

# Cinderella-Aschenputtel

## viewed through Anthroposophy

CATHY MARCONI

Fairy tales transcend time. Their origins go back to the distant past and are found in oral traditions around the world. Fairy tales take us on a journey that joins body with soul and spirit. They are often inspired, and are thought to bring us closer to the angelic realm through their picture-language. According to artist and writer Monica Gold (p. 36), angel beings are invited to enter our world through the stories and in this way help to maintain the well-being of children and those around them.

It is thought that the great teachers of the mystery streams of wisdom created fairy tales to reach and communicate with people. Mysteries of the human being and the cosmos were put forth in an imaginative way. They contain varied archetypes that reveal the secrets of planets and metals. Thus, one might live into the stories with one's entire being, rather than merely conceptually or abstractly. Such imaginative pictures live in the soul. "The tales first had to live as pictures in the soul, where they could become the germ of a future capacity to understand the spiritual relationships described imaginatively in them." (Schramm, p. xvi)

In this study, I will discuss the fairy tale "Cinderella" from an anthroposophic perspective. The tale is approached as a kind of step-ladder for growth and self-knowledge, which it surely is. Henning Schramm emphasizes that people experience fairy tales differently, approaching and understanding them according to their own unique

needs and world views. Through anthroposophy we look both to the cosmos and the human being to define spiritual and psychological wholes; so shall we view the fairy tale in this manner, too. From this perspective, we consider the organs, planets, zodiacal signs, and human being as interconnected and interweaving, all engaged in a kind of dance that manifests on many levels. We will discuss Cinderella as an image of the kidney, and the kidney process. In doing so, we are brought to the planet Venus and zodiacal sign Libra as well.

The archetype of the oppressed or persecuted feminine is an important element in the story. This archetype can be found both in Anthroposophic Psychology and in Jungian Depth Psychology. Here too, we may discover ourselves as we consider the unique experiences our lives have embraced and endured. The oppressed but resourceful Cinderella goes from fireside cinders, then tearfully, lovingly, to her mother's grave; athletically into and out of the pear tree; and ultimately into the arms of her beloved. She finally finds freedom. We see additional dimensions of this archetype as it moves into planetary and physiologic processes in a state of receptivity, resilience, and beauty.

The very word "Cinderella" has come to mean someone who is oppressed or held down and unappreciated. Intrinsic to this theme, however, is the eventual overcoming of these elements and finding release and resolve. According to

Wikipedia, the tale embodies the archetypal theme of “unjust oppression and triumphant reward,” the persecuted heroine. There are many versions of Cinderella and Cinderella-like stories around the world.

We find the Cinderella theme first arising in a documented form from China around 860 AD. In that version of the story, our heroine is Ye Xian,

of the traveling troubadours. They developed their collection of stories over a period of years, working carefully to build stylistic consistency and soulful presentation. It is of note that Rudolf Steiner considered the Grimm brothers to be directed by a higher guidance in their work. (Steiner as quoted in Schramm, p. xv)

Interestingly, in all of the above, her name has

---

“ THE ARCHETYPE OF THE OPPRESSED OR PERSECUTED FEMININE IS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THE STORY.

who befriends a fish that is the rebirth of her mother. Ye Xian's mother was killed by her step-mother and sister. Cinderella saves the bones which are magic. The Chinese Ye Xian-Cinderella story also contains a slipper component and a king who has fallen in love with her, whom she marries.

In Europe, we find Cenerentolla from Italy in 1634, while in France, *Cendrillon* or *Le Petite Pantoufle Verre* (The Little Glass Slipper). Germany brings us *Aschenputtel*, “the Ashfool” (as defined in Wikipedia) or ash maiden. “Aschenputtel” is derived from the Grimm brothers who compiled this and many other fairy tales into a book format that was published in 1812. Brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were very interested in the poetic writings of German culture and in the oral traditions

the same meaning--that of ash or cinders. This is found in the Latin word origin of cinis and the Italian cenere. We have mentioned “the ashfool,” *Aschenputtel*; and Cinderella of course refers to cinder or ash. One ponders the definition of this name and its universality, and wonders about a possible hidden or alternate meaning as well. Here we consider a kind of parallel process in the story. As we enter into it, we discover secrets revealed and new things to learn.

