

she never tested whether her husband was capable of changing. Not having tried out being honest in the marriage, she is left wondering how her husband would have responded to her authentic self. Further, if by acting on her felt needs a woman violates social norms, she needs to anticipate outer criticism and develop sources of support to deal with it. Therese incurs the censure of the community and mistakenly interprets this censure to mean that concealment of her authentic self in the future is absolutely necessary.

Therese's narrative also reveals the power of externalized judgments to swing self-assessment to the negative pole when it hangs suspended, caught between the conventional view and a self-forged construction of goodness. Because traditional teachings about women's role require self-sacrifice and submissiveness, a woman must defend herself against a morality that supports the very destruction of her authenticity through rendering her selfless, a selflessness that is labeled "good" and "normal" for women. She can defend herself only through self-knowledge and self-respect, and even that, unfortunately, is not enough.

Popular wisdom teaches that we must love ourselves first, and that we are weak and powerless if we need validation from others, but relational theory holds otherwise. As selves who do not exist in isolation, who are not autonomously functioning, island-like units of self-contained confidence and esteem, we need both a positive relationship with the self *and* love, acceptance, and validation from others. In fact, as research demonstrates, these two aspects—the quality of relationships and the nature of self-regard—go hand in hand.¹⁴ A person does not spontaneously learn to love the self in a vacuum and then go on to have loving relationships. Rather, loving relationships accompany transformations within the inner world, and those transformations foster loving relationships. The puzzle is, within a culture that teaches women to silence themselves as a way to be safe and achieve relatedness, how can a woman learn to take the risk of exposing her authentic self to create mutuality and dialogue within relationship?

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THE SELF IN DIALOGUE: MOVEMENT OUT OF DEPRESSION

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I'm on a search trip for what a woman is really like.

The high rates of depression in women can be seen as an almost inevitable response to living in a culture that deeply fears and devalues the feminine.¹ In the void of models presenting a female self who is active and authentic in relationships, women internalize prevailing cultural images of femininity, love, and achievement and become "easy targets for depression, a depression bound by patriarchy and robbed of its organic, mythic nature and consequently, its healing properties" (Holub, 1989, p. 6). With no celebration of the feminine mysteries—the blossoming of the female body, menarche, childbirth, menopause—and with few images of feminine strength, women's rite of passage to reclaim and create a self may necessarily include moving through despair about a self set aside in the quest for acceptance and love.

Nor Hall calls on myth to explain the "descent to the underworld" that characterizes woman's search for a lost self.

Rites of seasonal and human passage are gone—the Mother-Daughter rites lasted for 2,000 years . . . We are left without meaningful rules of ritual conduct—but the mystery remains . . . the descent to the underworld, the barren period of waiting, and the long sorrowful procession . . . imitating the

Mother's [Demeter's] search—these stages of the rite no longer have visible structures, symbols, or spaces to manifest in, but rather have themselves turned inward so that the initiation is an active entry into the dark terrain of an unknown self where we still search for the lost daughter, the feminine source of life . . .

The unconscious self has an autonomous way of making itself known; if people do not gather anymore on a sacred road to search for their lost souls, the gathering together and the search will be translated into the movement and language of our interiors. Rites of passage have turned inward where they can be lived out as stages of psychic transformation. (1980, pp. 84–85)

Staying in the language of metaphor to search for the "lost daughter," let us consider the fairy tale Rumpelstiltskin as symbolic of women's depression within patriarchy.² The story tells of a miller's daughter whose father delivers her to the male-ruled world with promises of her ability to please. "I have a daughter who can spin gold out of straw," says her father to the king. Entering the kingdom by virtue of her ability to give to a man what he most deeply desires—the treasure of her sexuality—the "beautiful daughter" of the tale is welcomed, but only if she is able to fulfill expectations. The king says to the miller, "That is an art in which I am much interested. If your daughter is as skillful as you say she is, bring her to my castle tomorrow, and I will put her to the test."

