

INDIVIDUAL PAPER PROPOSAL FOR EPF CONFERENCE ON THE THEME OF 'ILLUSIONS'

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Title: ILLUSION AND DISILLUSION IN THE MYTH OF THE MERMAID 'RUSALKA'

In this paper I seek to explore two distinctions in relation to illusion. One is the conditions underpinning the binary division between illusion and disillusion in this essential human condition. The other considers different kinds of 'illusions', their relationship to omnipotence and its attendant psychic and cultural manifestations.

The discussion is framed within the myth the mermaid Rusalka, the story arc of which traverses both territories of illusion and disillusion, thus representing the classic artistic idiom of 'doomed love'. It exemplifies the psychoanalytic duality of both illusion and its counterpart 'disillusion'.

The paper looks at early developmental aspects of omnipotence, which oscillate between a psychic state of possessing the mother, and its constructive de-construction when faced with reality, as a capacity for separation develops. The focus is on manifestations of illusions in the adolescent search for love objects, when the potent psychic admixture re-appears.

I rely on the writings of Freud and Winnicott, as well as on contributions by Lacan and Milner and discuss some contemporary Kleinian views.

In illustrating Milner's claim (1952) that the transference is a form of 'Illusion', I present a clinical vignette which considers elements of illusion in distant analysis and its effects on the transference.