

Chapter 10. Using *Hansel and Gretel* to nurture creative healing & augment psychic realities

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Abstract

This chapter explores how the author has used *Hansel and Gretel* (Tatar 2017) as a tool for creative healing. It argues that *Hansel and Gretel* is, in a psychoanalytical reading, a tale which guides the reader through a traumatic psychological journey and can invite recovery. The chapter itemises the tropes in the story which are psychotherapeutic symbols, such as: the idea of the children getting lost in the forest, being enticed by the house made of sweets, being held prisoner by an abusive carer. The author shares how he used these tropes as the stimulus for various meditations and creative, expressive responses, and, in the conclusion, provides a psychotherapeutic 'toolkit' for using the story. Drawing on psychotherapeutic approaches, mindfulness, autoethnography and computer-game theory, the author invites his readers to take a similar journey. Using a mixture of mindful reading, meditation, movement and reflective writing, the chapter demonstrates how the story can be transformed into a dynamic, ever-living, challenging text which can augment the psychic reality of lives and speak to our deepest desires and fears.

Introduction: *Hansel and Gretel* as creative healing

Jack Zipes (1988) states that we are drawn to fairy tales because they express:

something adults are afraid to talk about, something the Grimms knew 200 years ago . . . I mean child abuse, neglect and abandonment, and not only the kind experienced at the hands of strangers but that meted out by parents themselves.
(para. 3)

Hansel & Gretel is still a living, breathing text which speaks to us today, exploring some extremely hard-hitting issues. This chapter focuses upon some of its most challenging elements and shows how the tale catapulted me upon a creative journey into its narrative, its characters and themes. This chapter illustrates this journey, and in doing so invites the reader to travel upon their own exploration of the fairy story, using some of the concepts and strategies I outline here.

However, I must begin this chapter with a trigger warning: it contains details of my experiences and memories of my own childhood abuse which were provoked by reading and responding to *Hansel and Gretel*. If you are feeling vulnerable and/or empathetic, you may find some of the content upsetting.

As Zipes states, these fairy tales delve into areas which ‘adults are afraid to talk about’. When read deeply and authentically, they pose very difficult questions about our lives, our parenting, our memories and our feelings.

I have structured this chapter into three major sections. The first section, the methodology, explains my reasoning behind my creative response to *Hansel and Gretel*, citing established research methodologies, therapeutic tools and creative strategies in doing so. The second section contains extracts from my creative responses to *Hansel and Gretel*, minus any significant analysis. The third section and the conclusion analyse what I learnt from the process and what can be learnt more generally from my research.

In brief, I read the fairy tale, broke it down into sections, and devised creative and therapeutic responses – meditation, mindful movement, and freewriting – to answer some important questions about my own psychology and childhood. By illustrating these approaches and my responses to them, I aim to show the reader how they might respond to ‘Hansel and Gretel’ in a similar way.

Methodology and research questions

My research questions are these:

How can Hansel and Gretel be used as a healing therapeutic tale? How can freewriting, writing in role and concept mapping be used to help me understand my unique reaction to Hansel and Gretel? How can mindful meditation, and creative visualisation be used in this process?

This chapter seeks to be innovative in its methodology by adopting a New Materialist approach (Fox & Alldred 2015) while examining *Hansel and Gretel*. New Materialism enables researchers to create new and innovative ‘assemblages’ – bricolages of bespoke methods. As a creative writer, reader and teacher, I sought to build a new assemblage which will help me explore *Hansel and Gretel* in a meaningful, motivating and manageable fashion. My research is an assemblage of different strategies and techniques which seeks to use the fairytale to heal myself through creative response. Vital to point out is that New Materialism views research as an embodied, ecological experience, which thus invited close attention to the ways in which my body and the spaces I inhabit shaped my response to the fairy tale. This is a point upon which I will expand in the course of this chapter..

My research assemblage consists of these methods:

- Breaking down *Hansel and Gretel* into significant narrative and symbolic motifs.
- Asking questions of *Hansel and Gretel* which enable me to relate it to my own unique psychology and psychic realities (Meissner 2001: Glas 2021).
- Using mindful meditation, visualisation and Internal Family Systems therapy (Schwarz 2013) to help me relate the fairy story to my own childhood and life.
- Using freewriting (Elbow 1998), writing in role (Bolton 2009) and 'diagramming,' a form of concept mapping (Gilbert 2022), to support me in responding to the narrative motifs in 'Hansel and Gretel'.