At the start, the fairy-tale Cinderella begins with loss. Her mother is dying; in her last words, the mother instructs Cinderella to be good and honest in her life. She heeds her mother's advice, and weeps every day at her mother's grave in the yard of her home. She meets adversity when,



palumba  
inspired natural living

natural toys  
clothing  
books & music  
arts & crafts  
house & home

palumba.com  
734.927.5005

Follow us




# AWAKENING

the *spirit*  
in adventure

"Where Consciousness  
Meets Wilderness"

- Custom class trips
- Summer programs
- Semester school



Kroka Expeditions  
www.kroka.org | 603-835-9087



 **Sunbridge**  
Institute

*Inspiring Education!*

**Low-Residency Programs in  
Waldorf Teacher Education**

**Apply Now  
For Summer 2019**

- \*Elementary Teacher Education
- World Language Teacher Education
- \*Early Childhood Completion Track

**Financial Aid Available**  
**\*SUNY MED Option Available**

Visit our website for our winter/spring workshop offerings  
and to register for Summer Series 2019

**sunbridge.edu**

Full Member:  
AWSNA / WECAN

## Beginning Well

CARE FOR THE CHILD FROM BIRTH TO AGE THREE



EMPATHY FROM THE VERY BEGINNING

Pia Dögl, Elke Maria Rischke and Ute Strub

**Beginning Well**  
by Pia Dögl, Elke Maria Rischke  
& Ute Strub

Empathetic childcare for birth to three,  
from daily care routines and suitable  
playthings to play and motor  
development, sleep and waking  
rhythms, holistic learning, and more.

Shop online at  
[store.waldorfearlychildhood.org](http://store.waldorfearlychildhood.org)

Discounts for WECAN members  
(join or renew online!)

Mail-in and wholesale orders, contact:

 **WECAN**  
WALDORF EARLY CHILDHOOD  
ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA

845.352-1690  
[info@waldorfearlychildhood.org](mailto:info@waldorfearlychildhood.org)  
[www.waldorfearlychildhood.org](http://www.waldorfearlychildhood.org)

with the melting of the snow, her father remarries a year later to a woman who has two daughters. Of the three women, none are kind to her, but the step-sisters are especially unkind and mean.

The relationship of Cinderella to her mother, the mother-daughter relationship, is a prominent theme in the story. Cinderella cries at her mother's death, and turns to her for help as we shall see many times throughout the story. This speaks to the meaningfulness of faith, and may be viewed as key to Cinderella's relationship to the world of spirit. Magically, her mother interacts with her through a bird in a wishing hazel tree planted at her grave. In this way, her wishes are heard and granted.

As her tears flow, one is prompted to consider one's own relationship with the dead. My mother is deceased. One must consider that the dead are real, and that there is continuity in relationship. I think that one can achieve this continuity through reflection and belief in the person of concern. This aspect of the story encouraged for this writer a kind of review process, lovingly and forgivingly, of both positive and negative elements therein. In acknowledging the reality of this relationship as something living, it becomes more than memory or assimilation of the past. While there is nothing problematic about that reality, I find growth and even renewal by acknowledging my mother's death in humility, and allowing the relationship to continue in my life today. The parallel with our heroine is found in the mother-daughter relationship itself, and in the sense of connection felt beyond the threshold of death.

Cinderella's step-sisters treat her poorly, and substituting her nice clothes with plain ones, jeeringly say, "Just look at the proud princess, how decked out she is!" (Grimm's, p. 74). She is told she must earn her bread and is sent to the

kitchen where she must work all the time. Up before daybreak, Cinderella cooks and cleans, lights and tends the fire, and carries water. Having no bed upon which to lay her head, she sleeps in the ashes close to the fireside where it is warm. Adding insult to injury, her step-sisters put her food (peas and lentils) into the ashes forcing her to separate them out again in order to eat.

As Cinderella lives, works, and sleeps in the cinders, she presents to us basically an ash-forming process. She sorts the bad from the good, peas and lentils from the ash, and leaves the ashen residue. The kidneys, too, sort the bad from the good as they decide what to keep for the body and what not to keep. They perform an incinerative, burning, or ashen process as they create urine. In mystery-wisdom thought, Cinderella may be viewed as an imaginative picture of the kidneys. As an "ash-girl," she more or less inhabits the ashes, where she works unremittingly, and constantly. Is this not an apt picture of the kidneys as well? Like our heroine, yet unnoticed, their work is constant and pressured.

