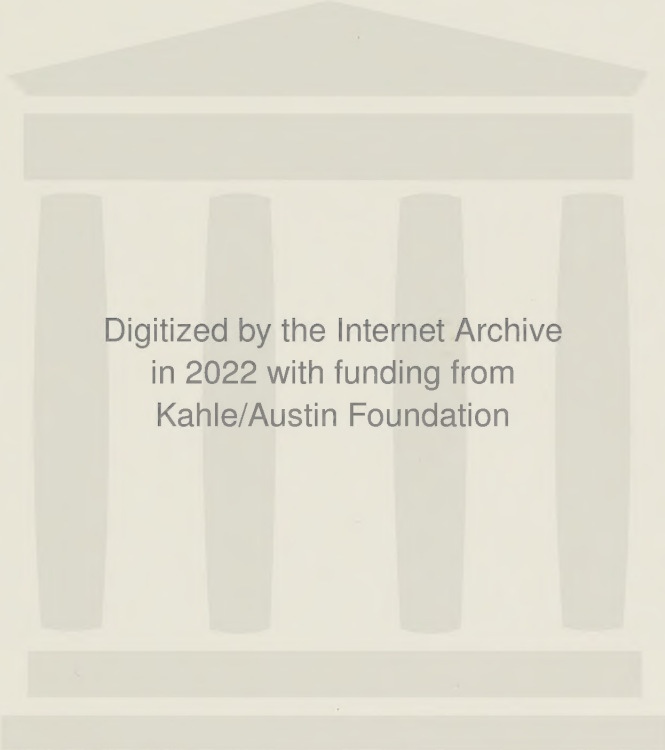


GOETHE'S FAIRY TALE

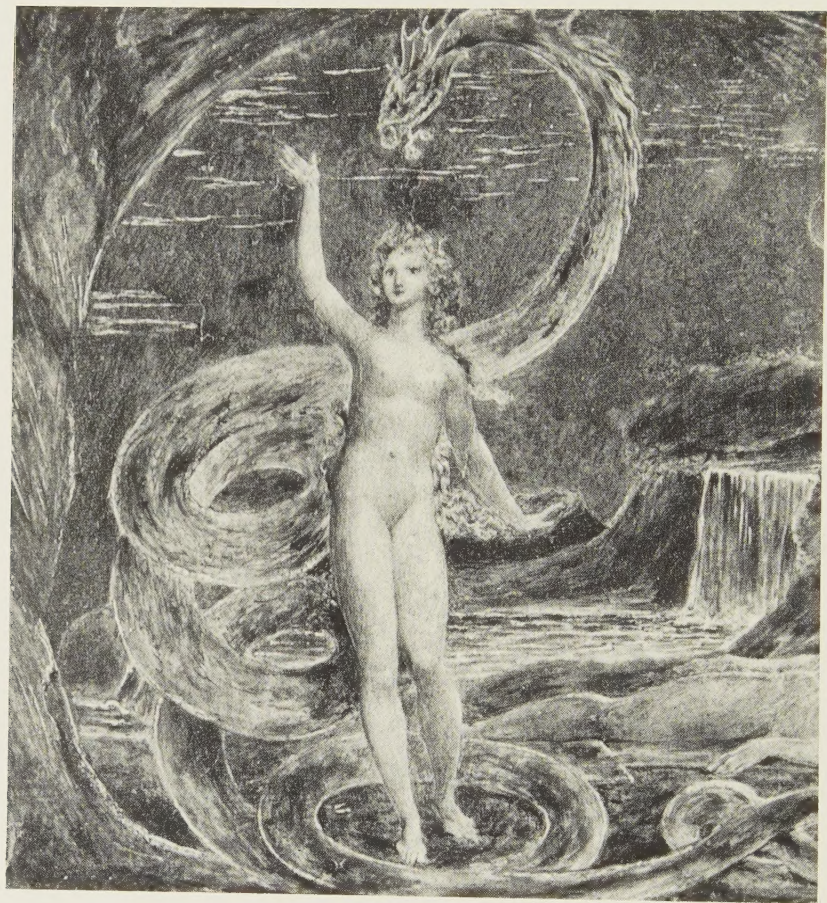


MAGNUM OPUS HERMETIC SOURCEWORKS



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GOETHE'S FAIRY TALE



GOETHE'S
FAIRY TALE
OF THE
GREEN SNAKE
AND THE
BEAUTIFUL LILY

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

TRANSLATED BY
DONALD MACLEAN

WITH A COMMENTARY
BY ADAM McLEAN

MAGNUM OPUS HERMETIC SOURCEWORKS #14

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Introduction

Before I translated *Goethe's Fairy Tale* I had not seen or heard any other translation, and the *Fairy Tale* itself was new to me. What a delight it was to take the wonderful language used by Goethe, so beautifully forged, and cast it afresh into English. At times it seemed as if I could not write fast enough, a hidden spirit whispering rune-wise the English words into my ear, and the genius of the English language taking delight in the imagination of the *Fairy Tale*. At other times it was not so, and I felt myself assembling clumsy and dissimilar words into awkward sentences and producing a work like the composite king, whose substances "in the casting had not properly fused together and who spoke in a rough stammering voice." Then it was as if the Old Man with the Lamp himself came to my aid. He shone his lamp upon those lumps of wood and they turned to silver filigree and could be integrated into the whole.

In all the imagery of the *Fairy Tale* there is a deeper meaning, and the whole story speaks at the same time a hidden language. I cannot claim to understand consciously that hidden language, only perhaps to feel it deeply but dimly, and yet I am aware that a true translation must preserve intact that hidden language. I have tried therefore not to injure or betray the original by imposing any contrived interpretation of my own. Difficulties and problems there were, and these are dealt with separately in my notes to the text.

After completing my own translation, I studied Carlyle's, which I came to admire. It is of course quite different from mine and yet I could not cease to marvel that the English language was capable of producing often two quite different modes of expression which equally well translated the original German. Carlyle has a beautiful rhymed version of Lily's song, but with true rhyme the accuracy is lost. Mine, in verse, not rhymed, is more accurate, but with the accuracy the beauty of the rhyme is lost.

After Carlyle I listened carefully to Suzanne Flatauer's translation. It is very good and expressive. It is freer and more imaginative

than Carlyle's but less accurate at times.

These two translations have helped me to eliminate minor inaccuracies or omissions in my own translation and occasionally I have borrowed apt words or expressions from them.

—DONALD MACLEAN

Goethe's Fairy Tale

The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily

Wearied after the exertions of the day, the old ferryman was lying asleep in his little hut by the great river, which heavy rain had swollen, and which had now overflowed its banks. In the middle of the night he was awakened by several loud voices; he heard that travelers wished to be set across.

As he came out of the door he saw two tall Will-o'-the-Wisps¹ hovering above the moored ferry boat. They assured him that they were in great haste and wished that they were already on the other side. Without delay the old man pushed off and rowed² with his habitual skill straight across³ the current, while the strangers hissed to each other in an unknown vivacious language and every now and again burst out into loud laughter; all the time they were jumping about, sometimes on the gunwale and thwarts and sometimes on the floor of the boat.

"The boat is rocking!" cried the old man, "and if you are so restless it might capsize; sit down you lights."⁴

At this injunction they burst out laughing loudly, deriding the old man, and were more restless than ever. He bore their misbehavior patiently and soon he touched the opposite bank.

"This is for your trouble," cried the travelers, and as they shook themselves there fell into the damp boat many shining pieces of gold.

"In heaven's name, what are you doing?" cried the old man. "You will bring me into the greatest misfortune! Had one gold piece fallen into the water, the river, which cannot abide this metal, would have risen in terrible waves, swallowing the boat and myself, and who knows what would have become of you; take your money back to yourselves!"

"We cannot take back to ourselves what we have shaken from us," they replied.

