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The Recovery of Feelings in a Folktale

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this essay is to explore the "symptom" of the denial of feelings and the subsequent recovery of feelings in relation to the task of uniting the human self. The spiritual, emotional, and physical implications of an exemplary narrative from the collection edited by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm are discussed in relation to the "telescoping" of the emotion of fear, the sensation of shuddering, and the experience of anxiety about the integrity of the self. The reader is cautioned that the study of folktales enriches our telling of them and is itself justified by that telling.

The purpose of this essay is to show how a traditional folktale narratively addresses the issue of the unity of the human self. In particular, many folktales serve as reminders that the individual's feelings are an indispensable constituent of that unity. Indeed, folktales share with the diverse "healing" or "caring" professions (pastoral counseling, psychotherapy, medicine) the common intention of promoting the coherence, integrity, and completeness of the human being. The exhortation, "Become a whole self" is sounded by folktales in a thousand and one variations and contexts. The study of the folktale promises enhanced understanding of the spiritual, emotional, and even the physical aspects of the human self.[1] How can this be?

The spiritual side of human life, which encompasses elements of both religion and philosophy, is directly addressed in the folktale by symbols that are a secular rendering of a sacred rite or divine occurrence. Deep conceptual issues are provoked. But this is done in terms comprehensible to the understanding of the ordinary person who lacks acquaintance with philosophical traditions or the history of religions.

Furthermore, the way the folktale's narrative structure contains a synopsis of a crisis of emotional development or maturation invites the attention of the psychotherapist. Going beyond the strictly intellectual functions, the folktale "stories," i.e., narratively depicts, crucial emotional experiences that occasion growth and the acquisition of self-understanding.

Finally, the manner in which the folktale expresses its commitment to the improvement of man's physical well-being as well as the practical, down-to-earth answers it proposes is compatible with an outlook on life oriented toward material prosperity. Recalcitrant experiences, those experiences in which we encounter our limits as human beings (that we have bodies,

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experience pain, birth, death, the necessity of work), are knit together in narrative form and unified in an imaginative but strikingly sensible dramatic episode. At the same time, the "heaviness" of high drama is dispelled as the folktale teaches us to laugh at ourselves and our blind spots.

In order to fulfill the purpose of this essay, I want to narrow the scope of the discussion. I propose to engage in the explication of a single, exemplary tale in the full breadth and depth of its imagery and implications. The remarkable narrative imagery through which "The Story of the Youth Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was" permits both a spiritual crisis and a paradigmatic emotional experience to emerge from a physical sensation makes this tale worthy of our careful study and informed retelling. As we will discover, this story's structure is analogous to a transparent "Chinese box" in the manner in which it "telescopes" a pervading mood of anxiety about the integrity of the self, the emotion of fear, and the sensation of shuddering ("goose flesh" as the latter is sometimes called).[2]

However, before proceeding, I hasten to add that the telling of stories needs no justification from scholarship. Rather, the study of tales (though valuable and important) is itself justified by the telling of such tales, insofar as that telling is enriched and deepened by a growing understanding of the story. Further justification is available when we realize that the message of the tale ("Become a whole self") can itself become a source of healing when applied to the wounds left by life's trials as well as an antidote against despair in the face of adversity.

Let us approach our chosen tale by meeting its protagonist. Though the hero is in fact a typical simpleton figure, there is something special about him. We learn that he is an "exception" in a particular sense. He is apparently so simple-minded that he does not know what people mean when they say that they experience a "shudder" as they pass the graveyard at night. In short, he has never experienced fear—hence, the story's title.

Thus, when the young man expresses an interest in "earning his daily bread" by acquiring this (to him) unfamiliar art, "shuddering," the stage is set for a rite of passage, an educational apprenticeship in life. The story is *not* primarily about bravery or courage, for the truly brave man knows what he should fear, and this cannot be said of the hero. (Many people would call this hero "foolhardy.") Rather, the story is about the vicissitudes faced by the young man as he endeavors to subject what is a physical response to his conscious control. The implications of this will be explored in detail shortly.