New Materialism provides me with a conceptual framework which can accommodate this assemblage in a coherent fashion because it requires researchers to examine the 'affect' which research assemblages produce: how one thing affects another. My research seeks to examine these 'affective flows' (Fox & Alldred 2015: 401), namely how one thing affects another, and see if they generate 'lines of flight' (401) or new and imaginative ways of thinking about the fairy tale and all the issues they raise intellectually and psychologically.

I have broken down the fairytale into different elements in order to respond to it at key 'symbolic' junctures. To this end, Carl Jung's notion of 'archetypes' (2010) informed my approach: the motifs are archetypal moments in the fairy tale that speak to my psyche, symbolic events which feel significant to me.

The use of mindful meditation was instituted to ground my responses in the present moment; the aim was to read and absorb key narrative motifs in the fairy tale, meditate upon them, and notice how my breathing, my mind-body, responded to them (Tarrasch et al 2016). Furthermore, I used mindful movement when appropriate to conjure a sense of the fairy tale by taking a walk in a wooded green space and visiting real places symbolically resonant of the places in the fairy tale, such as the witch's house, her oven and so forth.

Then I free wrote in response to these motifs. The freewriting approach was employed because of its creative and therapeutic effects (Bolton 2009: Elbow 1989; Wynne et al 2014): it unlocks 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi 2008) and I used it to provide me with access to my unconscious thoughts -- a process of thinking in itself. My freewriting was initially private because this gave me the freedom to write what I needed and wanted to write. After this initial freewriting, I re-read it, and edited it to

make it communicable to an audience: this involved re-writing sections of the freewriting so that what I was saying was understandable to others, rather than just myself. I did not alter any meanings, but I anonymised some people in accordance with the ethical research procedures of the university where I currently work.

I also used script writing to help me access the important psychological resonances of the story. As Tristine Rainer shows in *The New Diary*, a script can enable a person to enter into a dialogue with different parts of themselves (2004). Research with Vietnam veterans suffering from trauma, for example, shows that scripting can have a therapeutic effect (Lui 2013). I intended to keep the focus upon my own experience: my own feelings about significant people in my life, and my memories of them in the present moment in relation to the fairy story (Meissner 2001). This is important to point out because one of my childhood carers (CC) has told me that I have 'false memories' of my childhood. This insistence that I had a happy childhood is not how I would describe my dominant experience as a child; my memory is of being frightened of my CCs, desperately trying to please them, but feeling an undercurrent of fear throughout my childhood. As a result of my fear, I became attachment avoidant (Wakefield 2007).

I would like to stress this is my experience; my CCs' experience of me may have been different. I am not disputing their experience, but I am having 'unconditional positive regard' for my own memories of these experiences (Rogers 2004). I feel this is an ethical point; I am giving myself permission to claim my own experience. Much theorising about helping people deal with abuse grounds itself upon this fundamental principle: people are entitled to speak from their own experience, to talk about how they remembered feeling. Indeed, much therapeutic thinking claims that part of some abusive behaviour involves the abuser refusing to give credence to the abusee's authentic feelings (Camilo et al. 2016: 51) and/or telling them they are 'mad' for feeling or thinking that they are/were being abused, an action sometimes termed 'gaslighting' (Jones 2023).

Another important aspect of my research assemblage is the use of mindfulness and Internal Family Systems therapy (Schwartz 2013). In brief, Internal Family Systems therapy (IFS) uses mindfulness as the starting point for therapy sessions: a patient talks about their experiences of distress and then shuts their eyes, concentrates upon their breathing and scans their body to see where they are experiencing their distress in their body. They then engage in dialogue with that sensation.

In my case, I located the fear I felt around my childhood carers in my stomach: when I think of being in the presence of my childhood carers now, I can feel nauseous. I am still afraid of them. IFS encourages the patient to take this reflection further by calling up memories of the past, particularly early memories of interactions with them. The aim is not to find 'truthful' remembrances but for the client to observe their own experience of recalling these early memories. Once again, they are encouraged to find the part of the body which 'feels' the memory. This part of the body is then labelled as a distinct part of the client. In my case, I label it 'Little Francis', the little part of me which feels the fear of being in the presence of my CCs. The therapy in IFS then involves finding a kind, loving parental voice within yourself to soothe the fear of the personified area of distress. This kind part of myself is labelled 'Kind Carer'. This approach is explained in depth in many different articles and books, but Schwartz's *Moving From Acceptance Toward Transformation With Internal Family Systems Therapy (IFS)* (2013) is probably the best summary.