"Then you give me the added trouble," said the old man, bending

down and gathering the gold pieces into his cap, "of picking them all up, carrying them ashore and burying them."

The Will-o'-the-Wisps had jumped out of the boat, and the old man called: "Where is my payment?"

"He who will not take gold must work for nothing!" cried the Will-o'-the-Wisps.

"You must know that I can be paid only with fruits of the earth."

"With fruits of the earth? We scorn them and have never tasted of them."

"I cannot let you go, however, until you have promised me that you will let me have three cabbages, three artichokes and three large onions."

The Will-o'-the-Wisps wanted to slip away laughing and joking, but in some incomprehensible way they felt themselves held fast to the ground; it was the most unpleasant feeling which they had ever had. They promised to meet his demand at the earliest; he let them go and pushed off. He was already a long way off when they called after him.

"Old man, listen, old man! We have forgotten the most important thing!"

But he was gone and did not hear them. He had let himself drift downstream on the same side of the river in order to dispose of the dangerous gold in a mountainous region where the water could never reach it. There between high cliffs he found an enormous chasm, emptied the gold into it and rowed back to his hut.

In this chasm was to be found the beautiful green snake, who was awakened from her sleep by the clink of the coins as they fell. Hardly had she seen the shining discs than she immediately swallowed them greedily, and carefully sought out all the pieces which had scattered among the bushes and in the clefts of the rock.

No sooner had she swallowed them than she had the most pleasant feeling of the gold melting in her bowels and spreading through her whole body, and to her greatest joy she saw that she had become transparent and luminous. She had long been assured that this manifestation was possible; even so, she was not certain whether this light would last long, and, wishing to be sure of it for the future, and curious about who could have scattered the lovely

gold there, she left the rock to investigate. She could not find anyone. Nevertheless she found it all the more pleasant to admire both herself, as she slid among the plants and bushes, and her charming light which she cast upon the fresh green. All the leaves shone as emerald, all the flowers were lit in radiance. In vain she wandered through the lonely wilderness, but her hopes continued to grow as she came upon the plain and beheld far off a splendor like her own.

"Shall I not find my like at last!" she cried, and hastened on. She did not heed the difficulty of creeping through bog and reed; for although she preferred to live on the dry mountain meadows, in the clefts in high cliffs, and although she was fond of spicy herbs and accustomed to slake her thirst with gentle dew and fresh spring water, nevertheless she would willingly have undertaken everything laid upon her for the sake of the lovely gold and in expectation of the glorious light.

Very weary, she came at last to a damp marsh where our two Will-o'-the-Wisps were playing up and down. She went straight to them, greeted them, and was delighted to find such pleasant gentlemen as relatives. The lights glided beside her, hopped over her and laughed in their fashion.

"Mistress Cousin," said they, "although you are from the horizontal line, that is of no account; for indeed we are related on the shining side. For see,"—here the two flames by sacrificing their full width made themselves as long and pointed as possible—"how well this slender length suits us gentlemen of the vertical line; now, do not take offense, my dear, what family can boast of that? As long as there have been Will-o'-the-Wisps not one of them has ever sat or lain."

The snake felt very uncomfortable in the presence of these relations, for however high she wished to raise her head, she could not help feeling that she must bend it down to earth again in order to move about, and whereas before she had been very content in the dark grove, it now seemed that her luster in the presence of these cousins was decreasing every moment; indeed she feared that it would finally be quite extinguished.

In this embarrassment she hastily asked whether the gentlemen

could give her any information about where the shining gold came from which recently had fallen into the chasm; she supposed it was a shower of gold which had fallen directly from heaven.

The Will-o'-the-Wisps laughed and shook themselves and a whole lot of gold pieces danced around them. The snake rushed after them to swallow them.

"Bon appetit, Mistress Cousin," said the nice gentlemen, "we can serve you with some more." They shook themselves several times with great address so that the snake could hardly consume the costly fare quickly enough. Her radiance began to grow visibly, and truly she was shining most gloriously while the wisps had become quite thin and small without in the least losing any of their good temper.

"I am eternally grateful to you," said the snake when she had recovered breath after her meal, "ask of me what you will, and whatever lies within my power I will accomplish for you."

"Very good!" cried the Will-o'-the-Wisps. "Tell us, where does the beautiful Lily live? Take us as quickly as you can to the palace and garden of the beautiful Lily. We are dying of impatience to cast ourselves at her feet."

"This service," replied the snake with a deep sigh, "I cannot perform for you immediately. Unfortunately, the beautiful Lily dwells on the other side of the water."

"On the other side of the water! And we had ourselves ferried across on this stormy night! How cruel is the river that divides us now. Would it not be possible to call the old man over again?"

"You would try in vain," replied the snake, "for even though you were to encounter him upon this bank, he would not take you aboard; he is allowed to bring everyone over this way, but may take no one back again."

"Now we have landed ourselves in a nice fix!⁵ Is there no other means of getting over the water?"

"There are ways, but not at this moment. I myself can take you gentlemen across, but only during the midday hour."

"That is a time when we do not care to travel."

"Then you can go over in the evening on the giant's shadow."

"How can that be done?"

"The great giant, who lives not far from here, can do nothing with his body; his hands can lift no wisp of straw, his shoulders bear no faggot of brushwood, but his shadow can do much, indeed everything. He is at his mightiest therefore at sunrise and sunset; so in the evening you may sit on the neck of his shadow; the giant then goes softly towards the bank and the shadow takes the wayfarer over the water. But if at midday you will come to the corner of that wood where the thicket grows right to the edge, I will put you across and introduce you to the beautiful Lily; but if you would avoid the midday heat, then only towards evening may you call on the giant in that bend of the river lined with cliffs and he will certainly show himself most obliging."

With a slight bow the young gentlemen took themselves off, and the snake was glad to be free of them, partly so as to enjoy her own light, and partly so as to satisfy a curiosity which had long plagued her in a strange way. In one place in the crevices of the rock wherein she had often crept back and forth she had made a curious discovery. For although she had been compelled to creep through this chasm without a light, she had been able to distinguish the objects very well by their feel. Everywhere she had been accustomed to find only irregular products of nature; sometimes sliding between the points of large crystals, sometimes feeling the hooks and hairs of pure silver and bringing one or two precious stones up to the light with her. But to her great astonishment, in a rock which was enclosed on all sides she had felt objects which betrayed the creative hand of man. Smooth walls which she could not climb, sharp regular edges, perfectly constructed pillars and what to her was strangest of all, human figures, around which she had coiled herself on several occasions and which she took for bronze⁶ or highly polished marble. She now wished to combine all these separate perceptions through the sense of sight and to confirm what she had only been able to surmise. Now she considered herself capable of illuminating this wonderful subterranean vault with her own light and hoped to become fully acquainted with these curious objects all at once. She hastened and soon found upon her accustomed path the crack through which she usually crept into the holy place.

When she found herself within the place she looked around curiously, and although her light could not illumine all the objects of the rotunda, the nearest ones were clear enough. With astonishment and awe she looked up into a shining niche, in which the image of a venerable king in pure gold was placed. In size the statue was bigger than a man, but in form the image of a small rather than a big man. Its well-formed body was wrapped in a simple cloak, and an oak wreath held its hair together.

No sooner had the snake beheld this venerable image than the king began to speak and asked:

"Whence comest thou?"

"From the crevices where the gold dwells."

"What is more glorious than gold?" asked the king.

"Light," answered the snake.

"What is more refreshing than light?" asked the former.

"Conversation," replied the latter. During this colloquy she had glanced to one side and seen in the next niche another glorious image. There sat a silver king, tall and somewhat slight of build. His body was covered with an embellished garment, crown, belt and scepter adorned with precious stones. He had the cheerfulness of pride upon his countenance and appeared ready to talk when a dark-colored vein which ran through the marble wall suddenly grew bright and diffused a pleasant light throughout the whole temple. In this light the snake saw the third king who sat there, a mighty figure in bronze leaning upon his club, adorned with a laurel wreath and resembling more a rock than a man. She wanted to look about for the fourth, who stood at the greatest distance from her, but the wall opened while the lit-up vein flashed like lightning and vanished.

