

originally closely related despite the differences in the way these motifs are used. The reality in the saint's legend also once resembled the folktale more closely. The autonomy that the genres have formed over time should not obscure the fact that many hybrid genres break the rules, thus disappointing those who find pleasure in constructing an abstract system of classification.<sup>31</sup> With folktales, legends, jest, and saints' legends, we have shown that the dichotomy "believed/not believed" collapses under scrutiny, even within each of the genres. We cannot press the effort to differentiate the genres according to this dichotomy too far. Even the concept itself is not constant. The border between real and unreal is relative and shifts over time and space: The status of reality in folk narrative today is different than in the days of the brothers Grimm; it is different in the Balkans than in Germany or France. The concepts of genre obtained from one folk often break down completely when applied to the oral traditions of other folk groups, and every historical period produces its own peculiar art forms.

The experience of reality from narratives we call "folktales" seems to differ from time to time. The plot construction is generally more stable than generic classifications and characterizations: While genres change, motifs remain. Various versions and variants of a particular folktale can belong to very different genres according to the truth and reality of their content, which, in turn, depends on whether God or a saint, the devil, or a demonic figure performs the miraculous deed—to name one possible variation. Thus the same motif complexes occur in very different realms of belief and are told with very different attitudes toward their reality. Does the genre "folktale" have any validity if we also find "folktale motifs" in the Old Testament,<sup>32</sup> in classical<sup>33</sup> and Germanic legends about gods,<sup>34</sup> in heroic legends,<sup>35</sup> in tribal mythology,<sup>36</sup> and in literature from every century?<sup>37</sup> Many "truthful" genres, e.g., myth, saint's legend, and legend, have flowed into the folktale, losing their basis in reality in the process. Thus we cannot consider generic questions without simultaneously inquiring into the narrative's historical formation. We may not, as Max Lüthi does in his essays, which otherwise have taught us so much about folk narrative, work from a fixed European model of the folktale, i.e., from an a priori, completely poetic form which has attained a finalized style. These tales include anything that corresponds to this "folktale style" and make anything else conform to it. This completely ignores the countless transitional forms between folktale and legend, as well as the folktale's earlier forms and the transition from believed non-European tales. In any case, it does not suffice to limit ourselves to a "genre" in which supernatural, miraculous events have already lost their reality and become the genre's essential feature. Therefore, in the following chapters we must explore the folktale where it is still reality.



### III.

## *The Folktale and the Reality of the Magical World-View*

#### MAGIC

Few of the miraculous elements in folktales seem to have a link to living folk belief. Some of these ideas have already died off and disappeared from modern folk belief. When the archaic world-view is no longer understood, new, more believable ideas replace older elements. But some folktales have become so fantastic that it seems they never had a real relationship to folk belief. The folktale probably had a fantastic, fabulizing tendency from the start. The "table-be-set," the "cudgel in the sack," the knapsack from which entire regiments march forth, the bird that lays golden eggs and makes anyone who eats it ruler, and rubbing the magic lamp to make a genie appear are all purely fictional wishes that certainly never had anything to do with folk belief.

But where miraculous motifs are still tied to the magical world-view, they are not the product of a completely unbounded imagination. When we peel back the layer of fantastic exaggeration, we frequently uncover the underlying elements of belief on which the folktale is based. Of course, only some of this corresponds to modern folk belief because, even among "primitive" peoples, belief is always changing; its substance is in constant flux. Ideas from various ages may merge in a single folktale. In this section we use a few examples to elucidate the degree to which "survivals," i.e., rigidified elements of belief and custom which have lost their original meaning, exist in the folktale and to what extent the folktale is based on conceptions of reality from an archaic world-view.

The folktale contains the globally distributed concept of magic based on the principle of like produces like (*similia similibus*).<sup>1</sup> A well-known example of this sort of magic is the tribal practice of producing or imitating rain in order to stimulate natural rain. We find a clear example of this magical method in one of the oldest known folktales, "The Magic Flight" (Types 313, 314): In KHM 79 two children, a brother and sister, flee from the water

nixie. "The little girl threw a brush behind her which grew into a mountain with thousands and thousands of bristles and the nixie had a hard time climbing over it. When she finally succeeded and the children saw her coming, the little boy threw a comb behind him and it grew into a mountain with thousands and thousands of teeth, but the nixie managed to keep her footing and finally got across. Then the little girl threw back a looking glass, which turned into a glass mountain, so slippery, so very slippery, that the nixie couldn't possibly get across it." By the time she returned with an axe to break the glass, the children were far away.

The sequence of motifs in "The Magic Flight" described here is distributed over the entire globe.<sup>2</sup> The fleers usually escape by throwing back some objects which magically transform and become insurmountable obstacles for the pursuer. Considered superficially, these events seem to fantastically exaggerate, as folktales do, the otherwise natural act of throwing back something which hinders one's flight and may even delay a pursuer. This seems obvious and natural enough: Even some versions of "The Magic Flight" depict such simple, "realistic" flight. In a Serbian version, for example, the objects thrown back do not change; instead the pursuer stops to pick them up. In an Indian folktale the hero throws three cakes to the three dogs chasing him. We find similar realistic depictions in African narratives as well.<sup>3</sup> We can also trace the purely rational depiction of the flight historically: Hippomenes, Atalanta's suitor, wins a race by dropping golden apples from the Hesperidian tree which Atalanta, trailing him, picks up.<sup>4</sup> In the legend of the Argonauts, Medusa kills and dismembers little Absyrtos while fleeing from Kolchis and throws the pieces in the sea to impede Aëtes (the boy's father), who is pursuing her.<sup>5</sup> In both of these classical examples the tricks work without any magical transformation of the objects thrown back. The ancient Egyptian "Tale of the Two Brothers" also contains the flight motif without magical transformation of the obstacles: A god casts a stream full of crocodiles between the two brothers pursuing each other. Similarly, in ancient Germanic texts Rolf Kraki does without magic by throwing money back to his pursuers, who then fight over it.<sup>6</sup>