Following the conventional narrative of a woman's life, the daughter moves directly from her father's realm to that of the king, not arguing with the tasks or qualities assigned to her by paternal authorities. The drama that unfolds might have followed another plot had she not remained silently compliant but stood up to false expectations and said, in effect, "I choose to come into relation to the male world in my own way rather than by gratifying the wishes of the 'king.'" With only the conventional story of marriage as a model, with neither mother nor other women present throughout the story to provide guidance for alternative possibilities, the miller's daughter follows the

assigned script. She has little choice: how can she possibly respond to the king's demands in ways she has never imagined nor seen lived?³

Represented to the king by her own father as a daughter with magical powers to please, but as someone she is not, she must comply with the image or be killed. "If between tonight and tomorrow at dawn you have not spun this straw into gold, you must die," says the king. The miller's daughter steps straight into dilemmas about relationships that confront girls at adolescence—Will she enact a pretense in order to gain male favor, safety, and security? Dare she be herself? She believes, from what she has been told, that she must fabricate the expected lie or face an overwhelming threat. At this point, she becomes depressed, hopeless about the impossible transformation she must accomplish to be acceptable to the king. As she weeps alone behind the locked door, Rumpelstiltskin (that male-identified part of the female self that knows what the male world wants and how to give it) springs into life. Explaining the reason for her tears, the miller's daughter tells him, "Alas, I've got to spin gold out of straw, and don't know how to do it."

Rumpelstiltskin is activated in her psyche by the perceived necessity to please the king—that is, the desirable man, success, achievement, whatever commands in the male realm she must fulfill to gain favor and prevent punishment. But Rumpelstiltskin demands gifts from the miller's daughter before he will help her spin the deception. At first they do not seem like much—a ring, a necklace—a small sacrifice of truth here, a slight forgoing of her interests and creativity there. These gifts of self seem to promote her own good, but they further a pretense that begins to oppose her authenticity. Rumpelstiltskin's activity enables the miller's daughter to present to the king a self who does the impossible, but she knows herself to be much less (or something other) than she appears. She strives to be someone she is not in order to gain favor and ensure survival. No wonder that women who feel they have gained the approval of the king through other than their authentic selves feel like impostors and frauds.⁴

As the fairy tale progresses, the demands of the inner tyrant

(Rumpelstiltskin) and the outer tyrant (the king) become almost indistinguishable. Instead of being appeased by her impossible feat, the king places the miller's daughter in a larger room with a greater amount of straw on the second night and orders her "to spin it also in one night, if she value[s] her life." Rumpelstiltskin reappears, to demand his gift as well. On the third night, when the miller's daughter (unnamed throughout the tale) is locked into a still larger room with even more straw, the king says, "This must you spin tonight into gold, but if you succeed, you shall become my Queen." Rumpelstiltskin again comes to ask what she will offer to have him spin the illusion. As women often do when pressed to the limit, the miller's daughter says, "I have nothing more to give." Rumpelstiltskin demands, "Promise me your first child if you become Queen." The story goes on: "Who knows what may happen?" thought the miller's daughter, but she did not see any other way of getting out of the difficulty."

Imagining no other options that would ensure her survival, she acts against her best interests and promises to give up the symbol of her future wholeness and creativity, the nascent self. Rumpelstiltskin once more spins straw into gold. The king comes in the morning and finds "everything as he had wished." Having fulfilled his desires, the miller's daughter becomes queen.

Caught up in enacting the role of queen—wife, professional, sex symbol, whatever—the miller's daughter forgets her promise to Rumpelstiltskin. Then comes the infant, whose birth signifies, as in dreams and myths, the existence of a fragile new self, an emergent consciousness that needs care and nurturance.

After the child is born, Rumpelstiltskin reappears, bent on robbing the woman of this dawning self. "The Queen was terrified, and offered the little man all the wealth of the kingdom if he would let her keep the child. But the little man said, 'No, I would rather have some living thing than all the treasures of the world.'" The tale continues: "Then the Queen began to moan and weep to such an extent that the little man felt sorry for her. 'I will give you three days,' said he, 'and if within that time you discover my name you shall keep the child.'"

In the tale of the patriarchal daughter, Rumpelstiltskin steps into consciousness to press his demands at two key points in her life. First, he appears as this young woman moves into heterosexual relationship. Each time she sits alone in the strained, ragged center of her despair, trapped by expectations to enact a pretense, she experiences depression, hopelessness, and fear. These are the times the authoritative, male-identified aspect of self interrupts to take over, willing to perform the activity required to yield the expected transformation. Occurring privately behind locked doors, the self-alteration required to give the king what he expects remains invisible to others, a secret known only to the miller's daughter. But the self-change exacts a price.