A man of medium height stepping forth attracted the snake's attention. He was dressed as a peasant and bore in his hand a little lamp with a still flame, pleasant to behold, which lit up the whole dome without casting a single shadow.

"Wherefore comest thou, since we have light?" asked the gold king.

"Ye know that I may not illumine what is dark."

"Shall my kingdom come to an end?" asked the silver king.

"Late or never," replied the old man.

In a strong voice the bronze king began to ask: "When shall I arise?"

"Soon," replied the old man.

"With whom shall I join?" asked the king.

"With thine elder brothers," said the old man.

"What shall become of the youngest?" asked the king.

"He will sit down," said the old man.

"I am not tired," called the fourth king in a rough stammering voice.

While all those were speaking the snake had been creeping quietly around the temple, had been looking at everything, and now observed the fourth king from close by. He stood leaning against a pillar, and his considerable form was rather more bulky than beautiful. Only the metal from which he had been cast could not easily be determined. Closely seen it was a mixture of the three metals out of which his brothers were formed. But in the casting it would appear that these substances had not properly fused together; gold and silver veins ran unevenly through a bronze mass and gave the statue an unpleasant appearance.

Meanwhile the golden king said to the man: "How many mysteries dost thou know of?"

"Three," replied the old man.

"Which is the most important?" asked the silver king.

"The manifest one," replied the old man.

"Will you reveal it to us too?" asked the bronze king.

"As soon as I know the fourth," said the old man.

"What is that to me?" muttered the composite king to himself.

"I know the fourth," said the snake, and she approached the old man and hissed something in his ear.

"The time is at hand," cried the old man with a powerful voice. The temple resounded again and the metal statues rang; in that moment the old man sank towards the west and the snake to the east, and each one passed through the clefts in the rock with great speed.

All the passages along which the old man walked filled up behind him immediately with gold, for his lamp had the marvelous

property of transforming all stones to gold, all wood to silver, dead animals into precious stones and of destroying all metals; in order to bring about this effect the lamp had to shine alone. Wherever another light was beside it, it only gave off a bright radiance and all living things were always refreshed by it.

The old man went into his hut which was built against the mountain side and found his wife in great distress. She was sitting by the fire weeping, and could not console herself.

"How unfortunate I am!" she cried, "Oh how I did not want to let you go away today!"

"What is the matter then?" asked the old man calmly.

"Hardly had you left," she said sobbing, "before two impetuous wanderers came to the door; heedlessly I let them in; they seemed to be fine honest people; they were clothed in light flames, and one might have taken them to be Will-o'-the-Wisps; no sooner were they in the house than they began to flatter me with words in the most shameless fashion, and became so importunate that I am ashamed to think about it."

"Well," replied the old man smiling, "the gentlemen were only joking; for because of your age they would really go no further than common politeness."

"My age, my age!" cried the woman. "Must I always be reminded of my age? How old am I then? Common politeness! I know fine what I know. And just look round at how the walls look. Just look at those old stones which I have not seen for a hundred years; they have licked up all the gold, you cannot imagine how eagerly, and they assured me all the time it tasted much better than ordinary gold. When they had swept the walls clean they seemed to be in a very good mood, and indeed very soon they were much bigger, broader and more shining. Then they began their impudence again, caressing me again, calling me queen; they shook themselves and a whole lot of gold pieces danced around; you can see them shining under the bench. But what a misfortune! Our pug⁷ ate some of them and look, there he lies by the fireplace, dead; poor beast! I cannot get over it. I only saw him after they had gone, otherwise I should not have promised to pay off their debt to the ferryman."

"What do they owe him?" asked the old man.

"Three cabbages," said the woman, "three artichokes and three onions; as soon as it is day I have promised to take them to the river."

"You can oblige them," said the old man, "for they will serve us again some time."

"Whether they will serve us I do not know, but certainly they promised and guaranteed that they would."

In the meantime the fire in the hearth had burnt down, the old man covered the embers with much ash, cleared the shining gold pieces to one side, and now his little lamp again shone alone with the most beautiful radiance, the walls were covered with gold and the pug had become the loveliest onyx imaginable. The interplay of the brown and black color of the costly stone made it to be the most curious work of art.

"Take your basket," said the old man, "and put the onyx in it; then take the three cabbages, the three artichokes, and the three onions, lay them around the onyx and take them to the river. Towards midday have yourself put over by the snake and visit the beautiful Lily; bring her the onyx, she will bring it to life by her touch, just as by her touch she kills all living things; and she will have a faithful companion in him. Tell her not to grieve, her deliverance is at hand; she may regard the greatest misfortune as the greatest fortune, for the time is at hand."

The old woman packed the basket, and set off on her way as soon as it was day. The rising sun shone brightly over the river glistening in the distance; the old wife walked slowly, for the basket pressed down upon her head, and it was not the onyx at all which was so heavy. She did not feel any dead thing which she carried, for then the basket would rise in the air and hover above her head. But to carry fresh vegetables or a little live animal was a great burden for her. For a time she had been going along irksomely when suddenly she stood still, startled, for she had almost trodden on the giant's shadow which stretched out across the plain right up to her. And now she saw the huge giant who had been bathing in the river and had come out of the water, and she did not know how to avoid him. As soon as he noticed her he began to greet her playfully, and the hands of his shadow⁸ felt into the basket. Lightly and skillfully they

took out one cabbage, one artichoke and one onion and brought them to the mouth of the giant who then went further up the river and left the way clear for the woman.

She wondered whether it would not be better for her to go back and replace the missing things from her garden, and going on in this perplexity she soon came to the bank of the river. Long she sat waiting for the ferryman, whom she saw at last coming over in his boat with a strange traveler. A young, noble, fine-looking man, whom she could not look at enough, stepped out of the boat.

"What have you brought?" called the old man.

"It is the vegetables which the Will-o'-the-Wisps owe you," replied the woman, and showed him her wares. When the old man found only two of each kind he was vexed and assured her that he could not take them. The woman begged him insistently, told him that she could not go home now and that the burden on the way ahead of her was oppressive. He persisted in his refusal, assuring her that it did not depend on him at all.

"For nine hours I must keep together what is my due, and I may not take anything until I have given a third part to the river."

After much argument the old man finally said: "There is still one way. If you will stand guarantor to the river and acknowledge yourself as a debtor I will take the six pieces, but there is some danger in it."

"If I keep my word I shall not run into any danger?"

"Not in the least. Put your hand in the water," went on the old man, "and promise that you will pay the debt within four and twenty hours."

The old woman did so, but how shocked she was when she drew her hand black as coal out of the water again. She upbraided the old man roundly, assuring him that her hands had always been the most beautiful part of her and that, notwithstanding hard work, she had always managed to keep these noble members white and dainty. She looked at the hand in great vexation and cried out in despair, "This is much worse, I see it has shrunk, it is much smaller than the other."

"It only appears so now," said the old man; "but if you do not keep your word it can come about in earnest. The hand will shrink bit by

bit and finally disappear altogether without your losing the use of it. You will be able to do everything with it, only no one will see it."

"I would rather I could not use it, and people not notice," said the old woman. "Nevertheless, that does not matter. I shall keep my word so as to be rid of this black skin and this trouble."

With this she swiftly took up her basket which now rose up by itself above the top of her head and hovered free in the air, and she hurried after the young man, who was going along the bank quietly and in thought. His splendid figure and his strange apparel had made a deep impression on the old woman.