However, most folktales do depict a magical transformation of the thrown objects. But even this is not merely a fantastic exaggeration of reality; rather, it too has a close relationship to folk practices and belief. More specifically, this folktale motif is based on very serious impediment magic: Throwing back magical objects is part of ancient magical practice. Ethnographic research indicates that similar folk beliefs still exist in many places. For example, modern inhabitants of the upper Gangetic forests believe that a person who crosses a pass or ridge should throw back a pebble or piece of wood so that evil spirits are not carried into the next valley.<sup>7</sup> According to Vladimir Bogoraz, similar practices exist in the Chukchee cult of death in Siberia: When returning from a funeral, the Chukchee throw objects back in order to prevent the dead from following.<sup>8</sup>

In folktales the fleer's blood, spit, clothes, and tools often magically obstruct the pursuer. The folk belief that a part can represent, and even magically assume the functions of, the whole (*pars pro toto*) is part of the larger conceptual complex of contagious magic. More precisely, the law of sympathy states that all things that have been in contact once continue to suffer the same fate. In folk belief the law of sympathy means that things and people that belong together have a lasting connection even after their separation. In a folktale a horse's or bear's hair, a fish's scale, or an eagle's feather can summon the animals themselves when the hero needs their help. This folktale motif's basis in the belief in *pars pro toto* is quite clear: The person who has a part can also influence or have power over the whole. For this reason folk belief warns against throwing away nail clippings or cut hair. Also related is the part-for-whole role hair plays in love magic and in beliefs about the dead.<sup>9</sup> People must be careful with their hair not because it contains their "soul" but because they otherwise expose themselves to harmful magic propagated by someone else. According to folk belief, if the new owners of a dog put some of the animal's hair in their boots, the pet will grow accustomed to them more quickly.<sup>10</sup>

Even if it seems like jest, it is no coincidence that the hero in KHM 29 ("The Devil with Three Golden Hairs") must pull out the devil's hairs. The original text recorded by the brothers Grimm makes it clear that this motif is based on part-for-whole magic, which was the most important element of the tale. The text concludes with this sentence: "Therefore whoever does not fear the devil can rip out his hair and have the whole world."<sup>11</sup> These are ancient ideas for which early evidence exists. A story in Saxo Grammaticus's history of the Danes<sup>12</sup> parallels the Grimms' "The Devil with Three Golden Hairs": Thorkill arrives in Utgard, which is described as a living hell, and pulls a hair from Utgardloki's long beard, creating an awful stench. In Greek mythology one of Poseidon's grandchildren, Pterelasos, has a golden hair that guarantees him victory and immortality. He dies when his daughter pulls out this hair.<sup>13</sup> The Biblical story of Samson, whose hair provides him strength, is even better known.<sup>14</sup>

The idea that strength resides in the hair, as found in these ancient Jewish, classical, and Germanic sources, seems to be a secondary development from the idea of contagious magic. The central idea here is that the hair represents the hero, not simply that he loses his hair and thus his strength: Whatever happens to a man's hair will happen to him. Thus when an otherworld figure gives the folktale hero three hairs with which he can summon the donor, it seems the folktale has preserved an ancient belief in contagious magic.

Other well-known folktale motifs reflect this archaic magical conception of reality as well. For example, the saliva of the fleeing heroes or some other object associated with them answers for them as they escape. Talking saliva appears in versions of KHM 15 ("Hansel and Gretel"): Gretel's saliva answers the witch for the children, who have flown, until it dries up.<sup>15</sup> In

KHM 89 an amulet with three drops of the mother's blood assures motherly protection for the king's daughter on her journey. The blood clearly represents the mother's power. We discover the magical importance of these three drops of blood only when the girl loses them and the evil waiting maid "gloated, for now she had power over the bride who, without the drops of blood, became weak and helpless." The drops of blood speak for the mother: "If your mother knew of this!" In "Darling Roland" (KHM 56) the drops of blood answer for the murdered sister. In truly folkloric French versions of "Little Red Riding-Hood," the dead grandmother's blood is set before the girl to drink. When the child puts the cup to her lips, a voice laments: "You are drinking my blood!"<sup>16</sup> The trail of blood which shows the way to an otherworld or enchanted figure in some folktales (e.g., KHM 88) is a rudimentary, rationalized form of the ancient sympathetic conception of blood added to the folktale after the magical connection between the blood and its donor was no longer believed.<sup>17</sup>

We can trace to a distant past the idea that blood can speak for that person from whom it came. For example, blood has an independent function in the "ordeal of the bier"; Christian belief in judgment by the Lord became metaphorical only relatively recently:<sup>18</sup> God's statement to Cain's murderer in Genesis 4:10, "The voice of your brother's blood cries to me from the earth," was certainly not originally a metaphor. Modern idioms such as "spilled blood cries out to heaven" (*vergossenes Blut schreit zum Himmel*) and "the voice of blood" (*Stimme des Blutes*) still reflect the original belief. Our folklore does not contain literalized metaphors; rather, it depicts part of an archaic magical conception of reality which has a latent existence in the modern mind. Pacts with the devil must be signed in blood because the blood itself represents the person, not because people believe blood houses life or the soul,<sup>19</sup> and not because blood merely "symbolizes" the soul or life. Like hair, blood is a part representing the whole, according to a general sympathetic, contagious connection.