It is important to note the subtle shades of feeling on which the narrative plays. The sensation of shuddering is more primitive (one might say "less objective") than the emotion of fear. In what sense? In the sense that shuddering, unlike the emotion of fear, consists of the organism's "blind" or "automatic" reaction to physical stress. (For example, jumping into cold water can give one "goose pimples," another idiom for shuddering.) Shuddering surges through the body and reduces it to a medium for the transformation of nervous tension. In shuddering I am suddenly reminded that I have, I dwell as, a body that is exposed to surprise, that is vulnerable to changes suddenly occurring. While the emotion of fear may be realistic or irrational, depending on the

proximity of the object of fear, shuddering is just a brute fact. It is the automatic response of my body to sudden and surprising stress.

But equally important with the function of feeling in a physical and emotional context, there is a third dimension of meaning to this young man's "exceptional" situation. As the events of the narrative unfold, we at first react to them with our usual attitudes and responses. Many scary and grotesque episodes transpire (which teach the listener, if not the hero, to shudder). But after a while, we are no longer sure of what to be afraid and what to trust. We find ourselves confronting the unknown, the uncannily threatening, which arouses our dread, or anxiety. Anxiety, or dread, has features in common with both fear and shuddering, but is reducible to neither of these. Like shuddering, anxiety is subjective in that it seems to have no concrete object; but, like fear, it is regarded as disclosing something dangerous. Such a feeling is neither sensation nor emotion but is properly referred to as a "mood." This third nuance of feeling (a pervading mood of anxiety) has a special role to play in our story. The latent depth of the narrative consists in its sounding the issue of the integrity of the self in the face of finitude (death). This is the very paradigm of the unknown (in the face of which one experiences anxiety). Death, as Hamlet said, is "a land from whose region no traveler returns."

Two additional reflections about the spiritual implications of the story are in order. First, the tale's reader or listener cannot help but note that the hero makes a conscious decision to "learn the art of shuddering," by which he imagines he will earn his "daily bread." This decision contains an instructive absurdity which makes us directly aware that shuddering (to use another idiom, "feeling one's flesh crawl") is not the kind of organic response that a person can consciously intend, resist, or subject to the autonomy of whatever functions of consciousness are responsible for our awareness of self-control. This exceptional young man has apparently never learned (here "learned" means "experienced") that human beings are simultaneously both consciousness and organism intertwined. We are both mind and body. The hero is confused (some interpreters might label this a "category mistake") in his attempt to treat organic responses as if they were subject to his conscious and intentional manipulation. Thus, the problem with which the hero is grappling corresponds in its own narrative terms to the philosophic distinction between mind and body.

Second, the fact that the hero has never known this sensation of shuddering suggests that he is less than fully human. He lacks an essential ingredient of being human. Indeed, his awareness that an aspect of his own humanity is lacking may be hypothesized to be his motive in seeking to test his own identity. This indirectly provides the rationale, the plausibility, behind his seemingly silly preoccupation and persistence with learning to shudder. His task is to unify himself as body and mind. The danger that threatens him is fragmentation in both physical and spiritual terms.

Circling around let us traverse the narrative cycle of "The Story of the Youth Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was" as a whole. The tale itself is divisible into three self-contained "moves" or dramatic episodes. These are knit together by what we might call the young man's major "symptom"—his inability to shudder.

The first episode opens with the young man still living at home with his father and brother. The problem is posed. The young man declares his intention to earn his daily bread by learning the art of shuddering. There is despair over this simpleton. An attempt is made to educate him in his home village. But the well-meaning educator and his pupil are both clumsy. (The village churchman dresses up as a ghost to try and scare the youth. The youth, misunderstanding the man's good intentions, pushes him down the stairs, breaking his leg.) Thus, the young man commits a seemingly inevitable "fault," for which he is exiled from hearth and home.[3]

As a narrative text, the second and main episode is framed as a ghost story. It is filled with images (which we will shortly explore in detail) that make the listener (though not the young man) shudder. The young man spends three nights in a haunted castle, which itself becomes a symbol of a "descent into hell." Evidence of this will be presented later. There are profound spiritual implications to this initiatory "ordeal," which does in fact evoke distinct echoes of a shamanic transformation, culminating in rebirth. As a consequence of this "descent" and assimilation of the "split off" part of his own self, the young man emerges as a renewed, remade person. He has tested his limits and attained a harmonious union of body and mind. But in the context of our narrative, he is still not happy. Although he has evidently won the treasure hard-to-attain (in this case wholeness), he does not fully realize it. Although he has acquired the capacity to shudder, he has not yet, in fact, shuddered.