His breast was covered by a shining breastplate, through which all parts of his fine-looking body were seen to move. Over his shoulders hung a purple cloak, about his uncovered head flowed brown hair in beautiful curls; his winsome face was exposed to the rays of the sun as were his finely formed feet. Bare-soled he went calmly over the hot sand and a deep grief seemed to numb all external impressions.

The chatty old wife tried to draw him into conversation, but he gave little away with few words, so that finally, despite his beautiful eyes, she grew tired of always addressing him in vain, and took leave of him saying, "You are going too slowly for me sir. I must not miss the moment to cross the river by the green snake and deliver my husband's superb gift to the beautiful Lily."

With these words she walked on speedily, and just as quickly the fine-looking youth took heart and hastened in her footsteps.

"You are going to the beautiful Lily?" he cried. "Then we are going the same way. What kind of gift is that which you are carrying?"

"Sir," countered the woman, "after dismissing my questions with one syllable it is not right that you should enquire so eagerly into my secrets. But if you will make a bargain and tell me your fate I shall not conceal from you how it stands with me and my gift."

They quickly agreed; the old woman confided her situation to him, the story of the dog, and allowed him at the same time to look upon the wonderful gift.

Thereupon he lifted the natural work of art out of the basket and took the pug, who seemed to be resting gently, into his arms.

"Fortunate animal!" he cried, "you will be touched by her hand, you will be brought to life by her and not like the living flee from her to avoid a grievous fate. But why do I say grievous? Is it not more gloomy and fearful to be maimed by her presence than to die by her hand? Look at me," he said to the old woman. "At my age what a miserable condition must I endure. This breastplate which I bore in war with honor, this purple which I sought to merit through wise rule, have been left to me by fate—the former as unnecessary burden, the latter as meaningless adornment. Crown, scepter and sword are lost and I am left as naked and needy as any other son of earth, for so fatally do her beautiful blue eyes work, that they take from all living things their strength, and those that are not killed by the touch of her hand feel themselves relegated to the condition of a living, walking shadow."

Thus he went on lamenting, in no way satisfying the curiosity of the old woman, who wished to be informed not so much about his inner as about his outer circumstances. She found out neither his father's name nor that of his kingdom. He stroked the hard pug which the sunbeam and the youth's warm breast had warmed as if it were alive. He asked a lot about the man with the lamp, about the effects of the holy light, and seemed to expect much good from it in the future for his sad condition.

While thus conversing they saw from afar the majestic arch of the bridge which reached from one bank over to the other shimmering most wonderfully in the sun's radiance. Both of them were astonished, for they had never seen this edifice so glorious.

"What!" cried the prince, "was it not beautiful enough when it stood before our eyes built as from jasper and prase? Shall we not fear to step on to it now that it appears to be constructed of emerald, chrysoprase and chrysolite in the most intriguing complexity?"

Neither of them knew the change that had come over the snake, for it was the snake that used to arch herself over the river each midday and stand there in the form of an audacious bridge. The wayfarers stepped on to it in awe and went over in silence.

No sooner had they reached the far bank than the bridge began to undulate and move, soon touched the surface of the water, and the green snake in her own particular form glided after the wayfarers on

land. Those two had hardly thanked her for allowing them to cross over the river on her back when they noticed in the company apart from themselves there would appear to be several other people whom, however, they could not see with their eyes. Beside them they heard a hissing which the snake likewise answered with a hiss; they listened carefully and finally could make out the following.

"We shall," said a pair of voices alternately, "first have a look round incognito in the park of the beautiful Lily and beg you, at nightfall, as soon as we are reasonably presentable, to introduce us to the perfect beauty. You will find us at the edge of the great lake."

"Agreed," answered the snake, and a hissing noise lost itself in the air.

Our three wayfarers now talked over in which order they should present themselves before the beautiful one; for however many people might be around her they could only come and go singly, otherwise they would suffer considerable pain.

The old wife with the transformed dog in the basket approached the garden first, and sought her benefactress⁹ who was easy to find as she was just singing then with her harp; the lovely tones showed themselves first as rings on the surface of the calm lake, then as a light breath they set the grass and bushes in motion. In an enclosed green place, in the shade of a magnificent group of many different kinds of tree, she sat, and at the first glance entranced anew the old wife's eye, ear and heart, while she drew near with delight, and swore to herself that the lovely one had become even more lovely during her absence. Already from afar the good woman called greetings and praise to the most delightful maiden.

"What fortune to behold you, what heaven your presence spreads about you! How the harp reclines so charmingly in your lap, how your arms encircle it so gently, how it seems to yearn towards your breast and how it sounds so tenderly beneath the touch of your slender fingers! Thrice happy youth,¹⁰ thou who couldst once take its place!"

With these words she had come nearer; the beautiful Lily raised her eyes, let her hands fall and answered:

"Do not distress me with untimely praise, for then I feel more keenly my misfortune. Look, here at my feet lies dead the poor

canary which formerly accompanied my song in the most pleasant fashion. He used to sit upon my harp, carefully trained not to touch me. Today while refreshed from sleep I intone a peaceful morning song and my little singer lets his harmonious notes be heard more gaily than ever, a hawk shoots over my head; the poor little creature, frightened, flees to my bosom, and at that moment I feel the last quivering of his departing life. To be sure the robber, pierced by my glance creeps away powerless by the water, but of what avail is his punishment to me? My loved one is dead, and his grave will only increase the sad bushes of my garden."

"Take heart, beautiful Lily," cried the old woman wiping away a tear, which the maiden's story had drawn from her eye, "and be composed. The old man my husband will have you know that you should assuage your grief, and regard the greatest misfortune as harbinger of the greatest fortune, for the time is at hand, and really," continued the old woman, "there are all sorts of queer things going on in the world. Just look at my hand, how it has turned black! Truly it is a lot smaller already, and I must hasten before it disappears altogether. Why did I have to oblige the Will-o'-the-Wisps, why did I have to meet the giant, and why dip my hand in the river? Could you not give me a cabbage, an artichoke and an onion? Then I could bring them to the river and my hand would be as white as before so that I would almost be able to hold it beside yours."

"Cabbages and onions you could indeed find, but artichokes you would seek in vain. All the plants in my big garden bear neither blossoms nor fruit; but every twig that I break off and plant upon the grave of a loved one, grows green at once and shoots up high. All these groups, these bushes, these groves I have unfortunately seen grow. The canopies of these pines, the obelisks of the cypresses, the colossa of oaks and beeches, they were all little twigs planted by my hand as a sad memento in an otherwise unfruitful soil."

The old woman had not been paying much attention to this speech and was only looking at her hand which in the presence of the beautiful Lily seemed to be growing blacker and blacker and smaller every minute. She wanted to take her basket and simply hurry away when she felt that she had forgotten the best thing of

all. She lifted the transformed dog out and placed him in the grass not far from the beautiful one.

"My husband," she said, "sends you this keepsake; you know that you can bring this precious stone to life by your touch. This good and faithful animal will surely bring you much joy, and the sorrow that I am losing him can only be cheered by the thought that he will be in your possession."

The beautiful Lily gazed at the good little animal with pleasure and as it seemed with astonishment.

"There are many signs coming together," she said, "which give me some hope, but oh, is it not just an illusion of our nature that when many misfortunes come together we imagine that the best is near?"

What help to me the many signs of good,
The bird's demise, the friend's black hand,
The pug of precious stones, where is his like?
Was it not the lamp that sent him unto me?
Removed from sweet and human joys,
With woe alone I am acquainted.
Ah me! Why stands the temple not beside the river?
Ah me! Why is the bridge not built?"

The old woman had listened impatiently to this song, which the beautiful Lily accompanied with the pleasing tones of her harp, and which would have delighted anyone else. She was about to take her leave when she was again detained by the arrival of the green snake. The latter had heard the last lines of the song and at once confidently urged the beautiful Lily to take heart.

