

SNOW-WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS, OR AN ESOTERIC KEY TO READ BRO. DISNEY'S STORIES
By Giovanni Lombardo

Life is a dream
Calderòn de la Barca)

To dream is to live
Luigi Pirandello)

When I learned that Walt Disney belonged to our Family I confess I felt sense of amazement and of joy: I had finally found the justification of the feeling of satisfaction which I experimented when I was boy - and which never disappeared - when I read his stories, whose characters I have always considered as true beings, real and near to me. From adult, with my children, I have often seen his movies again, such movies I today consider real "pieces of architecture", it being accidental, and of secondary importance, the circumstance that they are disclosed in a 'mythical' language by the cartoon.

His most famous work is Snow-white and the seven Dwarfs, but also the others, such as Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Dumbo, Little Mermaid, to quote only the most famous, are developed through a common thread conductor: the defeat of Evil and the triumph of Love. The protagonist achieves this aim through a real initiation, by entry in an esoteric community followed by self-transformation that brings him to a new, spiritual rebirth.

The story of Snow-white is paradigmatic: the young woman is forced from the wicked step-mother to abandon the fatherly house, symbol of the values relevant to the life lived until then, and to find shelter in a dense and dark wood, that reminds us the cabinet of reflection. After having overcome a course of water, withstood a gale of wind and defeated finally the fear aroused by the vision of the eyes of the animals, phosphorescent eyes similar to flashing flames, the young woman comes near a hut the house of the dwarfs. I remember that in the German language "hütte" means both shelter and lodge, and this is not casual: let us reflect how many times in History the Masonic lodge was the last shelter for idealists, heretical or schismatic, disparate and desperate, all persecuted by the Power. Freemasonry generously opened the doors of its temples, always asking them where they wanted to go, rather than from where they came.

In this hut happens something seemingly trivial but really important: Snow-white wins the fear of a new and probably hostile environment and therefore explores it with her new friends, the animals of the wood, that she sees now, in the daylight, in a new dimension. *Si parva licet...*¹ this episode reminds me the teaching of Plato, who stated the initiate must be, first of all, "desirous to know", and of Dante, who exalted the curiosity of Ulysses, who crosses the border of the unknown to satisfy his want of "virtue and knowledge". But it is not enough. In a rush of generosity the young woman cleans the house of the dwarfs with the help of the little animals. I underline this episode because it exalts the value of the friendship among the different ones as well as the job in common. Bro Disney loved these themes, since they are present in all his works.

The story of the elephantine Dumbo is exemplary. It was mocked by his same similar because tormented by two abnormal, monstrous ears: a mouse - this beast is hated by the elephants - will reassure it and will give it the necessary courage to face the difficulties of the life. The figures from which the protagonist receives help are nearly always the humblest creatures, so to underline the everlasting antinomy between Being and Becoming: the values of the Manifestation are deeply different from those of the Being and who is 'last' in the one is often 'first' in the other.

The ability to accept the other, even different and therefore far from one's own paradigmatic models, to review one's own ideas, is a necessary pre-condition but yet not quite sufficient to achieve a catharsis. Man needs to overcome various tests, that recall the initiatory ones that every of us passed through before being proclaimed "brother."

Impudently similar to those Masonic are the tests that faces the young Arthur in the Sword in the Stone: with the Magician Merlin, he will be turned first into a squirrel, then in a fish, therefore in a bird. It will overcome so the tests of earth, of water and of air before facing the last, the most binding, that of the fire, namely. To throw the magic sword out of the stone in which it was aground. Many knights failed and he is therefore judged fool: but, sometimes, only a "sheer fool" can reach those heights which are instead forbidden to the conformist and pharisaic rationality.

¹ *Si parva licet componere magnis* (Virgilius, Georgics, iv, 176). If man can compare small things to greater ones

The sword is an 'axial' symbol, the *axis mundi*, the plumb line which joints the manifold states of the Being, microcosm and macrocosm, but it is also a solar symbol because it reflects the Light: let me recall the scene of the fight between the prince and the dragon in Sleeping Beauty.