Rumpelstiltskin comes at a second point in the young woman's development. At this symbolic time, the birth of her "beautiful child," he demands of her, "Now, give me what you promised." This moment can be interpreted on two levels. First, if the birth of the child is taken literally, a woman encounters the commands of the authorities telling her what she must do to be a perfect mother in their eyes. Rumpelstiltskin quickly appears as the inner tyrant, ready to rob her of her own perspective and thus of her direct experience, feelings, and values. Second the male-identified aspect of self becomes conscious and demanding at points when a woman tries to nurture a new self, a new consciousness or creativity. Rumpelstiltskin comes, telling her she must give it over to him—it is *his* property to do with as he will.

To accomplish the difficult task of naming Rumpelstiltskin, the queen enlists the help of messengers, those aspects of self not immobilized by the threat of loss. She first searches culture for the identity of her oppressor. She calls "to mind all the names that she [has] ever heard, and [sends] a messenger all over the country to inquire far and wide what other names there were." Through this exhaustive search, she learns about the cultural roots of inner prescriptions and demands. But this is not enough. As the queen calls Rumpelstiltskin all the names she knows, at every one, the little man says, "No. No. That's not my name." Then the queen steps outside of ordinary frameworks to

search for new ways of knowing and naming. In the story, this happens when the queen "suggest[s] to the little man all the most unusual and strange names": "Perhaps your name is Cow-ribs, or Spindleshanks, or Spiderlegs?" But this quest to confront her personal tyrant by likening him to strange figures also fails. Finally, on the third day, the queen's messenger comes across Rumpelstiltskin's identity "round the corner of a wood on a lofty mountain, where the fox says good night to the hare." Here, within the forest, that place of healing where things take root and grow, the name is discovered. In the midst of a symbolic reconciliation of opposites, where the fox and the hare live in harmony—a place where pain and death can lead to rebirth and healing—the inner tyrant is recognized and no longer poses a threat.

The fairy tale teaches that the way out of a depression bounded by patriarchy is not through continuing to enact the expected pretense or through allowing the male-identified aspect of self to take over. The miller's daughter (now queen) frees herself from Rumpelstiltskin's despotism by her own power to correctly name and confront that which has the ability to rob her of her very self. Enlisting the aid of all her resources, she must search to discover the identity of the inner voice that urges her to fulfill collective prescriptions and demands. She must seek the origins of that voice from her own background and from culture. But the fairy tale indicates that the only way to heal the deep inner split and the loss threatened to this woman is to go into that part of the psyche symbolized by nature—the seat of spontaneous feeling, the place where the timeless feminine mysteries of birth, death, and rebirth occur. And, moving into a search within her inner nature, apart from civilization's shoulds, she gains a perspective that allows her to overhear the voice that divides her against herself.

Today I bake; tomorrow I brew my beer;
The next day I will bring the Queen's child here.
Ah! lucky 'tis that not a soul doth know
That Rumpelstiltskin is my name. Ho! Ho!

Armed with this revelation of the harmful voice's identity, a woman then can redirect Rumpelstiltskin's destructiveness back onto himself so that, in a rage, he "[tears] himself asunder in the middle." The message is that by correctly perceiving, naming, and confronting, women can use anger to disarm the inner tyrant and free the authentic self. In this optimistic ending, the daughter, now queen, gains the freedom to nurture her emergent self within the kingdom. She can now accomplish the tasks of female development within a male-dominated world.

Women often describe themselves in the mythic position of having to spin straw into gold by morning. Gaile, age 35, trying to meet competing expectations experienced from home and from work, explains:

The demands are impossible. The phone rings all day long and I'm busy all day long and I don't have a minute to even think about what to do about the next project. The week will start out and the first thing I'll do Monday night is I'll take a bunch of work home with me. And I'll work, work, work Monday night. And then I'll be nuts working all day Tuesday and then I'll take work home with me again. And in addition to that, you have a brief due and the clients are cranky and, you know, you snap at the secretary or the, the partner or something. And it's really stressful to have a client that you feel is either not listening to you or listens to you and then goes out and does the wrong thing anyway and you're constantly having to resolve those problems.

And the other stress is time. Time is the biggest stress. There's never enough time to get everything done. Where do I find time to be with my son and husband? I'm so busy all the time that my personal relationships have suffered a lot. I'm almost uneasy if I don't take a briefcase full of work home with me. Even if I don't look at it. It's there. And I'm comforted by the fact that I have brought my work home with me and I have until morning to do it.