The third episode solves this problem in a humorous way. The drama of the second episode is recapitulated in comic terms, complete with a punning joke on the spiritual rebirth of part two. This serves as a comic dénouement with which to discharge the tensions generated by the scary events of part two and with which to return the listener to the everyday world.

In what sense is the young man a divided self at the beginning of the tale? I have suggested that his inability to shudder should be understood as a symptom. Shuddering and the complex of feelings surrounding it (the emotion of fear and the mood of anxiety) are such basic sensations that anyone who cannot experience shuddering is likely to be unaware of his other feelings, moods, sensations, and emotions. This is indeed an inference (not a part of the surface structure of the tale), but one strongly warranted by the events of the story itself. Thus, not shuddering becomes a symptom of a more general denial of feelings. This is the young man's major difficulty: he is so well armored against, defended against, his feelings that he is less than a whole person. His intellectual functions are divided against his emotional ones. To become fully human he needs to assimilate and integrate his feelings.

Such an integration of unrecognized feeling is possible for this young man, because the seed of the cure of his discontent lies within the malaise itself. It turns out that, paradoxically, his greatest weakness is also his greatest strength. The young man's emotional "armor," his denial of feeling, is his problem, but also the occasion for his success in overcoming great danger. In short, he presents us with a case of "the fool who perseveres in his folly and becomes wise," as the poet Blake put it.[4]

What this means will become clearer when we realize that in dealing with symptoms that have a psychoneurotic origin, the symptom is actually an accomplishment, an achievement. The father and brother and other educators at the beginning of the story fail miserably to help the young man precisely because they have no respect for his symptom. They attack the symptom directly, without addressing the young man's need for enhanced self-understanding. The result is mutual frustration. It is only when the young man, following his own intuitions, agrees to confront his own worst hell that the prospect of improvement is opened up.

The young man's numerous setbacks in his attempts to learn shuddering have a powerful irony to them. At least part of the reason why the youth fails to learn shuddering is that he is expecting someone to tell him what it is. He even tells a concerned stranger, "I wish someone would tell me what it is." But even if communicated in the form of words, shuddering remains something that needs to be shown in one's own experience, or the words are empty. This implies that another way of regarding the young man's problem is as a kind of over-intellectualization. To say that this is ironic may be an understatement, for the hero is initially presented as a simpleton. Now it turns out that he defends himself against his feelings through intellectualization.[5] He wants someone to tell him what he must experience for himself. This reinforces the division between his intellectual functions and those of his heart.

Now sharpening our focus to the three nights that the protagonist spends in the haunted castle, we find that one way of making sense out of what happens is to regard these events as concrete images of what he has "split off" and denied. His feelings are given concrete form, and he encounters them as something external. His feelings seem to come upon him from without in the form of disruptive dogs and cats, as comical but grotesque half men, as the ghost of the past, and as a sinister but powerful old man. For someone whose engagement in the world consists in a denial of feelings, feelings represent what is other, what is nonself. If a realistic reading is required of the fantasy narrative from a psychiatric perspective, then the events in the haunted castle are what are hallucinated by someone who is so well defended against feelings that he has never experienced shuddering. I propose to retell interpretively (narratively "reenact") the major happenings of the young man's trial from this perspective.

Toward midnight of the first night the youth hears a sudden cry coming from one dark corner of the castle hall in which he has seated himself beside a fire: "Au, miau! How cold we are!" The young man's feelings, projected into the environment, have become articulate. They have become dormant for a long time and are "cold." This time the youth welcomes them, symbolizing his positive attitude toward the task of assimilating them. He invites them to approach, and two black cats jump into the circle of the fire and look at him with savage, glowing eyes. They challenge him to a game of cards. This implies that what the young man is doing (opening himself to his long-blocked feelings) is risky, and this is made explicit in terms of a pun.