Such instances of contagious magic which still occur in our Western folktales are only remnants, but we find these ideas far more frequently in the tales of tribal peoples, where they are sometimes still magical reality today. Human excrement, as well as secretions,<sup>20</sup> can represent its creator: Clearly it is absurd to speak of "agents of the soul." In a Wongaibon (New South Wales) folktale, excrement answers for the fleeing hero.<sup>21</sup> In a Chukchee tale the evil spirit captures a boy, empties his bowels in his chamber pot, and orders the excrement to guard the boy.<sup>22</sup> In Northwest American Indian folktales, culture heroes such as raven and coyote can magically bring their excrement to life: The great raven transforms his own excrement into a beautiful woman and immediately falls in love with her.<sup>23</sup>

It is also notable that sympathetic relationships work even after death. For example, the blood in KHM 56 answers for the dead daughter.<sup>24</sup> The best-known example is KHM 28: Here the dead man's bone is made into a musical instrument which reveals the murder in a song. Once again the part gives information about the whole.<sup>25</sup>

In the Grimm version (KHM 28) the singing bone betrays the murderer, thus leading to the punishment he deserves, but no magical resuscitation of the dead man occurs. However, other versions of this tale (Type 780) do include bringing the dead man back to life.<sup>26</sup> The motif complex of bringing people back to life from their bones appears in all sorts of narratives. For example, in "The Juniper Tree" (KHM 47) the sister collects the boy's remains, which then transform into a bird, and the bird back into the boy. The heroine in KHM 46 ("Fowler's Fowl") finds both of her sisters, murdered and chopped up by the wizard, lying in a basin in the forbidden chamber: "But she got to work and gathered the pieces and put them in their right place, head and body and arms and legs. When nothing was missing, the pieces began to move and knit together, and the two girls opened their eyes and came alive again." This motif of dismemberment and resuscitation has also become one of the many methods of disenchantment. For example, in an Austrian folktale the enchanted princess must be cut in half, right through her heart, with a sword, then cut into pieces and cooked in a kettle for an hour.<sup>27</sup>

Even the farcical saint's legend "Brother Scamp" (KHM 81) doesn't hesitate to employ this motif. Here St. Peter brings the dead princess back to life:

"Bring me a cauldron of water." When the water was brought, he told everyone to leave the room and only Brother Scamp was allowed to stay. St. Peter cut the dead girl's limbs off, threw them in the water, made a fire under the cauldron and boiled them. When all the flesh had fallen off, he took the smooth white bones out of the water, put them on a table, and arranged them in their natural order. When they were ready, he stepped up to the table and said three times: "In the name of the most Holy Trinity, rise from the dead." The third time the king's daughter stood up alive, healthy, and beautiful.

Brother Scamp later attempts to repeat this feat but fails, not because he lacks the apostle's holy powers but because he does not know how to arrange the bones "and got them all mixed up." From the point of view of the psychology of religion, this failure is completely pre-Christian.

A Russian version of KHM 100 ("The Devil's Grimy Brother") depicts the motif complex "death and resurrection from the bones" in a different context. Before the hero can marry the czar's daughter, he must refrain from cutting or combing his hair, blowing his nose, cutting his nails, or changing his clothes for fifteen years. When the fifteen years are up and preparations for the wedding are underway, the devil cuts the hero into little pieces, throws him in a cauldron, and cooks him. He then takes the hero out and puts the pieces back together, bone to bone, joint to joint, sinew to sinew. He then sprinkles water of death and of life on the hero: The unwashed soldier stands up as a spruce lad. He then happily marries the czar's youngest daughter.<sup>28</sup>

The same motif complex also occurs in our folk legends, for example, in the story of the drowned child whose mother collects his bones in a kerchief and carries them into the church. There the child comes back to life, starts to cry, and frees himself from the cloth.<sup>29</sup> Folk ballads such as the ancient Danish "Mariboes Spring" also contain this motif. It also appears in the Finnish epic *Kalevala* when Lemminkäinen's mother collects her son's remains from the water.<sup>30</sup>

This widely distributed motif, which figures differently in a variety of genres of folk narrative, might strike us as unbelievable fantasy if we did not also find the collection and revival of bones in myth, such as the classical story of Pelops, who is resuscitated when his pieces are cooked in a cauldron.<sup>31</sup> Germanic mythology also contains the motif: In the Eddic story Thor's bucks are slaughtered, cooked, and eaten. A god revives the bones, which land on Thor's hide.<sup>32</sup>

What is the basis for this rebirth from bones within the history of religion? It is clear that the human or animal usually magically comes to life from his or her bones. Bones apparently function as the most important part of the body. Moreover, bones remain after an animal is eaten and take the longest of all body parts to decay. Thus even after death they could well appear to be the seat of the creature's lasting and renewable power of life. The skeleton was indeed a symbol of life before it came to represent death.<sup>33</sup>

We find this concept among hunting societies the world over; in some cases the motif still functions in their folk belief. Certain rules relate to this belief: Many hunting societies forbid breaking, burning, or throwing away the hunted animal's bones. Instead they preserve the bones in a particular place without losing a single one.<sup>34</sup> Adolf Friedrich has provided voluminous north Asian material about the idea that bones possess the power of life. Karl Meuli, proceeding from the strange division of the sacrificial animal in Olympic ritual, draws our attention to the ancient hunting ritual of setting aside specific parts of the animal, particularly the bones, from which new game is created.<sup>35</sup>

The north Asian data collected and investigated by Friedrich do not include tales only about bringing animals back to life from their bones; the concept applies to humans as well. People sometimes trace their lineage to the bones of an animal.<sup>36</sup> For example, we clearly see this concept in a Yukaghir tale from Siberia: The vicious raven kills his two brothers-in-law one at a time, pushes them into a heated bathhouse, and eats the roasted bodies. He then tells his wife to clean the bones, gather them in a bag, and hang them high in a tree. The wife cries bitterly, collects all the bones, even the smallest ones, puts them in a bag, and hangs it up as instructed. Later her third and youngest brother kills the raven and then asks his sister where she put their brothers' bones. She climbs up the tree and brings them down. He takes the oldest brother's bones, arranges them, and sprinkles them with the water of life and of youth. The first time he does this, flesh covers the bones; the second time, skin covers the flesh; the third

time, the young man stands up and speaks: "Oh, oh, I have slept too long; but I feel quite refreshed anyway." The same occurs with the second brother.<sup>37</sup>