Indeed this marvelous organ works hard, and provides multiple functions in the body. The kidneys are responsible for maintaining the volume and chemical composition of body fluids. At the start, we may notice that there are two of them, both bean shaped, with the right side slightly higher than the left. They have several roles in the body, all of which involve a balancing function. The kidneys extract waste from the blood, balance body fluids, and form urine. Thus, their work is primarily three-fold: filtration, reabsorption, and secretion. (Abrahams, p. 300) The kidneys selectively, "thoughtfully" retain what is useful and still needed by the body, and filter out that which is not – a process of selective reabsorption. This occurs inside the organ in the part called the nephron, in which are found



# Waldorf Teacher Training in Canada

## Waldorf Early Childhood Educator Training

Next intake, June 30, 2019

July session in Duncan, Vancouver Island;  
fall & spring in North Vancouver, BC

2 year part time program – 5 weeks each year. 3 weeks in July, 1 week in fall and spring with additional mentoring, observation and practicums.

## Mentoring: Transforming Ourselves to Meet the Other

"We are all just walking each other home" –Rumi

June 30 to July 5, 2019

with Louise deForest, Heather Church and Wendalyn von Meyenfeldt

## The Unexpected Gifts of the Mystery Children

—learning to see these children with new eyes

July 14 to 19, 2019

with Adola McWilliam, Marjorie Rehbach and Robin Laskowski

For more information about Early Childhood please contact Ruth Ker  
email: mrker@shaw.ca  
phone: 250-748-7791

## Waldorf Grades Teacher Training

Next intake June 30, 2019

July session in Duncan, Vancouver Island;  
fall & spring in North Vancouver, BC

3 year part time program – 5 weeks each year. 3 weeks in July, 1 week in fall and spring with additional mentoring, observation and practicums.

## Remedial Aspects;

Understanding and working with learning differences

July 8 to 12, 2019

with Ute Grimm and others

## Teaching with Heart

Experiencing the Waldorf approach

July 15 to 17, 2019

with Kate Reynolds and others

For more information about Grades please contact Lisa Masterson  
email: WCIGrades@gmail.com  
phone: 949-220-3193

Visit our website to apply or register for any of the above



British Columbia, Canada | [www.westcoastinstitute.org](http://www.westcoastinstitute.org) | [info@westcoastinstitute.org](mailto:info@westcoastinstitute.org)



## Transforming Culture

Rudolf Steiner spoke about  
"a future worthy of the human being."

How do we get there?

**anthroposophy.org**

Rudolf Steiner's Vision in Action



WINTER CAMP • Feb 18-23, 2019



FAMILY CAMP •  
Aug 14-18, 2019



FALL GAP SEMESTER •  
Sept 7-Nov 23, 2019



SUMMER CAMP •  
June 30-Aug 10, 2019

FOR ALL AGES ALL YEAR

New! ADULT WEEKENDS  
March 15-17 & 22-24, 2019



GLENBROOK.ORG • MARLBOROUGH, NH • 603-876-3342



“ FINALLY, THROUGH RESOURCES WITHIN HER, AND THE SPIRITUAL WORLD, SHE IS ABLE TO GROW AND BREAK FREE.

the glomeruli and tubules. Under great pressure, blood enters the glomeruli which are held in the Bowman's capsules, where the filtering process ensues. There are many, many of these capsules or receiving cups in the kidney. Imaginally, these containing cups may be viewed as chalices, which, in an act of compliance and surrender, receive the blood and tend to the needs of the heart.

The idea that the glomeruli might be viewed as chalices rather than simple containers, was presented in the Anthroposophic Psychology course I took in 2016. Thinking in this way ushered in a process of change for me. It is as if a window opened with the surrounding hills and valleys illumined by the warm rays of the sun. Our physiology, this organology, is illumined too, by the divine source and angelic beings that stand behind and work within it. For me, it involved an act of going from a more observational and didactic learning style to one that is enlivened or ensouled; that is, a growth process. As I consider the interrelatedness of things I ponder that all of the organs might be engaged in sympathetic dialogue with one another. These holy cups or chalices then, I see as something sacred, as they lovingly and under high pressure, accept and bend to the demands made of them by the heart organ.