However, after having been denied for so long, feelings are not likely to be well-behaved. The cats turn out to have long, dangerous claws, and they

display them in a sinister way. The suggestion is that feelings are not to be toyed with. Feelings are capable of inflicting wounds if one first persistently denies them and then invites them back. After having been denied for so long, the feelings are out of balance. Disequilibrium is the order of the day. When the youth sees the long claws possessed by these creatures, he "binds" them in a vice, cuts the claws, and kills the cats. This symbolizes the protagonist's ambivalent attitude—first inviting but then rejecting. Ambivalence, however, unleashes hell:

> . . . Out from every hole and corner came black cats and dogs with red-hot chains, and more and more of them came until he could no longer move, and they yelled horribly, and got on his fire, and pulled it to pieces, and tried to put it out.[6]

The feelings are capable of hellish tricks. They crowd sensible thought out of consciousness and threaten to extinguish the "light" of consciousness. Note that here there is an explicit reference to the motif of the "descent" to hell, for the dogs and cats wear "red-hot" chains. Indeed, confronting one's own denied feelings, however tentatively, means a descent to one's own personal hell.[7] Many disruptive affects dwell there. It is necessary to wield the sharp cutting edge of self-criticism to acknowledge, bind, master, and, thus, neutralize these disruptive feelings before they pull the light of the mind to pieces. And that is what the youth does with the knife he brought with him. He cries, "Away you vermin!" and chases the dogs and cats away. The first eruptions of denied feelings are relatively harmless when they are faced with decision.[8]

The second night in the castle is filled with grotesque images of dismemberment. They symbolize the risk that is occasioned by the persistent denial of one's own feelings. Although the intellect may be developed, the failure to let one's feelings unfold leaves only one half of the person alive.

This is what is concretely represented in the narrative. What is described as "half a man" comes down the chimney with a scream. Half by half other men come down. The young man's reaction is appropriate: he recognizes that something is missing. "Hullo! Another half belongs to this. This is not enough!" The implication is that, although denied feelings can prove to be rather obnoxious, they are really quite pathetic things.

In particular, this is the episode in which the narrative reveals that it is a regular "ghost" story. Other grotesque men bring nine dead men's legs and two skulls. They set them up to play nine-pins, or bowling. Far from shuddering, the young man asks the fellows if he can play too; and in order to further the game he takes the skulls, which are not quite round, and shapes them in his turning lathe, so they will roll better.

Once again a distinct message about one's relations to one's feelings can be deciphered here. One's feelings are not always pretty to look at (resentment, jealousy, anger, petty desires, etc.). We can be afraid of or intimidated by our feelings; or we can invite them into consciousness, and, treating them with humor and humility, "play" along. Thus, the young man's sense of humor suggests a positive prognosis. His sense of humor protects him (remember,

some defenses are necessary) against dying of fright at the sight of half-a-man. Indeed, that is all that could kill him, for the visitors, however grotesque they may have been, meant him no harm and were really fun-loving.

At another level, this humorous scene contains a serious warning. Denying all feelings can be dangerous. If one becomes trapped in such denials, it can lead to fragmentation, the disintegration of the self. The inference is that the distinction between mind and body is the result of an abstraction, made after the construction of a coherent self has already been attained. This becomes evident in the case of the failure to attain the integration of the mind and body into a coherent self. For example, dismemberment is the condition of some autistic children:

> There was no integrated body to Laurie, only an aggregate of separate parts that seemed to have nothing in common, not to belong together.
>
> When we dressed her, undressed her, or touched her, she not only felt limp, but as though her hands, arms, and legs were disconnected from her and her consciousness. Each part of her body seemed an object apart from the others, and the various parts of her unrelated...[9]

In reconstructing Laurie's development, Bettelheim speculates that her failure to become a whole person was due to her caretakers' failure to respond to her with feelings. She was treated as if she were just these isolated functions of eating, eliminating, making cries, etc. She remained a "mechanical doll," which lacked the unity of a coherent self.

Fear of dismemberment, anxiety about the integrity of the body and the coherence of the self, these are realities confronting autistic children and regressive fantasies emerging in adult psychotic episodes.

In addition, the theme of dismemberment appears in the context of the shamanic initiation.[10] Here dismemberment of the body is part of a ritual rite of passage, a rite of death and rebirth. The initiate is made a new man through the replacement of his vital bodily organs. Frequently, initiates report hallucinations in which they watch their own bodies being destroyed and reconstructed. The scene in our folktale seems to echo without explicitly repeating this "classical" motif by which the self is reborn.