Gathering the bones in a cloth and preserving them in a particular place (a tree) calls to mind the verse in "The Juniper Tree" (KHM 47): ". . . gathered up my bones, / Tied them in a silken kerchief, / And put them under the juniper tree. . . ." Likewise, the motif about cooking the bones in "Brother Scamp" (KHM 81), in the Russian version of KHM 100 mentioned above, and in the legend of Pelops is not a random invention; it too has parallels in real north Asian concepts and customs. The Siberian tale summarized above is not a "folktale" in our sense of the word because it corresponds to real concepts of belief and custom. Vladimir Bogoraz, who recorded the tale, notes that "the ancient Yukaghir preserved the bones of their dead by gathering them in bags or hiding them in secret places."<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, according to belief among these people, initiation to shamanism includes being killed and eaten by the spirits. The bones are then scattered, gathered up again, thrown in a kettle, and cooked until the shaman awakens with magical power. The initiate must die and rise from the dead before being transformed into his new spiritual existence as a shaman.<sup>39</sup>

This phenomenon is not limited to north Asian hunters. Mexican Indians in Guazacualco and Yluta also place the bones of the dead in baskets and hang them in trees so that their spirits will not have to burrow through the earth when they return to life. According to the ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead (ch. 25), all bones must be kept together for the resurrection.<sup>40</sup> Bringing people back to life from their bones apparently was also current in the world of the Old Testament: In Ezekiel 37:1-14 this image appears as a visionary parable for the resurrection and reunification of Israel. Pelops is slaughtered and brought back to life, but he lacks his shoulder blade because Demeter ate it. Thor's buck is lame because one of his bones was damaged. This motif of the missing or artificially replaced bone causing slight harm is also widely distributed in folktales.

A Scottish tale tells of the resuscitation of a sheep from its skin and bones, but the animal turns out lame because its hooves were eaten.<sup>41</sup> In an African Kabyle folktale the hero must bring back an eagle's nest from atop an unclimbable cliff. He succeeds with help from his beloved, the daughter of a Wuarsen (the cannibalistic giants in Kabyle lore). The girl tells the hero: "Take this knife and this perfume. Cut me up with the knife. The pieces will stick to the cliff so you can use me as steps and easily climb up and bring down the eagle's nest containing seven eaglets. As you climb back down, bring my pieces with you. At the bottom put all the pieces back together, and when everything is in order, blow the perfume into my nose. I will be alive just as before." He does as told, but after coming to life the girl tells him, "You did everything right, but you left my little toes stuck to the cliff and forgot to bring them down. Now I'm missing them."<sup>42</sup>

Almost the exact same narrative occurs in an Irish folktale: The hero is

able to fulfill the task of climbing a 900-foot glass mountain only by killing his helper, taking the bones from her body, and using them as steps. On the way down he must gather them up, but he forgets one. When he reaches the ground he puts the bones back together, covers them with flesh, and sprinkles them with water from the spring of life at the foot of the tree. His helper comes back to life, but she is missing a toe.<sup>43</sup>

We find the same motifs in German-language legends, only in a different context. The "hazel-witch" lives in Seis (southern Tirol): A farmhand says he saw her at a witches' feast. The other witches cook and eat the hazel-witch, except for a rib which one threw at the boy when they noticed him. Instead of eating the rib, the boy pocketed it. The witches replace the missing rib with a piece of hazelwood in order to successfully resurrect their meal. Later the boy tells the farmer that there is a hazel-witch in the house: She was sitting among them and fell dead from her stool.<sup>44</sup> In the legend about a child resurrected from his bones in church,<sup>45</sup> "the little finger on his right hand is missing a knuckle."

Even this motif of the missing bone (rib, toe, shoulder blade), which seems purely fabular, has parallels among north Asian hunters. Commonly the shaman is missing a bone after his resurrection. But then one of his relatives must die.<sup>46</sup> In a Siberian tale the great raven's daughter has her missing leg replaced with the leg of a wild goose.<sup>47</sup> A Yakut tale describes how a man, insulted by a shaman, kills the offender twice and scatters his bones. But the shaman's spirits gather the bones, and he miraculously comes back to life. The man kills the shaman a third time and cuts him into little pieces; he burns the shaman's jawbone at the stake. The shaman rises from the dead for a third time, but he no longer has a jaw. His relatives replace it with a calf's jaw.<sup>48</sup> Thus the motif about missing bones also leads us back to peoples who, as we saw above, have a traditional belief in resurrection from bones. The folktale motif derives from this belief but seems to have taken the first step toward becoming a part of more aestheticized narratives: This new tale complex adds a vital element of suspense to the pure report of folk belief, gradually reducing the reality of the older form.

Whenever folktales mention sympathetic animals, plants, or objects, we are dealing with an archaic belief in contagious magic. The objects the hero leaves at home before departing on a journey, so that his relatives will know how he is doing, work through sympathetic magic. The knife stuck in the tree in KHM 60 ("The Two Brothers") reveals whether the brother out in the strange world is still alive. The golden lilies which blossom from pieces of a magical fish and the golden twins produced by other pieces turn out to have a sympathetic relationship: When a witch turns one brother to stone, one of the golden lilies falls over at home (KHM 85, "The Golden Children"). The sympathetic flower is the hero's "alter ego," which dies when he does. This motif also appears in the ancient Egyptian folktale: One brother places his heart in an acacia flower; as long as the tree is standing, no one

can defeat the hero. He dies only when the tree is felled. Here we have the same connection between a plant and human life (the heart may be a later aetiological addition to explain why the hero's life is connected to the tree).