The idea of selective reabsorption and surrender is a Venus, air-astral process. The physiologic compliance of Venus is called homeostasis. This is where blood is used effectively in its recycling activity, bringing balance and peace to the body. Homeostasis also involves the adrenals atop the kidneys and the steroid cortisol, concerned especially with stress. Cortisol, considered Aphrodite-Venusian, is helpful especially in dealing with stress in the manner of management through digestion and metabolism, contrasted with the more aggressive inflammation associated with Mars.

Aphrodite-Venus may be found in the cooperative-tending processes found in the cortisol especially as it relates to this physiologic compliance. We digest stress on several levels, as it were, when we approach a problematic situation through thinking: reflection, consideration; we surrender to it. This involves acknowledging and working with Higher Beings, and is viewed as an act of love according to Steiner. (From class discussions, Anthroposophic Psychology lectures, 2016.)

The Mars process, by contrast, may go in the direction of greater assertion rather than consideration, with a possible leaning toward resentment. This tendency can contribute to unresolved and unconscious problems psychologically. Homeostasis can be compromised, and there may be a tendency toward inflammatory and other bodily illnesses.

We should note the comments of the anthroposophic medical practitioner Henning Schramm. He discusses fairy tales in relation to the planets and specific metal remedies in his very fine book *The Healing Power of Planetary Metals*. Fairy tales play a part in his medical and therapeutic work, and in his personal experience as well. He emphasizes that their abundant and lively picture-language speaks to the soul in an imaginative way. "Particular fairy tales open up better access, or even new access, to knowledge of the spiritual interrelatedness of metal remedies, planetary forces and the human being." (Schramm, 2013, p. 182) Reading his stories was most helpful to me, deepening my understanding of archetypes and planetary symbolism, as well. He views metal processes as being "described" by various characters in the stories. Schramm discusses Venus in relation to kidney and copper in Snow White. I can extend that to Cinderella as well.

With the planet Venus we are brought to consider what is of value and meaningful in our



# Bach

## INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Help the ones you love.  
Learn the Bach flower  
remedies.



Courses throughout N. America and via web or mail  
Approved by Bach Centre, UK. CE's available.

[www.bachflowercourses.com](http://www.bachflowercourses.com)



RAPHAEL ACADEMY

*Educating the Minds, Bodies, and Spirits  
of students who may have Autism  
Spectrum Disorder, Down syndrome, or  
other intellectual disabilities.*

### Raphael Academy is Growing!

*Now Interviewing for the  
2019-20 School Year*



**Pre-K/Kindergarten Class Teacher** - will help students explore the wonders of a Waldorf Early Childhood classroom filled with song, movement, storytelling, baking and crafts all within a strong nurturing weekly rhythm.

### New Combined Early Grades Class

**Teacher** - will guide students in the 1st-3rd grades and explore the Waldorf curriculum through an adapted, practice-oriented approach to academics and Ability Group Instruction (individualized reading and math).



**Transition Class Teacher** - will help prepare 9th-12th graders for the future by utilizing an adapted Waldorf curriculum, Ability Group Instruction, and Job Exploration within the community in addition to ongoing vocational and life skills training.

**Visit:** [www.rafaelacademy.org](http://www.rafaelacademy.org)

Raphael Village is working to establish its residential life-sharing community by fall 2020. We are looking for experienced coworkers who want to join the conversation and help pioneer this vision.

[www.rafaelvillage.org](http://www.rafaelvillage.org)

lives. Venus is associated with values, and the wish to find relationships that have intimacy and real content in them. Self-worth is developed here, and with it gifts of compromise and peace for oneself and others. Additionally, Venus is associated with attraction—involving not only the ability to attract others to oneself, but one's interest and attraction to others too.