In the case of our folktale, the young man is able to master the opportunities and dangers surrounding dismemberment because of his sense of humor. It is true that he does not shudder. But it is not unreasonable to infer that he is unaware of any shuddering this time, because any potential shuddering has been transformed into laughter and good feelings. It is clear that the hero is acquiring a more friendly relationship with his feelings.

The third night represents the young hero's confrontation with his own "dead" past feelings. Six men bring in a coffin, containing, as the youth says, "my little cousin." (Even when denied, one's feelings remain a close relative.) In a macabre way, the young man demonstrates that he is actually a very "warm" person. (Remember, the story stems from European peasant origins and contains a very earthy idiom.) In brief, the protagonist tries to wake up the corpse. He tries to warm the corpse's face with his hands. He rubs the dead

limbs "that the blood might circulate again." Finally, he even gets into bed with the corpse: "When two people lie in bed together, they warm each other." And if all this is not enough to teach the listener shuddering, the young man's efforts succeed. He wakes up the corpse, who gets up and cries, "Now I will strangle you." The young man throws the corpse back into the coffin and shuts the lid. The six men return and carry him away again.

In terms of the young man's symptom of not shuddering and his problem of the denial of his feelings, this episode suggests one way of attempting to integrate feelings as well as its limitations. If one raises the ghost of past feelings, the danger is that they may strangle one. Preoccupation with past feelings can strangle understanding, choke off possibilities of progress. Feelings are primarily present. They exist in the moment, now. It does no good to become intimately involved (so to speak, to get into bed with) feelings whose reference is oriented solely toward what is past. However, at times it may be necessary to raise the ghost of the past, at least in order to bury it more effectively and permanently. As Jesus says in the Gospels with reference to a similar issue, "Let the dead bury the dead."

By now the young man is getting desperate. He is plagued by what he imagines to be his failure and inferiority:

> "I cannot manage to shudder," he said. "I shall never learn it as long as I live." Then a man entered who was taller than all others, and looked terrifying. He was old, however, and had a long white beard. "You wretch," cried he, "you shall soon learn what it is to shudder, for you shall die."[11]

Here shuddering is no longer just a physical, subjective sensation. It now takes on the nuance of dread or anxiety in the face of death. Whatever may await the soul at death, whether immortality or oblivion, the very fact that the outcome is unknown can be an occasion for anxiety.[12]

The motif of the descent to hell is again explicitly echoed as the old spirit leads the young man downward, through dark labyrinthine passageways, to a smith's forge beneath the castle. This is the climax of the initiatory ordeal, the ultimate trial. Will the young man succeed in integrating, in winning control over, his feelings, or, on the contrary, will they overwhelm and dominate him completely? (The outcome then might be a kind of insanity, in which he would become a "half" man, a mere intellect.)

In the orange glow of a smith's forge, deep beneath the castle, the old man points out two anvils and two axes. The old one takes an axe and with one blow drives an anvil into the ground. Next, the young man takes an axe, splits the other anvil in half, and catches the old spirit's beard between the two halves. The old one is thus trapped and must surrender.

The fact that the young man outwits the old spirit through a trick, a strategem, and does not win through physical strength, is significant in view of the hero's reputation as a "simpleton." In the end, he does do justice to the cunning within him.

Equally important is the implication that the feelings cannot be mastered through brute force. In any direct confrontation with the intellect, one's feelings are bound to prove to be the stronger, if one remains at the level of

sheer strength. However, feelings can be mastered through a kind of cunning that sneaks up on them and catches them unawares.

The second "move" or episode of the folktale thus ends as the young hero acquires a share of the treasure and the hand of the king's daughter. In general, the acquisition of these rewards symbolizes the major components of human well-being—self-understanding and a satisfying relationship with another person. However, in this case, there is need of a postscript.