In such a way, IFS therapy, I sought to facilitate the different parts of myself to speak to me and each other. This internal dialogue with myself drew upon Bakhtin's dialogism theory (Holquist 2002): the childlike aspects of my personality (Little Francis) and the more grown-up aspects (Kind Carer) entered a dialogue with each other.

The discussion section below will draw out the more generalisable points that can be made from my approach to, and engagement with *Hansel and Gretel*.

Writing and meditation exercises

Starvation and abandonment

Writing in role exercises

Imagine you are Hansel or Gretel listening to your stepmother persuading your father to abandon you in the forest. How do you feel? What do you think?

My research begins with reading, a few times, the Grimms' fairy tale and the introduction to it in the Norton edition (Tatar 2017). *Hansel and Gretel* is one of the most exciting, suspenseful and terrifying of all Grimm's fairy tales. There are a few key elements of the narrative that shaped my project that are worth mentioning because these motifs vary in different versions:

- I use the motif of the children finding their way back to their home by the use of trails: during the first abandonment Hansel drops pebbles, during the second he drops breadcrumbs, which are then eaten by birds.
- I note that there is a witch's house made of cake and sugar.
- The witch is highly deceitful by pretending to be nice when the children first meet her.
- It is Gretel who pushes the witch into the oven and saves Hansel.

As Zipes (2013) points out in *The Golden Age of Folk and Fairy Tales: From the Brothers Grimm to Andrew Lang*:

The popularity and importance of the "Hansel and Gretel" tales in the European oral and literary tradition may be attributed to the themes of child abandonment and abuse. Although it is difficult to estimate how widespread child abandonment was, it is clear that lack of birth control, famines, and poor living conditions led to the birth of many children who could not be supported and became unwanted.
(210)

I was drawn to 'Hansel and Gretel' for very similar reasons: its themes of child abandonment and abuse are still highly pertinent, and speak to me on a deeply personal level.

Here is an edited version of my initial experience, with names altered for reasons outlined in the methodology and research sections.

I immediately think of my own childhood and my own relationship with my childhood carers (CCs). I think about how it was originally the mother – in the pre-Grimm versions – who wanted to abandon her children for fear of starvation (Tatar 2017). I think of my difficult relationship with my CCs. They are still alive, old now. One of my CCs has said they will never speak to me again because I told them about two years ago that I found them terrifying as a child...I know what it is like to be abandoned. The tale resonates with me.

Using an Internal Family Systems therapy approach, I locate in my body the feelings that the tale and these thoughts have generated: my stomach is churning, my heart is beating fast. IFS requires the patient to ask: what does this feeling want from me? I am very frightened of the mother in H&G. IFS then asks the patient to find a parental voice of kindness in oneself to speak to that 'frightened part'. This is my dialogue:

KIND CARER: What are you frightened of, Little Francis?

LITTLE FRANCIS/HANSEL: I'm frightened of X (CC). The rages. How X says they are leaving me. Leaving me alone in the forest to find my own way. X has left me now after I expressed my opinions about them... I have to be careful of what I say because X might try and humiliate me again...

KIND CARER: You are safe now. You can express any feeling and it will be OK.

The dialogue here raises the ethical issues relating to what I am doing; revealing personal information about my relationships with my family. Contentious information. But it also shows how it's important for me to say anything I need to say in relation to *Hansel and Gretel*, to really understand what the fairy story provokes in me.

Useless breadcrumbs

Imagine now you are lost in the forest. The birds have eaten the breadcrumbs that you used to find your way home.

I am walking along an abandoned railway line which is now an etiolated wildlife sanctuary called Parkland Walk. It is early in the morning. Sunlight filters through the trees. There are a few dog walkers about but not many other people.

I have entered the story of *Hansel and Gretel* again.

Daddy (the father in Hansel and Gretel, not my actual father) is leading me into the forest again. I am feeling anxious because I have had not had time to collect pebbles. I am dropping breadcrumbs instead. When Daddy leaves us, I feel quite confident though that I will find my way home. However, when he's gone, I see that the birds have eaten the breadcrumbs. I panic.