This conceptual complex may seem like pure fantasy at first, but actually it still has parallels to living folk belief. In many places people used to, or still, plant a tree when a child is born: Since they have a common fate, the tree may not be cut down during the child's lifetime. The tree may even hinder the development of an entire farm. Following a basic concept about the contagious relationship between a human and a plant, the child grows and weakens parallel to nature; he is "like a flower of the field."<sup>\*</sup> Trees are a favorite choice for a sympathetic relationship because trees have a strong vital energy and longer life span than humans. The opening of "Snow White and Rose Red" (KHM 161) also contains a clear reference to reciprocal existence between humans and nature: "A poor widow" had "a garden with two rosebushes growing in it, one of them bearing white roses and the other red roses. She had two children who resembled the two rosebushes, and one was called Snow White, the other Rose Red" (cf. the end of the tale as well). The twelve lilies in the twelve brothers' garden (KHM 9) have a magical, sympathetic connection to the brothers' lives: When their sister picks the flowers, the twelve brothers change into ravens. This magical parallel between the flowers and the brothers' fate is neither merely "symbolic" nor simply based on the notion of a "soul"; rather, it suggests an actual parallel identity. The old woman, who happens to be standing there when the sister in KHM 9 picks the flowers, confirms this interpretation: "They [the lilies] were your brothers, and now they've been turned into ravens forever."

The tale about the grass snake (KHM 105) depicts a sympathetic relationship to an animal. A girl has a symbiotic relationship to a snake: "When she began to eat, a grass snake slithered out of a crack in the wall, dipped its little head in the milk, and ate with the girl. The child was delighted." The child's friendly relationship to a snake is definitely not mere fairy-tale fantasy. The German Michael Heverer reported on his 1592 journey southward from Nyköping, Sweden, that while changing horses he thought he would stop for a meal, but in every house he saw children sitting on the floor sharing their porridge with tame snakes; he lost his appetite.<sup>49</sup> In the Grimm tale the child's relationship to the snake ends tragically: The girl's mother kills the "good little animal," and—as told in KHM 105—after the snake is slain, "a change came over the child . . . and soon the child lay in her coffin."

The idea of a sympathetic snake in this tale is ancient; Friederich von der Leyen correctly places this text near the start of his attempted chronological arrangement of the KHM. To be sure, this distinctive Grimm text does not belong among the very oldest folktales, because here the belief

\*Psalms 103:15.—Trans.

that the snake guarantees life, or at least brings good luck, is no longer an obvious reality. But in many places people clearly recognized this function of the snake until very recently: According to Adolf Wuttke, for example, Bohemian folk belief includes the idea that a family of snakes lives in some houses, and each member of the snake family "represents a member of the human family, [and] everything which befalls the snake also happens to the respective family member."<sup>50</sup> In the village of Magden in Frickthal [Switzerland], Ernst Ludwig Rochholz reports, domesticated house snakes "watch over the rearing of children, protect the milk animals in the stall, guard the adolescent daughters, and find them a man according to their merit. Sometimes a house has two [snakes] that live and die with the mother and father of the house."<sup>51</sup>

A folktale from Lorraine treats the motif of the snake as the spirit of a house somewhat more thoroughly than KHM 105, in a sense completing the Grimms' fragment while also displaying more typical folktale characteristics. Here the snake and the rich, hardhearted farmer's cows have a sympathetic relationship. The cows thrive as long as the maid feeds the snake milk. When the farmer chases the maid away for wasting milk, the snake abandons the stall, and misfortune befalls the farm and household. The snake gives his little crown to the maid, bringing her happiness and success. In the end the snake lives with the maid, "and the house prospered; God clearly blessed their household."<sup>52</sup>

A gypsy version of "Bluebeard" contains a sympathetic toad: The fiend dies when he eats his life-toad served up roasted by his third wife, who was supposed to feed the animal.<sup>53</sup> Sympathetic folk remedies rely on the same human-animal connection when they transfer a human disease to the animal. Thus the animal saves the human rather than causing his or her death.<sup>54</sup>

The folktale depicts other items outside the body which magically sustain life. For example, in the widely distributed tale type "The Ogre's Heart in the Egg" (Type 302), the hero must destroy the monster's heart hidden in an egg in order to free the maiden from the ogre's power.<sup>55</sup> For added security this egg lies inside an animal living in some secret place. The heart is often protected by multiple encasements; the heart's locale varies but is usually an egg inside a bird.<sup>56</sup> The grateful animals help the hero destroy the ogre's heart, and the ogre dies.

This motif seems so fantastic that it appears to have no relationship to even the most archaic reality; modern readers must find it hardly conceivable that any belief underlies this motif. Nonetheless we can establish such belief: The basic idea is that people can place their souls in material objects, thus providing themselves with a sort of life insurance. In the folktale only demonic monsters can still protect themselves in this manner, but originally humans themselves employed this practice as a general defense against black magic of all sorts. In the ancient Egyptian "Tale of the Two Brothers," the hero himself (Batu) deposits his heart in an acacia flower for security. When the flower with the heart is cut, Batu falls down dead.

Even today tribal peoples do not find this conception odd. We find the motif of placing a heart at the top of a tree to protect human life in a Cherokee Indian tale.<sup>57</sup> We also have evidence of this practice in black West Africa, where, for example, a medicine man puts the natives' hearts in a jar until some perceived danger has passed. Someone may also "entrust his heart" to an animal: Only the medicine man and the heart's owner, who guards the animal and hence himself from harm, know which animal has the heart. Accordingly, this particular motif about life being connected to a plant or an animal also plays a large role in tribal narratives. Rather than being limited to one tale type, the motif is a common narrative element among tribal societies, indicating its significant relationship to reality. For example, the Wuarssen, a man-eating demon in Kabyle folktales, says: "My soul is in safekeeping. . . . My soul is a hair resting in an egg inside a partridge. The partridge lives in a camel's stomach, and the camel lies under a boulder in the sea."<sup>58</sup>

A Koryak story from Siberia tells the motif as follows: In the Triton-man's tent stands a box containing his heart. When Ememqut abducts the Triton-man's wife, the Triton-man, who is out grazing his reindeer far away, says: "My heart is really pounding. Something must have happened back home." Ememqut finds the box and throws it, heart and all, into the fire. When the heart begins to burn, the Triton-man becomes very ill; when it burns completely, he dies.<sup>59</sup>

These tales in which humans, not demons, hide their hearts reveal the older belief. In a Siberian folktale, seven Samoy hang their hearts on the tent poles when they come home and then sleep without their hearts.<sup>60</sup> In an ancient Asian folktale, the brothers hang their hearts in a tree before going to sleep.<sup>61</sup>

Here we must briefly address the places the ogre hides his encapsulated heart: In Nordic versions<sup>62</sup> the princess tries to get the ogre to tell her where he hid his heart. He tells her it's under the threshold, but he tricks her and it's not there. The maiden decorates the threshold in his honor. The second time the giant alleges that the egg containing his heart is in the hearth. Since he mistrusts the princess, she gets him to reveal the secret only through trickery.