In undertaking the descent into the nightmarish hells of the castle, the youth has confronted his very worst enemy—himself and his denial of feelings. He has engaged his feelings in the only way possible for him at the item—as external representations that overtake him from without. He has obtained valuable experience in mastering feelings, though he did not suspect their true identity, that they were his own. In surviving the ordeal he has emerged with a new capacity for feeling. But he does not yet seem to realize it. He has complained for so long of not shuddering that this has become a habit, which persists even after the underlying problem has been alleviated. The implication, in terms of this interpretation, is that he has developed new capacities for feeling, but has not had the opportunity to experience them.

It is not until the young man finally stops trying to shudder (trying to shudder by "deciding") and simply "lets things be" that he learns the lesson. In the third and final episode a number of issues are drawn together in a humorous dénouement. That the young man's rite of passage has resulted in a "rebirth" of his self is symbolized in a "baptism," through which he becomes explicitly and consciously aware of what it is to shudder for the very first time.

It is a member of the "lower class," who are traditionally less inhibited and more earthy than intellectual, who finally engineers the hero's lesson in shuddering. The wife's waiting maid says:

> "I will find a cure for him; he shall soon learn what it is to shudder." She went out to the stream which flowed through the garden, and had a whole bucketful of gudgeons brought to her. At night when the young King was sleeping, his wife was to draw the clothes off him and empty the bucketful of cold water with the gudgeons in it over him, so that the little fishes would crawl about him. Then he woke up and cried: "Oh, what makes me shudder so, dear wife? Ah! now I know what it is to shudder!"[13]

In this final episode the danger of dismemberment and anxiety about the integrity of the self are dispelled in what amounts to a comic catharsis for both the hero and the audience. The story returns to the basic subjective sensation of "goose flesh." The organism reacts to surprise, to unexpected stress, and it shudders. At the same time, the symbolic value of the scene should not be overlooked. The folktale secularizes, translates into profane terms, a sacred rite. The dousing with water evokes echoes of the Christian rite of baptism. The little gold fish reinforce this allusion. (The fish itself is a well-known image of Christ—recall the multiplication of the loaves and fishes as well as the disciples who were "fishers of men.")[14]

The implication is that the young man's descent and his confrontation with his own worst hell, his once denied but now recovered feelings, constitute a spiritual rite of baptism, from which he emerges renewed and reborn. He can

now call on the resources constituted by his feelings as well as his intellect in solving life's problems. Hence, the folktale ends in a marriage, which, in addition to involving the exploration of his own feelings about another human being in intimate community, also suggests that his feelings and intellect have finally been "married," i.e., joined together. He is no longer an "exception." He has become fully human. No doubt this is a mixed blessing. However, even though the happy scene at the tale's end may be disrupted by difficult trials, he will be able to summon the energies of his whole self to deal with the vicissitudes that beset him.[15]