"The prophecy of the bridge is fulfilled!" cried she. "Just ask this good woman how splendid the arch appears at present. What used to be opaque jasper, what was only prase through which the light only gleamed at the edges, has now become transparent crystal. No beryl is so clear, no emerald so beautifully colored."

"There I wish you good luck," said Lily. "Only forgive me if I do not believe the prophecy to be fulfilled. Over the high arch of your bridge only pedestrians may cross, and it has been promised to us

that horses and coaches and travelers of all kinds shall be able to go back and forth over the bridge all at once. Has it not been foretold of the great piles, that they will rise of themselves out of the river?"

The old woman, who had been keeping her eyes upon her hand all the time, interrupted the conversation here and took her leave.

"Stay a moment longer," said the beautiful Lily, "and take my poor canary with you. Beg the lamp to change him into a beautiful topaz: then I will bring him to life with my touch, and he along with your good pug will be my best pastime, but hasten as much as you can, for with the setting of the sun unbearable decomposition will take hold of the poor creature and destroy forever the beautiful coherence of his form."

The old woman laid the little corpse between tender leaves in the basket and sped away.

"However that may be," said the snake, continuing the interrupted conversation, "the temple has been built."

"But it does not yet stand by the river," replied the beautiful one.

"It still rests in the depths of the earth," said the snake. "I have seen and spoken to the kings."

"And when will they arise?" asked Lily.

The snake answered, "I heard the great words sound in the temple: 'the time is at hand'."

A pleasant cheerfulness spread over the face of the beautiful one.

"Now," she said, "I hear the glad words for the second time today; when will the day come that I shall hear them thrice?"

She stood up and at once a delightful maiden stepped out of the bushes and relieved her of her harp. Another maiden came after the first and clapped the carved ivory folding stool together on which the beautiful one had been sitting and took the silver cushion under her arm. A third one, who bore a large sunshade embroidered with pearls, then showed herself, waiting to see whether Lily might need her company for a walk. These three maidens were beautiful and delightful beyond all means of expression, and yet they only heightened the Lily's beauty in that everyone would have to agree that they could in no wise compare with her.

Meanwhile, the beautiful Lily had been looking at the wonderful pug with great favor. She bent down, touched him, and at once he

jumped up. He looked round happily, ran hither and thither and finally rushed up to greet his benefactress¹¹ in the most friendly fashion. She lifted him into her arms and pressed him to herself.

"Thou art so cold," she exclaimed, "and even though only half a life is working in thee, thou art nevertheless welcome to me; tenderly will I love thee, prettily will I play with thee, lovingly caress thee, and fast will I hold thee to my heart."

Then she let him go, chased him away, called him back, and played so prettily with him and cavorted so gaily and innocently with him on the grass, that anyone would have watched her joy with fresh delight and shared in it, just as before her sadness had turned every heart to compassion.

This gaiety, this charming play were interrupted by the arrival of the sad youth. He appeared as we already know him, only the heat of the day seemed to have drawn his strength from him even more, and in the presence of his beloved he grew paler every moment. Upon his hand he bore the hawk which sat quietly like a dove and drooped its wings.

"It is not friendly of you," called Lily to him, "to bring that hateful creature before my eyes, that monster that today has killed my little singer."

"Do not speak harshly of the unhappy bird!" the youth replied. "Much more arraign yourself and destiny, and allow me to keep company with the companion of my misery."

Meanwhile the pug had never ceased to tease the beautiful one, and she responded to the transparent darling in the friendliest manner. She clapped her hands to shoo him away; then she ran to make him run after her. She tried to catch him when he ran away, and chased him away when he tried to come near her. The youth watched silently with mounting vexation; but finally when she took the ugly animal, that seemed quite horrible to him, into her arms and pressed him to her white bosom and kissed his black muzzle with her heavenly lips, he lost all patience and exclaimed quite desperately:

"Must I, who live before thee in a separate presence because of a sad fate, perhaps forever, who have lost everything, even myself through thee, must I behold before mine eyes that such an unnatu-

ral monstrous creature arouses thy joy, captures thine affection and enjoys thine embrace! Must I still go back and forth, crossing and recrossing the river in sad circuit? Nay, there still remains a spark of ancient heroism in my breast; let it blaze up this moment in a final flame! If stones may rest upon thy breast let me become a stone; if thy touch kills, I will die at thy hand."

With these words he started violently: the hawk flew from his hand, he flung himself at the beautiful one, she stretched out her hand to ward him off and touched him thus all the sooner. Consciousness fled from him, and with horror she felt the lovely burden on her bosom. With a cry she stepped back, and the fair youth sank soulless from her arms to the ground.

The calamity had happened! Sweet Lily stood motionless and looked starkly at the soulless corpse. Her heart seemed to have stopped beating in her breast, and her eyes were without tears. In vain the pug endeavored to cajole a friendly gesture from her; the whole world had died away with her friend. Her silent despair did not look round for help, for no help was of any avail to her.

On the other hand, the snake roused herself all the more busily; she seemed to be thinking of succor, and truly her strange movements served to stem for a time the immediate terrible effects of the disaster. With her lissome body she drew a wide circle 'round the corpse, gripped the end of her tail with her teeth and remained lying quietly.

It was not long before one of Lily's lovely waiting maids appeared bringing the ivory folding chair and with a friendly gesture invited the beautiful one to be seated. Soon afterwards the second one came bearing a fire-colored veil, wherewith she adorned rather than covered the head of her mistress. The third one handed her the harp. Hardly had she pressed this splendid instrument against herself and conjured forth some notes from the strings before the first one came back with a bright round mirror, placed herself opposite the beautiful one, caught her-reflection and exhibited to her the most pleasant picture to be found in all of nature. Grief heightened her beauty, the veil her charm, the harp her appeal; and much as one might wish to see a change in her sad situation, one also would wish to retain for eternity her picture as it appeared at present.

With a quiet glance at the mirror she now drew melting tones from the strings. Again her grief seemed to mount and the strings responded powerfully to her affliction. Several times she opened her mouth to sing, but her voice failed her; and soon her grief was loosed in tears. Two maidens came to her aid catching her by the arms; the harp sank from her lap, only just to be caught by the ready maid who bore it to one side.

"Who can bring us the man with the lamp before the sun sets?" hissed the snake softly but audibly. The maidens looked at each other and Lily's tears increased. At this moment the woman with the basket returned breathlessly.

"I am ruined and maimed!" she cried. "See how my hand has almost disappeared completely! Neither the ferryman nor the giant were willing to put me across because I am still a debtor to the water; in vain have I offered a hundred cabbages and a hundred onions, but they only want the three pieces, and no artichoke is to be found in these parts."

"Forget your need," said the snake, "and try to help here; perhaps then you will be helped at the same time. Hurry as fast as you can and find the Will-o'-the-Wisps; it is still too bright to see them, but perhaps you can hear them laughing and flitting about. If they hurry, the giant will still take them over the river and they can find the man with the lamp and send him."

The old wife hurried as best she could, and the snake seemed to wait for their return as impatiently as Lily. Unfortunately, the rays of the sinking sun were already gilding only the highest tops of the trees of the thicket, and long shadows drew over lake and meadow; the snake moved impatiently and Lily's tears flowed over.

In this extremity the snake looked all around her, for she feared every moment that the sun would set, that decomposition would penetrate the magic circle and irresistibly attack the lovely youth. At last she saw high in the air with purple-red feathers the hawk whose breast was catching the last rays of the sun. She shook herself with pleasure at the good sign, and it did not deceive her; for soon after they saw the man with the lamp gliding hither over the lake, just as if he were coming on skates.

The snake did not alter her position, but Lily stood up and called

to him.

"What good spirit has sent you at the moment we want you so much and need you so badly?"

