusive levels. The blood chamber too can be read as representing both outer and inner realities, and as representing evil and foul rooms or realms in the outer world; as abduction, violence, sexual abuse, hateful speech, and harassment, directed toward women in the real world. In addition, we can interpret it as internal, psychological forces driving women towards destructive behaviours such as returning to a violent relationship, of repeating compulsive and addictive behaviour, or as being caught psychologically in repeating a trauma or in a complex endlessly nagging with an acid and critical voice.

Regardless of how we interpret the blood chamber, we need to learn not to go there, or if we have to, how to deal with it and how to drag ourselves out again. Off course in real life, the specifics will differ. For example re-entering a psychological trauma will be different if one is doing so, assisted by a professional therapist or if one completely alone. For the purpose of this essay, I have to address this on a general level.

As for being too naïve. In my opinion, being too naïve, or too nice or too sweet is a highly underestimated characteristic when it comes to getting into difficult situations that women can put themselves in by not being aware of other people’s wicked intentions. Some people are simply too naïve, too clean, too unspoiled, or untainted by life.

Recently, I initiated an online discussion about women’s wife and evil, and to my surprise, some of the participants would not even acknowledge that evil exists. Not in them, not in anyone and not at all. My thought was that they did not want to see it, accept its existence because then they do not have to deal with the possibility that they could be evil, bad, wicked themselves.

In the tale of Bluebeard his wives are seduced, and unwilling to accept the possibility that the blue hue in his beard may mean that things are not as good as they seem. Therefore, they neglect their inner voice warning them of the danger. They want things to be as good as they seem.

The problem is not so much being naïve as such, but the refusal to give up this attitude, when life calls on a more realistic outlook. We need to be willing to pay attention to the clues we get of things and people not being as they seem or not being as we want them to be, and act according to our gained knowledge.

As for being (too) curios. I call this a double-edged sword, because on one side being mindlessly curious can lead us directly into trouble as it did for the two first sisters.

We have to be investigative and curios when we do have the wisdom to listen to the inner voice warning about the blue hue of toxicity. Then instead of closing our eyes and minds, we need to examine the thing, to understand, to know. Sometimes we find that we need to walk away then. Alternatively, we must enter the blood chamber courageously curious as the third sister does.

Being curious and investigative brings to my mind the concept of the daughter archetype coined by Skogemann:

"I define the daughter archetype as a basic concept for the woman as a subject for herself, a concept for female agency that otherwise is lacking in analytical psychology. The name of the term is also chosen to differentiate it from the mother archetype. The phenomenology of the daughter archetype is represented at all levels of psychic functioning. The images range from ego-representations to goddess-like Self representations. The notion of the daughter archetype addresses the female psyche, but does not define the feminine as such". [Skogemann, b]

The third sister expresses this female agency of the daughter archetype in her decision to save her sisters from the sorcerer. I have thought that it should rather be labelled *the heroine archetype*, because the term daughter defines a certain relationship. In this fairy-tale both parents are absent, and as I hinted at earlier women and girls without parental figures in their lives, whether this are dead or simply malfunctioning, must learn to "mother" or "father" themselves, or becoming their own agents/heroines in this world. My own personal history mirrors this aspect of the story, and that may be why I initially felt estranged to the term daughter archetype. The answer hinted subtly at from this fairytale could be that all women are daughters in some respect of The Great Mother, if none else.

As for being evil oneself, or rather positively aggressive. The third sister overpowers the sorcerer by using her cleverness, then she tricks him, and as stated earlier she accesses some of his trickster-like resources. Thus, she is not afraid to use aggression towards him, to use his own modes of deception on him. In short, to be mean. In the end, the brothers and relatives of the sisters' burn down the house, which can be seen as healthier animus powers being used in a positive aggressive way.

The quote by Edinger implicates to me that acknowledging and being conscious of ones own capacity of evil is in fact a resource that makes us able to fight back, to defend and protect ourselves. Getting access to aggression and learning to temper it is a necessary component in the process of differentiation and separation in the developing of the young feminine psyche. That is properly why teenage girls practice by having multiple conflicts with their mothers.

The promise

The promise of this fairy tale is that it conveys the message that it is possible to fight the violent masculine regardless if we meet it in the psyche as a malevolent animus complex or out in the world. We can enter the blood chamber, and we can get out of there alive.

Kalsched [1996] discuss this in relation to Pinkola-Estés, [1993] that describes this as a malignant force that *is what it is* [Ibid. p. 42].

I find that Pinkola-Estés is right in underlining that "Women need to learn that there exists predators" [ibid.] and continuing:

"To understand the predator is to become a mature animal that is not vulnerable out of naïveté, inexperience or foolishness [Ibid.]