But perhaps the heart was originally hidden where the giant first claimed; the threshold and hearth were, after all, the most important places in the old peasant home. Long ago, when funerals were held at home, people were buried at these spots. Perhaps later narrators, searching for a more artistic and developed composition, considered these places too simple. Perhaps the Celtic versions prove that the heart was indeed originally stored in these locations: Here the giant's heart actually lies under the threshold or under a tree in his garden.<sup>63</sup> This evidence carries considerable weight because Celtic folktales are among Europe's oldest.

The seemingly fantastic folktale motif of the glass mountain was also once part of belief; it belonged to the concept of the realm of the dead. Jacob Grimm refers to the Lithuanian custom of burying lynx or bear claws with

the dead so they could climb the steep mountain and reach the throne of the holy judge.<sup>64</sup> In her investigations, Inger Boberg correctly draws parallels to the Celtic "Glastonbury" and the ancient Nordic "Glaesirvellir."<sup>65</sup> Jan de Vries points out,

it must be noted that this is a motif about the otherworld. In the most varied parts of the world great dangers and monstrous difficulties threaten the dead on their journey to the next world. . . . The ride up the glass mountain is as much a part of the journey to the beyond as, for example, the ancient Persian belief in crossing the Zinvat bridge. Thus we doubtless find mythic elements in this folktale.<sup>66</sup>

Numerous folktales depict the mysterious power of *magic formulas*: "Open sesame!" opens the secret treasure chamber in the mountain (Type 676; cf. KHM 142). In KHM 19 the fisherman repeatedly conjures the magic fish with the incantation "Little man, whoever you be, Flounder, flounder in the sea. . . ." The magic table (KHM 36) serves up the finest delicacies, but only when it hears the magic formula "Table, set yourself!" Similarly, the formula "Little goat, bleat, bring me a table with good things to eat" in KHM 130 magically produces a freshly set table. In the same tale the heroine puts her sister to sleep with a magic spell. Upon hearing the words "Shake your branches, little tree, Throw gold and silver down on me," Cinderella's tree supplies the most beautiful dresses ever seen (KHM 21). Cinderella repeats this magic formula three times in the course of the story. The queen's magic mirror in "Snow White" (KHM 53) answers the formula: "Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who is the fairest of all?" Cinderella (in the Cap o' Rushes tale type) escapes the prince by saying: "Behind me dark, before me clear, So no one sees which way I steer."<sup>67</sup>

Gretel implores the white duck to take her and Hansel across the large body of water in the witch's forest: "Duckling, duckling, here is Gretel, Duckling, duckling, here is Hansel. No bridge or ferry far and wide—Duckling come and give us a ride" (KHM 15). The Goose Girl (KHM 89) uses the incantation "Blow, wind, blow" to magically produce a strong wind. The discharged soldier in KHM 199 paralyzes the robbers with a formula for thieves.<sup>68</sup> A magic formula frees Joringel from the witch's spell: "Greetings, Zachiel! When the moon shines on the cage, let him go" (KHM 69). We could easily provide many more examples of magical speech.

The magic formulas work only if the wording is exactly right. If not repeated perfectly, the magic produces disastrous consequences: In "The Sweet Porridge" (KHM 103)<sup>69</sup> the heroine's mother cannot stop the magic pot because she forgets the formula "Cease, little pot!" The flood of porridge is finally dammed when the daughter comes home.

We can easily trace the use of such formulas in the folktale to living folk belief, but their formulation is certainly not recent, and therefore we cannot

draw any conclusions about a particular archaic conception of reality. However, it is striking that written magic (using numbers and/or letters) plays absolutely no role in the folktale even though it has an important place in belief. Surely this implies a criterion for dating the tales: If folktale magic uses no writing, it must originate from a time before writing existed.<sup>70</sup> The folktale depicts a stage of development in which even a mere word still had direct power, i.e., an almost material effectiveness. As soon as anyone expresses or even thinks an effective thought, particularly wishes and curses, the deed is done, the thought becomes a real material fact. "I wish you'd turn into a raven and fly away, then I'd have some peace and quiet," the queen tells her little daughter, and "the words were hardly out of her mouth when the child turned into a raven" (KHM 93; cf. KHM 25).<sup>71</sup> Again folktales from tribal societies offer particularly telling examples, because they do not limit this process to a few exceptional transformations and instead depict the word's powerful effectiveness in everyday life as well. In an Eskimo folktale, for example, a blind man's speech has the power to call other people's eyes into service.<sup>72</sup>

Naming a person or a supernatural being also clearly has magical potential. For example, ancient Egyptian sorcerers gain power over the gods by ascertaining their true names.<sup>73</sup> An Old High German house blessing aims to ward off all demons by reciting their names: "Well, Vicht, you should know that your name is Vicht." This suggests that people's names are linked to their existence, they are part of their essence. Thus the king's son merely calls helpful "Iron Hans" three times, and he immediately appears (KHM 136).