"The spirit of my lamp," replied the old man, "has driven me on, and the hawk has led me hither. The lamp splutters when someone needs me, and I only need to look up into the air for a sign; some bird or meteor shows me the direction in which I should go. Calm yourself loveliest maiden! Whether I can help I do not know; a single person cannot help, only he who joins with others at the right time. We shall respite and hope. Keep your circle closed," he went on, turning to the snake, and, sitting down on a mound of earth near her, lit up the dead body.

"Bring the good little canary here as well and lay him in the circle." The maidens took the little corpse out of the basket which the old woman had left standing and obeyed the man.

Meanwhile the sun had set, and as the darkness increased, not only did the snake and the man's lamp begin to shine after their own fashion but Lily's veil also gave out a gentle light which, like the gentle red of dawn, tinged her pale cheeks and her white robe with infinite grace. Each one looked at the other quietly; sorrow and grief were softened by sure hope.

It was not unwelcome then when the old wife appeared in company with the two jolly flames, who albeit must have expended themselves with some extravagance in the meantime, for they had become extremely thin; but despite that, they comported themselves all the more nicely towards the princess and the other young ladies. With the greatest assurance and with much expressiveness they said fairly commonplace things, and showed themselves particularly susceptible to the charm which the shining veil shed over Lily and her companions. Modestly the young ladies cast down their eyes, and the praise of their beauty really did make them beautiful. Everyone was content and tranquil except for the old woman. Despite her husband's assurance that her hand could not grow any smaller as long as it was shone on by his lamp, she maintained more than once that if it were to go on like this, this noble member would disappear completely before midnight.

The old man with the lamp had been listening attentively to the

Will-o'-the-Wisps' conversation and was glad that Lily had been distracted and cheered by this intercourse. And actually midnight had come without anyone knowing quite how. The old man looked at the stars and then began to speak.

"We are together at an auspicious hour; let each one execute his office, each one do his duty, and a common happiness will dissolve within itself the single griefs just as a common misfortune consumes individual joys."

After these words a marvelous sound arose, for all the people present spoke out for themselves and expressed aloud what they had to do. Only the three maidens were silent; one had fallen asleep by the harp, the other near the sunshade, the third near the chair, and they could not be blamed for it was late. The young men of flames, after a few perfunctory courtesies addressed to the girls-in-waiting, had finally devoted themselves exclusively to Lily as being the most beautiful.

"Take hold of the mirror," said the old man to the hawk. "Catch the first ray of the sun and shine it on to the sleepers, thus waking them with the reflected light from on high."

The snake now began to move again, undid the circle and moved in great rings towards the river. Solemnly the two Will-o'-the-Wisps followed her and one might have taken them for the most serious flames. The old woman and her husband took hold of the basket, the gentle light of which had hardly been noticed before; they pulled at each side and it grew bigger and bigger and shone more and more. Then they lifted the corpse of the youth into it and laid the canary on his breast; the basket rose into the air and hovered over the head of the old woman and she followed in the steps of the Will-o'-the-Wisps. The beautiful Lily took the pug on her arm and followed the old woman, the old man with the lamp brought up the rear of the train, and the surroundings were lit up by these lights in the strangest fashion.

But when the company reached the river, with no less amazement they saw it spanned by a glorious arch by which the beneficent snake had made a resplendent way for them. If already by day one had admired the transparent precious stones of which the bridge appeared to be composed, now by night one was amazed at

their shining glory. High up the bright curve of the arch stood out sharply against the dark sky, while lower down lively rays flashed towards the center and revealed the mobile stability of the structure. The train went slowly over, and the ferryman looking out from his hut from afar watched with astonishment the shining curve and the strange lights moving across it. No sooner had they reached the other side than the arch began after its fashion to sway, and undulating drew nearer to the water. Soon the snake moved onto the land, the basket set itself down on the ground, and again the snake drew her circle round it; the old man bent down before her and spoke.

"What have you decided?"

"To sacrifice myself before I am sacrificed," replied the snake. "Promise me that you will leave no stone on land."

The old man promised and then said to the beautiful Lily: "Touch the snake with your left hand and your loved one with your right."

Lily knelt down and touched the snake and the corpse. At once the latter seemed to go over into life, he moved in the basket, indeed he raised himself and sat up: Lily wanted to embrace him but the old man restrained her and helped the youth to stand up, guiding him while he stepped out of the basket and the circle.

The youth stood, the canary fluttered on his shoulder, there was life again in them both—but the spirit had not yet returned. The fair friend had his eyes open but did not see; at least he seemed to look at everything without participation. Yet hardly had the astonishment at this occurrence moderated before it was observed how strangely the snake had changed. Her beautiful slender body had fallen apart into thousands and thousands of shining precious stones; the old woman wanting to grasp her basket had carelessly bumped against her, and the shape of the snake could no longer be seen—only a beautiful circle of shining precious stones lay in the grass.

The old man at once began to gather the stones into the basket and his wife had to help him with this. The two of them then carried the basket to a place high up upon the bank. There, despite the remonstrance of his wife and the beautiful one, both of whom would fain have kept some of the stones, the old man emptied the

whole lot into the river. Like shining, twinkling stars the stones floated away on the waves, and one could not make out whether they were lost in the distance or had sunk under the water.

"Gentlemen," said the old man respectfully to the Will-o'-the-Wisps, "now I shall show you the way and open the passage; but you will do us the greatest service by opening the doors¹² of the holy place; it is through them that we must enter this time and no one except yourselves can open them."

The Will-o'-the-Wisps bowed in a proper manner and stood aside. The old man led the way into the rock, which opened before him; the youth followed, still mechanically; quiet and uncertain, Lily kept at some distance behind him; the old woman did not want to remain behind and stretched out her hand, so that the light from her husband's lamp might shine upon it. The Will-o'-the-Wisps brought up the rear, bending the points of their flames towards each other, appearing to talk to one another.

They had not gone far when the procession found itself before a great bronze door,¹² the wings of which were locked with a golden lock. Thereupon the old man called the Will-o'-the-Wisps forward, who did not require much encouragement before they busily consumed lock and bolt with their most pointed flames.

Loud clanged the bronze when the doors sprang swiftly wide and in the holy place the venerable statues of the kings became visible, lit by the lights as they came in. Everyone bowed before the august rulers; especially the Will-o'-the-Wisps did not stint their intricate bows.

After a pause the gold king enquired: "Whence come ye?"

"From the world," answered the old man.

"Whither go ye?" asked the silver king.

"Into the world," said the old man.

"What seek ye with us?" asked the bronze king.

"To keep company with you," said the old man.

The mixed king was about to speak when the gold king spoke to the Will-o'-the-Wisps who had come too close to him:

"Remove yourselves from me. My gold is not for your palates."

They turned to the silver king and nestled against him, his raiment shone beautifully reflected in their yellow light.

"Ye are welcome to me," said he, "but I cannot nourish you; eat your fill elsewhere and bring me your light."

They went away from him and stole past the bronze king, who appeared not to notice them, and went straight towards the composite king.

"Who shall master the world?" cried the latter in a stuttering voice.

"He who stands upon his feet," answered the old man.

"That's¹³ me!" said the composite king.

"It shall be revealed," said the old man, "for the time is at hand."

The beautiful Lily fell upon the old man's neck and kissed him most fervently.

"Holy father," said she, "I thank thee a thousand times, for now for the third time I hear that word of portent."

She had scarcely finished speaking before clinging even more closely to the old man, for the ground began to sway beneath them; the old woman and the youth also clung to each other—only the agile Will-o'-the-Wisps noticed nothing.

One could clearly feel that the whole temple was moving like a ship gently leaving port having weighed anchor; the depths of the earth seemed to open before it as the temple moved through it. Nowhere did it strike against anything, no rocks stood in its path.

For a few moments a fine rain seemed to drizzle through the opening of the cupola; the old man held the beautiful Lily more closely and said to her:

"We are under the river, and soon will reach our goal."

Not long after, they thought that they were standing still, but they were deceived: the temple was climbing upwards.