However, Kalsched argues that her denying "its relationship to trauma" and by "delinking it from the vicissitudes of personal development ... undermines therapeutic possibilities" [Kalsched, 1996, p. 111] and as he states:

"Images change and change radically in relation to environmental factors, therapeutic or otherwise" [Ibid.]

My analysis of this fairy-tale and its alchemical imagery certainly tells me that images do change and the possibility of working in and with the blood chamber shows that it is possible to overcome the sorcerer/predator and access the psychic energy hitherto in his possession.

The fear of the feminine

My contention is that being aware of these malignant forces in the psyche brace women and makes them better equipped to deal with it in the real world. On the cultural and political level there is still much to do in terms of dealing with hate against women, though.

As stated in the introduction, this is *not* about victim blaming. I would like to bring this into a cultural or collective perspective by talking not about "men" or "women". Rather I prefer to talk about it in terms of the masculine and the feminine. In addition, of the fear and hate of the feminine. Paradoxically this resentment also comes from women, or rather from the malevolent animus complex in women. That is why dealing with it on a symbolical and archetypal level makes sense.

In these years, we experience a widening polarisation between the genders. It is off course beyond the scope of this essay to address this polarisation in depth. I can only hint at what is at stake on the collective and cultural level. The polarisation points to a split between the feminine and the masculine in the collective psyche. Firstly, we have a deep split between the masculine and the feminine. After years of patriarchy, the feminine has been devaluated. In the ideology of the patriarchy, the feminine is furthermore split between the positive and the negative feminine. Neumann [1994] in his essay on the subject points to the fact that:

"The devaluation of the feminine is to be understood as an attempt of overcoming the fear of the Feminine and its dangerous aspect as the Great Mother and as the anima. ... [I]n the patriarchate the unconscious, instinct, sex and the earth – as things of this world – belong to the "negative Feminine" with which the male associates woman and that in all patriarchal cultures up until the present, woman and the feminine have suffered under this male defensiveness and contempt" [Ibid. p. 263]

This devaluation takes place both on a cultural and psychological level, and in both men and women. The patriarchal ideology has been "inseminated" into both the masculine and the feminine psyche, and therefore there is a split and an internal fight in both genders coursing suffering internally as well as externally, individually as well as collectively.

However, Neumann mentions that also the earth is devaluated. In these years we also experience that our exploitation of nature is threatening Mother Earth as the very Matrix in which we all live, the womb that gives us life and nurtures us. I do not think it is coincidental that we experience this along with the polarisation of genders.

I hope to have shown in my alchemical analysis of this fairy tale of dealing with the sorcerer within, that by dealing with malignant masculine forces a relation, however subtle, can be established to the great feminine. My dream of the rubber-clad figure is an initial dream. My encounter with this figure is my initiation into entering my psyche's blood chamber and my inner work of dealing with difficulties and trauma, and it is to me an initiation to working with these themes on the cultural and psychological level.

The end.

Litterature

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Summary

In this fairy-tale essay, I read Fitcher's bird and ask what it can tell us about the relation of the feminine psyche to evil, and what it teaches women in terms of dealing with evil. I analyze the symbols of the fairy-tale using my alchemical imagination, focusing especially on the blood chamber. I try to demonstrate that the sorcerer of the fairy as an intruding and malevolent animus figure can be seen as an initiator into a matured level of the consciousness of the feminine psyche. I state that by being aware of the malignant forces in the psyche women are better braced to deal with evil in the world, and I conclude by pointing to the implications of the fear and hatred of the feminine on the cultural and collective level.

Appendix A

Fitcher's bird by the By Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

Source: This version is seen 24.01.2021 at <https://www.pitt.edu/~dash/grimm046.html>

I have also read the Danish version translated by Villy Sørensen:
Fitchers fugl. I: Grimm: Samlede eventyr. København : Gyldendal, 2006.

Bluebeard: Discussion and references can be found here <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bluebeard> [Seen 30.01.2021]

Fitcher's Bird

Once upon a time there was a sorcerer who disguised himself as a poor man, went begging from house to house, and captured beautiful girls. No one knew where he took them, for none of them ever returned.

One day he came to the door of a man who had three beautiful daughters. He appeared to be a poor, weak beggar, and he carried a pack basket on his back, as though he wanted to collect some benevolent offerings in it. He asked for a bit to eat, and when the oldest daughter came out to give him a piece of bread, he simply touched her, and she was forced to jump into his pack basket. Then he hurried away with powerful strides and carried her to his house, which stood in the middle of a dark forest.

Everything was splendid in the house, and he gave her everything that she wanted. He said, "My dear, you will like it here with me. You will have everything that your heart desires."