References

1. The self is defined as the ensemble of emotional, volitional, and intellectual functions encompassing both the mind and heart, the spirit and body. However, the purpose of this essay is to explore the representations in the folktale of denied and recovered feelings. The existence and efficacy of the self are presumed.
2. This tale is story number four in *The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales*, trans. M. Hunt and J. Stern (now available in paperback from Random House, Pantheon Books, 1972, pp. 29-38). Originally entitled "*Von einem der auszog das Fürchten zu lernen*," the story first appeared in the second edition (1819) of the collection of anonymous folktales edited by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. It is important to note that the nuances of the feeling of fear discussed in my essay are already available in the surface text of this tale. While the title mentions "fear" (*Fürchten*) the body of the text always uses the ieiom *Grauseln* or *es gruselt mir*, which is correctly rendered as "shudder" and "it gives me shudders."
3. In terms of the classical definition of the folktale (see V. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. L. Scott. Austin, University of Texas, 1968), the action is motivated by the hero's perception that he "lacks" something (he doesn't know what it is to shudder). There is a violation of an interdiction, which leads to the hero's exile. (He assaults one of his elders due to a misunderstanding.) No villain makes an appearance, though the hero's "delinquent" behavior permits us to label him as the villain in this particular moment, at least in the sense that he is his "own worst enemy."
4. Blake, W., "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," *The Portable Blake*. New York, The Viking Press, 1971, pp. 249-266.
5. Freud, A., "Intellectualization at Puberty," *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*, trans. C. Baines. In *The Writings of Anna Freud*, vol. 2. New York, International Universities Press, 1966, p. 158.
6. Grimm, *op. cit.*, p. 34. In presenting himself as an initiate, a candidate to spend three nights in the castle, the youth pleased the presiding king so that the latter granted him permission to take three inanimate objects with him into the castle. The youth's reply reveals his practicality: "Then I ask for a fire, a turning lathe, and a cutting board with a knife,"—things useful in an emergency, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
7. Bruno Bettelheim makes an analogous point in the different context of the rehabilitation of autistic children: ". . . One cannot help another in his ascent from hell unless one has first joined him there, to whatever degree. There is no 'direct confrontation' available to the sick child, unless somebody offers himself for the confrontation. This will always, to some degree, mean a descent to one's own hell, however far behind one has left it." See *The Empty Fortress*. New York, The Free Press, 1972, pp. 10-11.
8. At this point the narrative of the folktale is interrupted by a classical motif pointing to the literary "subtext" of the tradition out of which the folktale was synthesized. After chasing away the dogs and cats, the youth is tired. He sees a great bed in the corner, and he climbs in. But just as he is about to shut his eyes, the bed begins to move. It rolls all over the castle as "if six horses were harnessed to it, up and down, over thresholds and stairs." Finally, it overturns. The rider throws the quilts and pillows in the air. He lies down by his fire and goes to sleep until morning. It is significant that Sir Gawain, hero of the romances of King Arthur's round table, encounters a similar bed. Heinrich Zimmer's discussion is informative in this connection: "In the *Chateau Merveil* Gawain was subjected to tests more bizarre than those in the castle of the Green Knight. His principal encounter was with a certain

perilous bed, *Lis de la Mervoille*, "The Marvel Bed'—no pleasant piece of furniture . . . . The instant he lay down to sleep, it went raving mad. It galloped to and fro across the room, bolted aginst the walls, bucked and quaked . . ." (See Zimmer, H. *The King and the Corpse*, Campbell, J. ed. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1957, p. 86.) Indeed, this scene suggests that when we get into bed that is just the beginning—our dreams constitute wild rides, perhaps pulled by the six horses of our desires and wishes. Nor is it any accident that one particular kind of dream in which our anxiety gets out of control actually contains a reference to a horse—for a "nightmare" is just such a "ride." While I cannot comment on the meanings that a "marvel bed" might have in the context of Arthurian romance, for our folktale the suggestion emerges that if one's feelings are denied during the day, then they may be expected to be particularly energetic at night.

9. Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
10. Eliade, M. *Shamanism*, trans. W.R. Trask. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1972, pp. 34, 36, 49, 53, 66, 108, 130. I am maintaining that this folktale, which, after all, is a secular, not an overtly sacred document alludes to, echoes, the "initiatory dream" of the shaman, but does not explicitly reenact it. Eliade, referring to the initiation proper, writes: ". . . The candidate witnesses the dismemberment of his own body by the ancestral or evil spirits. But then his bones are put together again and fastened with iron, his flesh is renewed, and, on returning to life, the future shaman has a 'new body' . . ." (*ibid.*, p. 42).
11. Grimm, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38.
12. A rich literature is available on the old spirit in folktales. See Jung, C.G. "The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairy Tales," *Four Archetypes*, trans. R.F.C. Hull. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1970, pp. 83-132. Jung writes that the tale "makes it clear that it is possible for a man to attain totality, to become whole, only with the co-operation of the spirit of darkness, indeed that the latter is actually the *causa instrumentalis* of redemption and individuation . . . . The fairytale tells us how to proceed if we want to overcome the power of darkness: we must turn his own weapons against him . . ." (*ibid.*, pp. 129-30). That is in effect what the hero does as he beats the old spirit at his own game by catching his beard in the two anvil halves.
13. Grimm, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
14. I have documented in detail a folktale's secular "translation" of a sacred story from the Book of Genesis in the course of calling attention to Kant's appreciation of the ordinary person's "untutored reason." See my "Kant's Treasure Hard-to-Attain," *Kant-Studien*, vol. 69, number 4, 1978.
15. I owe a debt of gratitude to T. David Brent, Ph.D., for encouraging me to undertake the project of writing this essay as well as for his valuable comments along the way.

Further related readings

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