The fairies, three as the Pillars, have just freed the young prince from the fetters, so he can free Aurora from the sorcery of the witch. Trying to stop the young man the witch turns herself into a flaming dragon. For the psychoanalysts the reference is quite clear: "to win the dragon" equals to "to dig dark and deep jails to the vice", i. e. to fight in one's inner to free ego from the tensions and from the passions that anchor it to the materiality, causing frustrations and sufferings. The fairies can no longer actively help the prince, only aid him in a totemic form; nevertheless they offer him, before the fight, one "sword of truth" and one "shield of virtue". Just before the final strike the sword reflects a dazzling light, then, once the dragon is killed, it exhausts its role and so finishes to shine. It is now just a simple object, with no value. Personally I recognized in this scene an urging to consider the 'metals' for what they are: a tool, a help for the man, of which however he should get rid if he realizes that they obstacle his spiritual growth. Do you remember the "Sermon on the Plain"? "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". But what means "poor in spirit?" Does it mean a lack of spirituality? Not at all, otherwise they could not gain the kingdom of heaven. I notice that in the Greek text the locution "in spirit" is translated *tò pneumati*, which is dative-ablative, the case matching to the complement of efficient cause. I believe then man should translate: blessed those people that deliberately opted for the simplicity, that privileged "to be" rather than "to have", and still, that if called to high rank positions, shall work for bettering their subordinates.

This theme is clearly developed in the Little Mermaid. The old King of the Sea was forced to give the witch his golden trident - symbol of the royalty, of the power tied up to the wisdom, to the light – thus sparing the life of her daughter, who had been previously captured by the witch. In that instant all the sea creatures are turned into worms. After the death of the witch, killed by the prince Erik, the human being who loved Ariel, the trident falls at the feet of the old king who grasps it. In that moment all the sea creatures find the old feature again. I think that the hidden teaching of this episode is the following: the Light, meant also as royal power, must not be delivered to unworthy people, and of this we should remember in all the occasions of the life, also and especially in the 'profane' ones. Eventually the king himself, at first so mistrustful toward human beings, will turn into woman his daughter and grant her in bride to the prince, reminding us that to love a creature doesn't mean to hold it endlessly tied up to oneself, but to favour the harmonious development of its personality so that it can choose in full conscience and knowledge.

A last consideration, on the magick. The matter would deserve a deep study, but this topic doesn't allow it. I will confine myself, therefore, to a brief hint on the theme, hoping the following reflections are of stimulus to deepen it.

From the Latin *magis* - more - magus is, in esoteric circle, he who works to transform the inner, and not who uses some secret powers of the Nature to turn canes into snakes, thus arousing admiration among the disbelievers, as Simon Magus did. For the alchemists, the change of the lead in gold was essentially symbolic: in reality they aimed at another metamorphosis, well more binding but so much more fruitful: the revealing the divine that is within us. Who achieves this result he gains the archetypical Beauty. So Little Mermaid or Snow-white feels a new joy, never felt before, while the Beauty surrounds her, while Grimilde, the wicked queen that, blinded by the envy, had prepared the poisoned apple, is forced to lose her own external beauty and to become an old deformed and disgusting witch with no certainty to perform her crime.

We are so come at the end of the film and, with it, of our reflections. We must still briefly examine the theme of the transformation, or better, specifically, of the rebirth, eloquently described in Snow-white. The young woman, deeply sleeping, therefore in condition of profanity, is abandoned in a coffin of crystal and gold, alchemical symbols, respectively, of purity and of eternity. Dwarfs and beasts cry her, in common pain. The Prince will awake her again, with a kiss of True Love, then they will go to 'east' where hacks a construction, confused among the clouds, not well-defined and therefore 'defective', but which attracts every spectator, wondering him by its splendour of Light.