The arts thrive with Venus, and an appreciation of things of beauty. With Venus love is fostered; love for knowledge and ideas, for the world, humanity, and the universe. Astrologer John Jocelyn views Libra-Venus as an exalted energy that through intuition and its central, coordinating place in the zodiac, balances the forces of thinking, feeling, and willing. We read, "The scales must always be balanced. Constantly are Libra souls weighed and ever do they weigh themselves, to see what is lacking, in order to maintain harmony and poise." (Jocelyn, p. 133)

Interestingly, Jocelyn associates Libra-Venus with Good Friday, and therefore with the crucifixion



of Christ. Jocelyn emphasized that those born under this domain pass through the Good Friday experience in a real way that involves extremely difficult emotional experiences that are tied with physical suffering. He says, "Love is literally the life of Libra. Those born in or under this Venus sign are crucified in the flesh through their desires and feelings, until purification thoroughly refines the soul and brings it to a state of poise

As we read the story, we find this to be the case in Cinderella. Like many such tales, we find lightness, dreaminess, and plentiful imagery, yet the thematic pathos cannot be denied. Deeply saddened at the death of her mother, she cries every day at her mother's grave in the back yard. The poor treatment from her step-family is well described, and even her father refers to her as a "stunted little kitchen wench." (Grimm's, 2015,

“WE DIGEST STRESS ON SEVERAL LEVELS, WHEN WE APPROACH A PROBLEMATIC SITUATION THROUGH THINKING: REFLECTION, CONSIDERATION; WE SURRENDER TO IT.

and peace.” (Jocelyn, p. 134) The issue of choice is an important one for Libra that may come into play here. The necessity of having to choose one thing over another, brought on by life's demands, can result in disaster for this peaceful sign. Such situations may invoke a sense of unfair treatment that threatens their sense of proper apportioning and cherished unity. The crucifixion is found in the sorrow brought on by intense thought regarding one's emotions and feelings, where body is sacrificed to spirit.

p.80) These may be viewed as sorrowful elements that contribute to alienation; Cinderella is alone in the world.

We may find the zodiacal Libra and planetary Venus "Good Friday" theme discussed by John Jocelyn (p. 134) in Cinderella's constant hard work – the night and day physical labor. It is my viewpoint that Cinderella's crucifixion, as a Libra-Venus figure, is found here, in this place of bodily sacrifice and emotional disparagement. In her bondage she bears the cross,

harkening back to the persecuted heroine motif. This is an ashen process too, psychologically, which harmonizes higher and lower aspects of oneself. Through this one is finally brought to Christ-Consciousness. (Jocelyn, p. 136)

In the compelling book *The Zodiac and the Salts of Salvation* by George Carey, the image of Justice from the Tarot is discussed. Justice sits on a throne wearing a coronet on her head, holding an upward-pointing sword in her right hand and a scale in the left. She is associated with Venus and

Work to which Dr. Carey referred, in which Venus operates. We see it in the balancing of blood/water volume, red blood cell regulation, and the secretion of waste. In fact, the word “kidney” is derived from the Latin *retinere*, or reins, meaning to hold, or keep back; the kidneys work hard to hold onto what is of value to the body and to give it back. (Carey, p. 193)

Cinderella is a being who works hard, too. Up before daybreak, she tends and lights the fire, cooks, cleans, and even sleeps in the ashes. She is given her peas and lentils mockingly mixed with

---

“ WE FIND THE CINDERELLA THEME FIRST ARISING IN A DOCUMENTED FORM FROM CHINA AROUND 860 AD.

material creation, and suggestive of the idea that equilibrium is necessary for creation or creativity to happen. This is referred to as the “Great Work,” involving the “Grand Man” or universe and the human body, and their interrelation. It involves, among other things, a spiritual marriage in which the pineal and pituitary glands, male and female respectively, are united. (Carey, p. 200) In the Great Work, all material must be utilized constructively and without waste.