I freewrite this on a park bench:

Oh shit, I am really lost this time. There are no breadcrumbs to show me back home: the birds have eaten them. I am fifty-four. I told my CC what I thought and felt about them, and they told me they never wanted to speak to me again. Before, when I have had conflicts with my CC, I have always found pebbles to lead me back to them. My apologies were pebbles that led me back to them.

The freewriting once again brought the feelings of abandonment that the first exercise did. I found it interesting that I discovered through writing this way that the pebbles were like the apologies that I would offer to my parents to reconcile with them. They were my pebbles. But now, having had therapy, having thought very deeply about things, these pebbles have become breadcrumbs that have been eaten by the birds.

I wrote this IFS interaction:

KIND CARER: So the birds have eaten your breadcrumbs. There's no way back to your parents now. All you have is me.

LITTLE FRANCIS/HANSEL: And I'm frightened. You are not strong in me. The voice of my punitive CCs is bigger.

KIND CARER: But I do exist in you.

IFS theorisation would note that there is still a strong punitive part to my psyche, which is exhibited here.

Eating the witch's house

Imagine finding the witch's house and devouring all its sweets.

I have left Parkland Walk and I walk down Crouch Hill, feeling lost. I have immersed myself in the world of *Hansel and Gretel* again. I am no longer in modern-day London, but in the world of the fairy tale.

Then I find a marvellous house all made with delicious food: Dunn's Bakery. Old-fashioned ladies serve me in there. The food is wonderful: I buy a Bath bun and a wholemeal fruit scone, and then go to Caffeinate where I buy a latte. I sit in the café, and surreptitiously eat my bun. I speak to the witches, the old-fashioned ladies of my delight, and write this dialogue which coalesces the witches into one witch:

WITCH: Hello, my sweetie, I can see you are lost. You are angry and lost. Going through some horrible mid-late life crisis at 54, all that therapy has warped your mind.

LITTLE FRANCIS/HANSEL: Oh, can I, can I just stay here forever, just eat cake and drink coffee for the rest of my life? Never have to deal with any difficult feelings ever again?

WITCH: Yes, of course.

Imprisonment

Hansel is imprisoned in a cage, while Gretel is used as the witch's slave to help fatten up Hansel for eating. Imagine this imprisonment...

I go to the toilet in Caffeinate. It is a small, pleasant room, rather like the witch's oven, and I imagine that I am locked inside it. I freewrite this on the potty:

I am locked inside the witch's cage. I feel the heat of the room. I can't get out. There is a strange sense of familiarity of being in this prison. I remember long days and nights in my CC's house. Never really being allowed out of the house during the holidays, amusing myself by reading, playing quiet games, avoiding being hit. What am I going to do? How am I going to get out?

I leave the toilet and sit down in the café again. I order another coffee. My heart is pounding now. I am retraumatising myself. Remember the terror of those days. Feeling so trapped in the family home. The fear that my CC might randomly descend and punish me or my brother.

I write this IFS dialogue:

LITTLE FRANCIS/HANSEL: I am feeling frightened, very frightened, very frightened of my gaoler. She has locked me into her grasp and I feel I need to keep her happy at all times. I need to listen to her very meekly, very apologetically, as she tells me what a terrible little boy I am.

Here the explicit need for repression of the memories clamps down my emotions.

Pushing the witch into the oven

The children push the witch into the oven, lock it and make preparations to escape. Imagine imprisoning your own gaoler.

I have printed out all that I have written so far, and I am standing by a recycling bin at the top of Parkland Walk. I rip up the paper into the smallest bits I can manage and drop them into the bin.

Then I sit down and freewrite this on a bench opposite the off licence in Crouch Hill:

I am free. I have ripped everything up. I have let go of it. I don't care whether people think it's great or a load of rubbish. I don't care if my CCs read it or not, whatever happens, the spell is broken...

Having ripped up the script, I now write a new IFS script, which explores all the issues raised in my discarded piece of freewriting:

KIND CARER: Tell me about how you felt when you pushed the witch into the oven...

LITTLE FRANCIS/HANSEL: Pushing the witch into the oven was liberating, I feel like she is contained now.

Escaping the witch's wood

The children run away from the witch, never to see her again. Imagine finding a loving carer.