Tribal peoples avoid revealing their names to strangers because they could be used in black magic. Tribal peoples can even mortgage their names, and according to this *habeas nomen* concept, whoever has the name has the man. In our own folk belief, a dying man can "give away" his name; and we can still occasionally observe an aversion to state one's name.<sup>74</sup> Our culture contains yet other remnants of these ancient concepts about names. For example, when parents name their child after a dead person, they do so—at least unconsciously—believing and hoping that the child will have many of the namesake's characteristics, if not that person's "soul." Likewise, the poor occasionally name their children after rich persons. People avoid giving their child the name of someone who recently died in the fear that the child might suffer the same fate, perhaps even die of the same cause. Some tribal peoples view giving a child a dead person's name as a type of rebirth. We also find this idea in the oldest folktales: In the ancient Egyptian "Tale of the Two Brothers," the hero, Batu, is turned into a tree. A splinter from the tree produces a baby boy whose name is also Batu, and he is the same hero Batu.

"Rumpelstiltskin" (KHM 55; Type 500), generally cited as the model example of the power of name magic, actually seems to have nothing to do

with this: A girl promises her first-born (in other versions her hand in marriage) to the dwarf who helps her spin. The demonic helper comes to collect and will allow the girl to renege only if she can guess his name within three days. Most analyses cite the power of the name to explain how the demon loses the bet: The demon apparently loses his power because the girl says his name. But the demon's downfall actually results when Rumpelstiltskin bursts into excessive rage because she guessed his name and he loses the reward. This is a type of riddle-bet, not name magic. The girl could be required to guess something other than the name: In some versions she must not *forget* the demon's name,<sup>75</sup> and in others she is supposed to guess his age.<sup>76</sup> Neither task is easy: The demon's age is incalculable, and he doesn't have a human name. An archaic feature of "Rumpelstiltskin" and other riddling contests is that the prize is existential: Life itself is at stake. One either guesses or perishes. When the riddle is solved, the Sphinx plunges into the abyss; the Eddic dwarf Alwis turns to stone when struck by sunlight.<sup>77</sup> But the wager itself, not name magic, determines the contestant's fate.

Numerous other agents of magic play a role in the folktale. Music, for example, often has a persuasive magical power. Particular music compels those who hear it to dance: When "Darling Roland" (KHM 56) plays the violin, the witch must dance whether she wants to or not. The hero in KHM 110 ("The Jew in the Brambles") also wishes for a fiddle which makes everyone who hears it dance. In a Kabyle folktale people cannot continue working when they hear the magic flute; the birds become silent, and even the walls of the houses bend down to listen.<sup>78</sup> Music also breaks spells: In a gypsy folktale a girl born as a rose regains human form when a musician plays the violin.<sup>79</sup> Magical sounds also empower the horn with which the hero can call for help (cf. *Song of Roland*). In KHM 54 the walls and fortifications fall like those in Jericho when the magic horn sounds. Other magical music in the folktale puts everyone to sleep. The folktale also depicts other ways of putting people into a magical sleep: A prick from the enchanted spindle sinks Sleeping Beauty into magical sleep (KHM 50); a poisoned comb puts Snow White into her deathly sleep (KHM 53). Folktales from tribal societies contain forms and practices of sleep magic that our living folk belief lost long ago. For example, a Siberian tale plainly explains how a woman throws her thimble on her husband when she wakes up in the morning, making his sleep so deep and sound it seems as if he is dead.<sup>80</sup>

Even folk beliefs about the evil eye occasionally find their way into folktales. In an Eskimo tale the hero kills people and animals by looking at them.<sup>81</sup> The sorcerer Balor, who has a single eye in the middle of his forehead and another in the middle of the back of his head, appears in Irish folktales. The eye on the back of his head would kill everyone, like a basilisk, with its evil squinting glare and its poisonous shining colors if

Balor did not keep it closed. He opens it only when he wants to turn his enemies to stone.<sup>82</sup> Here fantasy builds on folk ideas about the evil eye.

In contrast, the Irish folktale hero Fionn, who can recognize anything simply by biting himself on the thumb, sounds like the product of pure fantasy.<sup>83</sup> But we find similar motifs in other Irish tales: The thumb possesses curative power; the hero draws wisdom from his or her burned thumb; biting the thumb can help one see into the future.<sup>84</sup> Surprisingly, similar narrative elements appear in African folktales: When the clever heroine of a Kabyle tale asks the fingernail on her little finger for advice, it provides information and help.<sup>85</sup> Again the folktale depicts an ancient practice for increasing magical power that living folk belief has lost: According to Plutarch,<sup>86</sup> Isis nourished Malcander's child by sticking her finger in his mouth. According to Jewish legend, the angel Gabriel fed Abraham with his finger. Nursing a child with a finger also played a role in the Virgin miracle in the Middle Ages.<sup>87</sup> Today this notion survives only in some idiomatic phrases. The German saying "sich etwas aus dem Finger zu saugen" was not originally a metaphor but rather magical reality during the stage in human evolution preserved for us in the folktale.

Our narratives also contain remnants of hunting magic: After slaying the seven-headed dragon, the hunter in KHM 60 ("The Two Brothers") cuts out its seven tongues, wraps them in a cloth, and guards them closely (cf. KHM 111). In folktales and medieval heroic epics, this motif usually serves as the hero's proof that he really killed the dragon. But this hunting trophy originally had a different purpose. The hunter prevents the animal or beast from getting revenge by cutting off an essential part of its body (other trophies include horns, ears, tail, and teeth). Before skinning a bear, Siberian hunters cut off its paws, poke out its eyes, and sever the tendons in its feet. If through their carelessness the bear should suddenly free itself, it would no longer pose any danger. The hunters consider the bear truly dead only after they break out its teeth and remove its claws.<sup>88</sup> The folktale has lost the original meaning of this ancient hunters' custom.