Now a strange loud noise was heard above their heads. Planks and beams haphazardly joined together came thrusting and crashing down into the opening of the cupola. Lily and the old woman sprang to one side, the man with the lamp seized the youth and stood still. The ferryman's little hut—for that was what the temple had lifted from the earth and taken into itself as it rose—gradually sank down and covered the youth and the old man.

The women cried out loudly, and the temple shuddered like a ship unexpectedly striking aground. Fearfully the women wan-

dered around the hut in the dim dawn light; the doors were closed, and no one answered their knocking. They knocked more loudly and were somewhat surprised when finally the wood began to ring. By the power of the lamp enclosed within, the hut had become silver from the inside outwards. Not long after, it even changed its shape; for the noble metal abandoned the fortuitous forms of the planks, posts and beams, and expanded to a splendid casing of fine workmanship. Now a glorious little temple stood in the center of the large one or, one might say, an altar worthy of the temple.

By some steps, leading up from within, there now ascended the noble youth, lit by the man with the lamp; he seemed to be supported by another man, who came forward in a short white garment, holding a silver oar¹⁴ in his hand. At once one could recognize him as the ferryman, the erstwhile inhabitant of the transformed hut.

The beautiful Lily climbed up the outer steps which led from the temple to the altar, but still she had to keep apart from her beloved. Now all the time that the lamp had remained hidden, the woman's hand had been growing smaller and smaller, whereupon she cried: "Am I still to become unfortunate after all? With all these miracles is there no miracle to save my hand?"

Her husband pointed to the open door and cried: "Look, the day is breaking, hasten and bathe in the river."

"What counsel is that!" she cried, "I should become quite black and disappear altogether; for I have not paid my debt yet."

"Go," said the old man, "and do my bidding. All debts are cleared."

The old woman hurried away, and at that moment the light of the rising sun shone on the cornice of the cupola, the old man stepped between the youth and the maiden and cried in a loud voice:

"Three there are who rule upon the earth: Wisdom, Fair-seeming¹⁵ and Power."

At the first word the golden king arose, at the second the silver, and at the third the bronze king had slowly raised himself when the composite king suddenly sat down clumsily.

Anyone who saw him, despite the solemn moment, could hardly refrain from laughing, for he was not sitting, lying or leaning but

had shapelessly sunk together.

The Will-o'-the-Wisps who had hitherto been occupied with him, stepped to one side; they seemed, although pale in the morning light, well nourished again and in good flame. They had skillfully licked out the golden veins of the colossal statue with their pointed tongues right to the very inside. The irregular empty spaces that had thus arisen remained open for a time and the figure kept its original form. But when the finest little veins had been consumed the statue collapsed and unfortunately just at those places that remain intact when a man sits down; while the joints which ought to have bent remained stiff. Anyone who was not able to laugh had to turn his eyes away; the cross between form and lump was repulsive to behold.

The man with the lamp now led the fine-looking youth, who was still staring blankly in front of him all the time, down from the altar and straight to the bronze king. At the foot of that mighty sovereign lay a sword in a bronze scabbard. The young man girded it on.

"The sword on the left, the right side free!" cried the mighty king.

They went then to the silver king, who lowered his scepter towards the youth who took hold of it with his left hand and the king said in a kindly voice:

"Feed the sheep."¹⁶

When they came to the golden king he pressed the oak wreath on to the head of the youth with a father-like gesture of blessing and said:

"Know the highest."

During this ceremony the old man had been observing the youth closely. After the girding on of the sword his breast lifted, his arms moved and his feet trod more firmly; when he took the scepter in his hand his strength seemed to grow more gentle and by some inexpressible charm more powerful; but when the oak wreath adorned his locks his features came alive, his eyes shone with inexpressible spirit, and the first words of his lips were: "Lily."

"Dear Lily," he cried as he hastened towards her up the silver stairway—for she had been watching his journey from the pinnacle of the altar—"dear Lily, what can that man, furnished with everything, wish for more costly than the innocence and tranquil

inclination which thy breast holds out to me? O my friend," he went on turning to the old man and looking at the three holy statues, "glorious and sure is the kingdom of our fathers, but you have forgotten the fourth power which controls the world sooner, more universally and more certainly: the power of love."

With these words he fell upon the neck of the beautiful maiden who had cast away her veil, and whose cheeks were now colored with the most beautiful, imperishable red.

Upon this the old man smiled and said: "Love does not rule, it cultivates,¹⁷ and that is more."

With all this festivity, happiness and delight, they had not noticed that the day had fully broken, and now suddenly through the open door quite unexpected objects met the eye of the company. A great square surrounded by pillars formed the forecourt at the end of which was to be seen a long and splendid bridge, stretching across the river with many arches. On each side there were sumptuous and spacious colonnades arranged for wayfarers, many thousands of whom were already to be found there busily going back and forth. The great road in the middle was thronged with herds and mules, riders and carriages, which on the two sides were streaming in both directions without obstructing each other. They all seemed to be admiring the spaciousness and sumptuousness, and the new king and his consort were as much delighted with the movement and life of this great crowd as they were happy in their mutual love.

"Remember the snake in honor," said the man with the lamp. "You owe your life to her, your people owe her this bridge by which these adjacent banks have been united and made into populated lands. Those floating and shining precious stones, the remains of the body she sacrificed, are the piers of this glorious bridge, on which she has built herself and upon which she will maintain herself."

They were about to request from him the explanation of this wonderful mystery when four beautiful maidens came in by the door of the temple. By the harp, the sunshade and the camp-stool Lily's companions were immediately recognized, but the fourth, more beautiful than the three others, was a stranger, who in playful, sisterly fashion sped with them through the temple and mounted

the silver stairs.

"Will you believe me more in future, dear wife?" said the man with the lamp to the beautiful one. "It is well for you and for every creature that bathes in the river this morning."

The rejuvenated and beautified old woman, of whose former features and shape no trace remained, encircled with lively youthful arms the man with the lamp who received her caresses in friendly fashion.

"If I am too old for you," he said smiling, "you may choose another husband today; for from today no marriage holds good that has not been contracted anew."

"Do you not know," replied she, "that you too have become younger?"

"I am glad if I appear to your young eyes as a fine youth; I will take your hand afresh and will happily live with you into the following millennium."

The queen welcomed her new friend and stepped down with her and her other playmates into the altar, while the king between the two men looked across towards the bridge and attentively observed the bustle of the crowd.

His satisfaction however did not last long, for he saw an object which caused him displeasure for a moment. The great giant, who did not seem to have recovered from his morning sleep, was staggering along over the bridge causing the greatest confusion there. As usual he had arisen drunk with sleep and was intending to bathe in the familiar bend of the river; but finding dry land instead, he was feeling his way along the wide paving of the bridge. Although he now trod in amongst the people and animals in the clumsiest fashion, and though his presence was regarded with amazement by everyone, yet no one felt him; but as the sun shone in his eyes, and he raised his hands to wipe them, the shadow of his enormous fists moved back and forth so mightily and clumsily among the crowd that people and animals fell into each other, were hurt, and ran the danger of being hurled into the river.

The king on seeing this misdeed instinctively felt for his sword, but recollected himself and gazed calmly first at his scepter and then at the lamp and the oar of his companions.

"I can guess your thoughts," said the man with the lamp, "but we and our powers are helpless against this helpless one. Keep calm! He harms us for the last time and fortunately his shadow lies away from us."

Meanwhile the giant was coming nearer and, in astonishment at what he was seeing with open eyes, had allowed his hands to fall; he did no more damage and entered the forecourt with his mouth wide open. The giant was going straight towards the doors of the temple when suddenly he stuck fast to the ground in the middle of the court. He stood there as a mighty statue of reddish shining stone, and his shadow marked the hours, which were engraved in a circle on the ground, not in figures, but in noble and significant pictures.