Freewriting extract:

I go for a run down Parkland Walk and escape the witch's wood. I feel the crunchiness of the gravel under my feet, count my breaths as I run, I am not listening to music, but just being in this moment as I run, shaking my arms a little and letting go. At the bottom of the walk, I run across the railway pedestrian bridge and into Finsbury Park, and down the hill and onto Seven Sisters Road. I have escaped and now I am free.

Extracts from the IFS script:

LITTLE FRANCIS: I have escaped from my fears. I don't feel frightened anymore.

KIND CARER: Tell me more about that. What happened?

LITTLE CARER: I guess I realise that I am free. I am no longer a child anymore. I have choices. I can choose to leave. I can choose to get away. I can choose to express my feelings whatever they are.

Returning home with treasure

Hansel and Gretel return to their father who has rejected their stepmother and now takes them in properly. He will be a loving, caring father from now onwards.

I return home feeling the fairy story inside me. I shower and then sit down and meditate on the sofa.

I freewrite:

I always have the present moment, the reality of what is happening in the eternal present. The sounds of the world, the sounds of my thoughts, the colours of the light and objects, the smells in the perfumed summer air, the tastes of food.

Extracts from the IFS script:

LITTLE FRANCIS: I feel safe now. I am OK, whatever I do, wherever I am, I am OK.

KIND CARER: You don't need me right now. You have become me...

Discussion and Analysis

Augmenting psychic realities

Initially, I'd like to unpick what is happening – both literally and psychically — in this research assemblage. In brief, I have used *Hansel and Gretel* to 'augment', or increase/transform, the psychic reality of my childhood, in much in the same way that 'augmented reality' computer software amplifies and changes a user's experience of their physical environment. This digital technology is described thus:

augmented reality (AR) aims to present information that is directly registered to the physical environment. AR must have the following three characteristics:

Combines real and virtual

Interactive in real time

Registered in 3D. (Hollerer et al. 2016: 21)

Crucially, while I was not using a digital device to achieve my augmented reality experience, what is outlined above could be applied in the psychic realm: the 'real' world of my childhood experience was overlayed, amplified and transformed by the 'virtual' world of the fairy story. My CCs were overlayed by the father, mother and witch of the tale, while I, transporting myself back to being a child, powerfully identified with both Hansel and Gretel. I use the word 'overlayed' judiciously because it conveys the parallel sense that while my CCs had aspects of the characters of the tale, they were not them: they were/are realities lurking behind the overlay. Similarly, the 'real' world of Parkland Walk and Dunns Bakery with its sweet pastries were overlayed by the forest and sweetie house of the tale. The important point here is that using the tale in this way enabled me to access, understand and transform the psychic realities (Glas 2021: Fonagy & Allison 2016) of my relationship with the world and my experiences of my CCs. The freewriting and the scripting using the Internal Family System (IFS) were instruments that enabled me to augment my psychic realities using *Hansel and Gretel*. To extend the digital technologies analogy; if the new narrative of *Hansel and Gretel* and my life was what I saw and experienced (like seeing augmented reality on a digital device like a phone or headset), then the freewriting/scripting were the phone/headset itself.

Nurturing healing through *Hansel and Gretel*

Why might other people carry out this exercise? Why use Hansel and Gretel in this way? Surely what I have done is so personal, it makes no sense for anyone else to adapt the fairy story like this. It was a difficult if enlivening experience for me to do it; possibly anyone who deeply reads and meditates upon the meaning of *Hansel and Gretel* to them may have similar thoughts and feelings without having to follow the rubric I have laid out. Even if a reader has not endured the sort of childhood I have had, they may still feel the trauma of the story. Perhaps too many of us worry that the people in positions of responsibility – whether it is our teachers, employers, doctors, or politicians – can have malign intentions, tricking us with their houses made of sweets, and imprisoning us to serve their own sadistic desires. As the psychotherapist R. S. White (2015) points out, the fairy story can speak to people who have suffered abuse. His theorisation about it influenced my creative thinking before carrying out the research. He illustrates how the tale deals with abandonment, deceit, manipulation and sadistic humiliation (903-904), and shows how his patient Gila so powerfully associated with the tale. He writes:

Gila's fixation on Gretel at the oven with the witch pointed to her panic and inability to think when faced with the realization that the witch/mother intended to kill her. (910)

Having now gone through the process of living the tale as augmented reality, I can understand Gila's fixation. The oven represents the murderous nature of an abusive home: the heat, the imprisonment, the inability to escape. I found the overlay of the tale liberating, possibly in a way that Gila did not; she could not believe that Gretel would ever escape the oven. Yet, in this part of the story, I was able to push the witch into the oven. My freewriting and script indicate just how liberating this was for me. Little Francis says:

It's like I have put the witch in the oven, and I have some distance upon her, like I can almost see and feel and taste her somehow. Like I have the freedom to cook my own experiences how I want. Make them flavourful...