In numerous versions of "The Blind King" (Type 551), a wise man tells the king that he can regain his sight only with the blood from a dragon's heart. In an Italian version of "Little Brother and Little Sister" (KHM 11), the blind king must smear his eyes with his own daughter's blood.<sup>89</sup> In a Greek version of "The King's Children," the Egyptian king wants to cure his leprosy by bathing in a royal child's blood.<sup>90</sup> Again, all this sounds like pure fantasy designed merely for the sake of storytelling: The blood from a dragon's heart is particularly difficult to obtain and thus provides a basis for the folktale hero's adventure. Requiring human blood also sets up conflict or tension which the narrative then disengages in the typical folktale manner. But again the reality of belief conflicts with this "purely fictional"

\*Literally, "to suck something out of your finger"; meaning, roughly, "to pull something out of thin air."—Trans.



interpretation. Belief often ascribes magical power to blood, and many past and present remedies prescribe blood as a curative agent. Before a division between folk and scientific medicine existed, Hartmann von Aue's "Poor Heinrich" suggested using the blood of a virgin to cure lepers.

Folk medicine may not go so far as to claim that dew from the gallows can restore a blind man's sight (as happens in KHM 107, "The Two Traveling Companions"), but we do find a basis for this idea in folk belief: Everything associated with the gallows and people hanged there somehow has magical power.<sup>91</sup>

In KHM 16 the hero observes how a snake brings its friend back to life with three special green leaves. According to folk belief, a snake in distress signals all the other snakes in the area to come and help.<sup>92</sup> Likewise, a folk belief collected in the upper Palatinate which says that at a certain time of year toads sit in fountains and draw in all the poison that falls from the sky, corresponds to the fountain-toad motif in KHM 29.<sup>93</sup> In KHM 165 a king's daughter wastes away because a toad took some of her hair to build a nest; she will recover only if she gets her hair back. We find a similar view in folk belief: In Bohemia it is said that if a toad builds its nest with someone's hair, that person will waste away and cannot be saved by anyone.<sup>94</sup>

We can mention only briefly other magical practices which appear in individual folktales. Folktales frequently contain all sorts of fertility magic. Women become pregnant after eating fish (KHM 85).<sup>95</sup> A gypsy folktale describes at great length the detailed recipe for fertility obtained by the barren queen.<sup>96</sup> A salesman in a Palestinian tale shouts: "Magic eggs for sale! Eat one and you don't need a man to become pregnant!" A woman feeds her stepdaughter pancakes made from the eggs, and she really becomes pregnant.<sup>97</sup> An Italian folktale prescribes a concoction made from three hairs from the devil's beard for the childless queen.<sup>98</sup>

Fertility magic in folktales among tribal peoples seems still to have a closer relationship to living folk belief. A girl in a Kordofan folktale eats the bone meal from a crushed skull to become pregnant.<sup>99</sup> In an Oceanian tale, blood from a man's finger produces a daughter.<sup>100</sup> The European folktale naively mixes pre-Christian and Christian motifs: Parents respond to successful fertility practices by saying, "God has answered our prayers."<sup>101</sup> Even Jesus and St. Peter impregnate a woman with an apple "full of hope."<sup>102</sup> Individual motifs about magical procreation may be fantastic, sometimes even absurd, but in principle they correspond to the folk belief in a magical world.

All of these motifs about magical practices are older than the word magic mentioned above. But in both cases the folktale depicts a real picture of belief in magic. We have cited only a few examples of this archaic reality in the folktale, but we already see that even modern "tales of magic" are not mere fantasy. These tales were living "reality" in an archaic world where magic was real and completely natural and did not yet have a numinous effect. In the folktale this archaic world meets the enlightened world-view

which no longer recognizes magical forces. This later view of reality freely employs these magical motifs and mixes them with pure fantasy to achieve a poetic effect. We must ask how the folktale, a product of fantasy, preserved archaic elements. How can we explain the folktale's unique mixture of primitive and artistic components?

The question itself contains the answer. The modern European folktale's status as conscious fiction enables it to maintain and preserve themes, traits, and motifs that have ceased to be part of belief. The folktale, unlike the legend, no longer has any reason to pay attention to belief. Even the oldest recorded Mediterranean folktales had already begun to outlive the belief they depict. However, because the content was no longer believed, the tales retain elements of the old magical world-view.<sup>103</sup> For the same reason, Christianity has had little significant influence on the European folktale.

We cannot, however, fail to recognize an entirely different factor in the folktale's development. Because primitive magic, the law of sympathy, contagious and homeopathic magic are not bound to a particular religious world-view, they have been able to survive up until the present by continually renewing themselves in folk tradition. The enlightened artistic world-view and belief in magic exist side by side in the folktale. For very different reasons, both of these elements of the folktale have helped preserve the magical world-view. The artistic guise preserves magical thinking as a product of fantasy; the magical world-view maintains it as reality.

#### MAN AND ANIMAL—TRANSFORMATION AND DISENCHANTMENT

We have already pointed out the symbiotic relationship between man and animal in terms of their sympathetic connection in certain folktales. An investigation into grateful and helpful animals in the folktale also seems to take us back to an archaic world. These animals behave independently in the folktale and often fulfill an important function in the plot by determining what will happen to the hero. For example, three animals repay the kind-hearted hero's favors by helping him complete three tasks (e.g., KHM 17, "The White Snake"; 62, "The Queen Bee"; 191, "The Mongoose"; and 126, "Faithful Ferdinand and Faithless Ferdinand"). Occasionally the grateful animals help the hero find and destroy the monster's hidden soul and thus obtain the king's daughter. In "The Faithful Animals" (KHM 104a) a man pities some animals and frees them. They return the favor by later freeing him from prison.<sup>1</sup> There are a number of reasons the animals may be grateful to the hero: The hero either rescues individual animals from some danger (e.g., KHM 17 and 62; Type 554), or he lets an animal he could have killed get away unharmed (e.g., as a hunter in KHM 57 or as a fisherman in KHM 19, Type 555). The tale type "The Girl Who Married Animals" (Type 552) also portrays helpful animals: A bankrupt man mar-