So it went for a few days, and then he said to her, "I have to go away and leave you alone for a short time. Here are the house keys. You may go everywhere and look at everything except for the one room that this little key here unlocks. I forbid you to go there on the penalty of death."

He also gave her an egg, saying, "Take good care of this egg. You should carry it with you at all times, for if you should loose it great misfortune would follow."

She took the keys and the egg, and promised to take good care of everything.

As soon as he had gone she walked about in the house from top to bottom examining everything. The rooms glistened with silver and gold, and she thought that she had never seen such splendor.

Finally she came to the forbidden door. She wanted to pass it by, but curiosity gave her no rest. She examined the key. It looked like any other one. She put it into the lock and twisted it a little, and then the door sprang open.

What did she see when she stepped inside? A large bloody basin stood in the middle, inside which there lay the cut up parts of dead girls. Nearby there was a wooden block with a glistening ax lying on it.

She was so terrified that the egg, which she was holding in her hand, fell into the basin. She got it out again and wiped off the blood, but it was to no avail, for it always came back. She wiped and scrubbed, but she could not get rid of the stain.

Not long afterward the man returned from his journey, and he immediately asked for the key and the egg. She handed them to him, shaking all the while, for he saw from the red stain that she had been in the blood chamber.

"You went into that chamber against my will," he said, "and now against your will you shall go into it once again. Your life is finished."

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.

"Now I will go get the second one," said the sorcerer, and, again disguised as a poor man, he went to their house begging.

The second sister brought him a piece of bread, and, as he had done to the first one, he captured her by merely touching her, and he carried her away. It went with her no better than it had gone with her sister. She let herself be led astray by her curiosity, opened the blood chamber and looked inside. When he returned she paid with her life.

Then he went and captured the third sister, but she was clever and sly. After he had given her the keys and the egg, and had gone away, she carefully put the egg aside, and then examined the house, entering finally the forbidden chamber.

Oh, what she saw! Her two dear sisters were lying there in the basin, miserably murdered and chopped to pieces. In spite of this she proceeded to gather their parts together, placing them back in order: head, body, arms, and legs. Then, when nothing else was missing, the parts began to move. They joined together, and the two girls opened their eyes and came back to life. Rejoicing, they kissed and hugged one another.

When the man returned home he immediately demanded the keys and the egg, and when he was unable to detect any trace of blood on them, he said, "You have passed the test. You shall be my bride."

He now had no more power over her and had to do whatever she demanded.

"Good," she answered, "but first you must take a basketful of gold to my father and mother. You yourself must carry it there on your back. In the meanwhile I shall make preparations for the wedding."

Then she ran to her sisters, whom she had hidden in a closet, and said, "The moment is here when I can rescue you. The evildoer himself shall carry you home. As soon as you have arrived at home send help to me."

She put them both into a basket, then covered them entirely with gold, so that nothing could be seen of them.

Then she called the sorcerer in and said, "Now carry this basket away, but you are not to stop and rest underway. Take care, for I shall be watching you through my little window."

The sorcerer lifted the basket onto his back and walked away with it. However, it pressed down so heavily on him that the sweat ran from his face. He sat down, wanting to rest, but immediately one of the girls in the basket called out, "I am looking through my little window, and I can see that you are resting. Walk on!"

He thought that his bride was calling to him, so he got up again. Then he again wanted to sit down, but someone immediately called out, "I am looking through my little window, and I can see that you are resting. Walk on!"

Every time that he stopped walking, someone called out, and he had to walk on until, groaning and out of breath, he brought the basket with the gold and the two girls to their parents' house.

At home the bride was making preparations for the wedding feast, to which she had had the sorcerer's friends invited. Then she took a skull with grinning teeth, adorned it with jewelry and with a wreath of flowers, carried it to the attic window, and let it look out.

When everything was ready she dipped herself into a barrel of honey, then cut open the bed and rolled around in it until she looked like a strange bird, and no one would have been able to recognize her. Then she walked out of the house.

Underway some of the wedding guests met her, and they asked, "You, Fitcher's bird, where are you coming from?"

"I am coming from Fitcher's house."

"What is his young bride doing there?"

"She has swept the house from bottom to top, and now she is looking out of the attic window."

Finally her bridegroom met her. He was slowly walking back home, and, like the others, he asked, "You, Fitcher's bird, where are you coming from?"

"I am coming from Fitcher's house."

"What is my young bride doing there?"

"She has swept the house from bottom to top, and now she is looking out of the attic window."

The bridegroom looked up. Seeing the decorated skull, he thought it was his bride, and he waved a friendly greeting to her.

After he and all his guests had gone into the house, the bride's brothers and relatives arrived. They had been sent to rescue her. After closing up all the doors of the house so that no one could escape, they set it afire, and the sorcerer, together with his gang, all burned to death.