In my psychic augmented reality, I have murdered my abuser. The fairy tale affords the chance to do this.

Increasingly, as I followed the tale, I was leaving my own personal experience behind, and more and more entering an archetypal realm that the fairy story provokes; dealing with an internal conflict in myself (Jung 2010). I was imprisoning myself, trapping myself with painful memories and thoughts and feelings, and wondering how to get out of them. The path I had taken was the opposite of 'repression': the refusal to think or dwell upon them. This provoked a crisis, particularly when I was imprisoned in the house of sweets by the witch. Could I cope with recalling such painful memories? But then the fairy story provided an answer: I could put the witch of my fears where they belonged, in a form of augmented reality, drawn from the fairy story of *Hansel and Gretel*. At this point in the process, Little Francis feels some space between the trauma and himself, a situation he describes as making his experiences 'flavourful'. This was an interesting part of the experiment because it suggests that Little Francis begins to feel some degree of power and autonomy over his experiences. It's the great turning point in the fairy story, where finally the children turn the tables on their adult abusers. This narrative motif enabled Little Francis similarly to feel some sort of power over his own memories and experiences: he no longer needed to repress them, but nor did he feel overwhelmed by them. From this point onwards in the process, Little Francis and the Kind Parent begin to integrate, culminating in the final point where Little Francis and the Kind Parent become one. They are not split off, but part of the whole person who is Francis: it is this sort of integration which is the purpose of much therapy (Jung 2010: Schwarz 2013: White 2015: Glas 2021).

Conclusions

Hansel and Gretel can augment the reality of one's difficult upbringing. It requires a careful positioning of oneself as an agent of one's own life: a creative interpreter, if you like. To do this, I have outlined a structure for this process which would include these steps:

1. The creative interpreter reads the tale at least three times.
2. They meditate upon the fairy tale, and see what thoughts and feelings come up when thinking about its plot, characters and settings using basic mindfulness techniques (Schwarz 2013). They then freewrite after this meditation (Elbow 1998: Bolton 2009).
3. They break the tale down into the key sections which speak to them, i.e. dealing with abandonment by a carer, being the victim of abuse, etc. They could use the categories I have devised, but they do not have to.
4. They then devise a plan to enact aspects of the fairy tale in a setting which is resonant of *Hansel and Gretel*, e.g. a park or wood, etc. They plan 'stopping/writing' junctures where they know they will stop and write. They write a detailed schedule of reading, meditating, writing and moving through their chosen spaces.
5. They enact their plan by imaginatively recreating *Hansel and Gretel* in their bodies/heads as they move through the space they've chosen for their enactment.
6. They stop and freewrite in response to the tale.
7. They contact their 'inner child' using Internal Family Therapy system scripting (Schwarz 2013) and write a script where their inner parent speaks to the victimised little child.
8. They enact the fairy tale and write over the space of a day, if possible; a concentrated period of time.
9. They write reflectively about what they learnt from the experience, and judge whether the process helped and supported them in dealing with their childhood trauma.

As Holman (2011: 221) and White (2015) suggest, this fairy tale can be used to understand childhood trauma in therapeutic settings, and my research assemblage endorses this. *Hansel and Gretel* creates 'affective flows' in its readers, making them experience their childhood traumas once again, but it also provides 'lines of flight', or new ways of thinking about those traumas, with its ever-surprising narrative twists and nuances.

I have shown it to be a healing tale when dealing with my own childhood trauma: for me, the freewriting and writing-in-role as Little Francis and the Kind Carer helped me process the upset that the tale provokes. My mindful meditations enabled me to calm myself when I felt challenging feelings

and the IFS helped me understand what was happening psychically to me. Furthermore, the acting out of the fairy tale brought it to vivid, embodied life.

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