When we consider equilibrium and the effective and constructive utilization of materials, we must also consider once again the kidney organs. Here, in their compliance and acceptance of the blood where all is used without waste, we find the Great

the ashes by her step-sisters and step-mother. When the ball is announced, she wants to go, but is told that she may not. When her step-sisters command her to comb their hair and help them get ready, she weeps because she, too, would like to attend the festival. Yet she is accepting of this, doesn't complain, and continues her work. When she asks her step-mother if she may go, the step-mother replies, “Thou are dusty and dirty, and wouldst go to the festival? Thou hast no clothes or shoes, and yet wouldst dance?” (Grimm's, p. 76)


One of the things I like about fairy tales is the presence of an unseen dimension in the stories that the characters may turn to. It is

healing to be assured that there are resources in life beyond one's immediate surroundings, which sometimes may let one down. Cinderella's mother in heaven, along with the birds in the sky, enter into the story now, and become allies to her for its duration. Reaching out, she exclaims, "You gentle pigeons, you turtle-doves and all you birds beneath the sky, come and help me to pick "The good into the pot, the bad into the crop." (p. 76)

Reaching out, she finds her prayers are answered, and therein lies her transformation. Psychologically, her transformation occurs over the course of the story, and may be described thus: At the beginning, she awakens to her young childhood with sadness; her mother has died. Yet the warmth and relatedness of this relationship doesn't die, rather it continues through a wishing hazel-tree that harbors a bird, her mother, who speaks to her through the bird. She is deeply nourished by this, and turns to it often. Cinderella discerns her harsh and unappreciated circumstances, but still she maintains and carries on in a state of compassion, compliance, and surrender. Finally, through resources within her, and the spiritual world, she is able to grow and break free. At last, a new role unveils itself where, in beauty, she becomes the wedded Princess.

There is a reframing of thought that happens for me in reading these stories. It involves going from a basic concept-forming or memory-based thinking to something imaginal, which is inclusive of the dead and angelic realm in awareness, and this is fulfilling for me. I think that this is what the fairy tale is meant to do. I am attracted both to the cosmic and to what is human, and I find that in the imaginative realm these are interwoven. The visual imagery and ephemeral elements in fairy

tales provide inspiration for me and an impetus to learn and read even more.

Rudolf Steiner spoke about the arts and their power to transform. He said, "For in art, what is outwardly sense-perceptible is spiritualized, and imbued with impulses of the spiritual world; that which is inwardly perceptible to the soul is presented in an external embodiment." (Anthroposophic Psychology course lectures 2015, R. Steiner's quote from True and False Paths) Here in the artistic element, we find a reflective interplay of spirit and matter, of the material and ephemeral; microcosm and macrocosm. It is a theme that is close to my heart. In fact, much of Steiner's extensive work emphasizes and embodies this dynamic, and creates in this way, I feel, a living lemniscate. One is brought into greater connection with an invisible and ethereal dimension; and this promotes self-reflection, healing, and inspiration for this writer to do art. 

---

**Catherine Marconi** is a California-based painter and counselor who holds a Master's degree in education. Marconi has worked in the mental health field for many years and in 2017 she completed the Anthroposophic Psychology Program.

#### REFERENCE LIST

- 1 Abrahams, Peter. (2007). *How the Body Works*. New York: Bright Star Publishing.
- 2 Anthroposophic-Psychology course; Relational Psychology, 2014-2017.
- 3 Carey, George Washington, and Perry, Inez Eudora. (1932). *The Zodiac and the Salts of Salvation*. Los Angeles, CA: The Carey-Perry School of the Chemistry of Life.
- 4 Gold, Monica. (2012). *Fairy Tales and Art Mirrored in Modern Consciousness*. New York: The Association of Waldorf Schools of North America.
- 5 Grimm, Jacob, and Grimm, Wilhelm. (2015). *Grimm's Complete Fairy Tales* (translation Margaret Hunt). New York: Barnes and Noble Books.
- 6 Jocelyn, John. (1970). *Meditations on the signs of the Zodiac*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.
- 7 Schramm, Henning. (2013). *The Healing Power of Planetary Metals*. Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books.
- 8 Wikipedia.org/cinderella-aschenputtel.

*This article was written in completion of the Anthroposophic Psychology program in 2017. Fairy tales present an imaginal dimension that is inclusive of angels, the dead, planets, minerals, and physiology. Rudolf Steiner views fairytales as soul nourishment that bring together the roots of human-earthly life with the cosmic realm. Therefore, there is not a single stage in life that does not accord with them.*

*This is the story of Cinderella – it is a heroine's tale. The persecuted feminine faces so much unkindness and loss in her life, and she must somehow find a way through them. Bravery and fortitude transform suffering into joy. It is my hope that in reading this we will find those places within and without that have called forth bravery and courage from oneself; the heroine in us all.*