The king rejoiced to see the shadow of the monster put to good use; nor was the queen less surprised when she, adorned in the greatest splendor, came up out of the altar with her maidens and saw the strange statue which almost blocked the view from the temple to the bridge.

In the meantime the crowd had swarmed after the giant, and now that he was standing still they surrounded him and stared in wonder at his transformation. Then the crowd turned towards the temple, which they appeared only now to have noticed, and pressed towards the door.

At this moment the hawk hovered high over the dome with the mirror, caught in it the light of the sun, and cast it upon the group standing on the altar. The king, the queen and their attendants appeared in the dim vault of the temple illumined by a heavenly splendor, and all the people fell on their faces. When the crowd had recovered and stood up again, the king and his party had stepped down into the altar, in order to go to his palace through hidden halls, and the people spread out within the temple in order to satisfy their curiosity. They contemplated the three upright standing kings with astonishment and awe, but they were all the more eager to know what kind of a lump might be hidden under the carpet in the fourth niche; for whoever it might have been, a well-meaning person had modestly spread a sumptuous covering over the king who had crumpled up, which no eye could penetrate and no hand

might dare lift off.

The people would never have made an end of their inspection and admiration, and the pressing crowd would altogether have crushed itself, had not their attention been drawn again to the great square.

Unexpectedly, pieces of gold were falling as from the air and ringing upon the marble paving stones. The nearest travelers fell upon them to get possession of them, with this marvel repeating itself in isolated instances, first here and then there. We may understand that the departing Will-o'-the-Wisps were having some more fun here, and were merrily squandering the gold from the limbs of the crumpled-up king. For a time the crowd ran greedily hither and thither, still pressing and tearing at one another when no more pieces of gold fell from above. Finally the crowd melted and went on its way; and to this day the bridge is thronged with wayfarers and the temple is the most frequented upon the whole earth.

Notes to the Translation

A striking characteristic of Goethe's style in the *Fairy Tale* is the use of several single narrative sentences following each other with only a comma between. Though modern English might prefer to make separate sentences with full stops I have retained Goethe's style.

Another characteristic at variance with modern English style is to use the same adjective (like glorious or splendid) in two consecutive sentences. Again I have retained Goethe's style.

In English it is impossible to convey the varying degrees of familiarity and politeness expressed in the three German forms of you : "du", "ihr" and "Sie." Inevitably something of the relationship and attitude of the characters to each other is lost in the translation. Nevertheless I have used "thou" and "ye" when the dialogue has a dramatic, poetic or religious quality.

1. *Will-o'-the-Wisps*—German *Irrlichter*. The German word is very expressive, being a compound of *Irr* and *Lichter*. *Irren* is to *err*, to *wander*, even to *be mad*, and *Lichter* are *lights*. At once then we have a picture of wandering lights, misleading lights, mad lights. This word picture does not exist in the English "Will-o'-the-Wisp" or "Jack-o'-Lantern," and I had considered coining a word "Straylight" to translate *Irrlicht*, as these *Irrlichter* play such an important part in the story. Note that the ferryman addresses them as "Lights." (I recall that Goethe referred to his own thoughts when he was feverish and could not control them, as *Irrlichter*.)

2. *rowed*—German *fuhr*. *Fuhr* means "drove." The ferryman drove or steered the boat. It could have been rowed with two oars, sculled from the stern with one oar or sailed across. I have chosen rowed because I feel this is what is meant.

3. *straight across*—German *quer über*. *Quer über* is usually meant as "straight across" but *quer* also means "slanting" which is why Carlyle translated it as "obliquely." A boat setting a course straight across a river will point into the current and the wind and thus be aslant the river. The skill of the boatman lies in determin-

ing the exact angle at which to lay his boat which will vary during the crossing according to the strength of the current and the force of the wind.

4. *you lights*—German *Ihr Lichter*. In German this is a pun. *Ihr lichter* sounds much the same as *Irrlichter*.

5. *a nice fix*: this is an idiomatic translation of the whole phrase: "Da haben wir uns schön gebettet," which really means, "Here we have bedded ourselves nicely."

6. *bronze*—German *Erz*. I have been in some perplexity about how to translate *Erz*. The main meaning of *Erz* is "ore," ore of any metal, particularly iron. The adjective of *Erz* is *ehern*, which is often used to mean iron.

A German-speaking friend of mine suggested that the third king was made of crude unrefined metal or indeed ore, and this would represent the will before it is ennobled through thinking and feeling.

A second meaning of *Erz* is an alloy of copper or iron mixed with other metals. Rudolf Steiner mentions the third king as being of "copper," representing the "will" forces. But for copper Goethe would have undoubtedly used *Kupfer*.

Carlyle and Flatauer translate *Erz* by brass and *ehern* by brazen. This follows the biblical use. For instance, in Exodus XXV (Authorized Version) we read of the offerings of gold, silver and brass. In the Lutheran Bible the offerings are *Gold*, *Silber* and *Erz*. But the brass of the bible is not the brass of today which in German is *Messing*. Although the German word for "bronze" is "Bronze," *Erz* can also be correctly translated by bronze. Bronze corresponds to my feeling for the metal of the king and of the gate or door of the temple, and I should like to see this feeling confirmed by an alchemical insight. *Erz* corresponds almost exactly to the Latin *aes* meaning primarily crude ore or metal and later copper, bronze, and brass. Indeed *Erz* (and ore) may be derived from the declined forms of *aes* [Genitive *aeris*].

7. *pug*—German *Mops*, the symbol of mopiness or vexation.

8. *the hands of his shadow* and not "the shadow of his hands," because the shadow was the effective part of the giant.

9. *benefactress*—German *Gönnerin* (see also note 11), a difficult

word to translate, really meaning a well-wisher, someone who favors, advances, helps, even protects. It expresses an inner quality of benevolence and not just the difference in rank or station which *patroness* implies. A patron saint could be a *Gönnerin*. In Carlyle's time "patroness" would be a more apt translation than it is now.

10. *Thrice happy youth, etc.* A strange apostrophe which I think is directed at the fair youth with the hawk. The German states unequivocally "thou who wast able to take its place" not "might take." Does this not indicate that at one time formerly, perhaps in a state of innocence, the youth had been able to rest like the harp upon the breast of the beautiful Lily without being killed by her touch, and that his threefold happiness consisted of being able, like the harp, to nestle in her lap, to be softly encircled by her arms and then to be touched by her slender fingers? Then the chords of his soul would make music like the harp.

11. *benefactress*—German *Wohltäterin* (see also note 9). This word indeed corresponds to the English benefactress, for its root meaning *Wohl-täter-in* is "well-doer-ess" or "bene-factor-ess," whereas *gönnen* (from which is derived *Gönnerin*) really means "not to grudge," "to favor," "to wish well."

12. *door*. Goethe uses three words to express a gate or door, and the distinction between their meanings is different from the distinction between gate and door. The first word mentioned here is *Pforte* which suggests an entrance door rather than a gate. Next we have the great "bronze door"—*Tor*, which could equally be a gate. *Tor* is used for a large door as in a fortress or city wall, but it can also be a (large) gate such as a castle gate or palace gate. The third time "the doors sprang swiftly wide" we have *Pforte* again, and *Pforte* is used until the giant approaches the *Türe* (doors) of the temple, and *Tür* is used again where the crowd press towards the temple door. *Tür* is generally a common door rather than a gate. As it seems to me that the temple had only one door, I have translated *Pforte*, *Tor* and *Tür* all by "door."

13. *That's me*—German *Das bin Ich*, "that am I." Some writers of English will say that this expression is ungrammatical on the grounds that the verb "to be" does not admit of the accusative case "me," and would prefer "That is I" or even "That am I." But for

three reasons I prefer "That's me." Firstly, the "me" is not a true accusative but corresponds to the emphatic French pronoun *moi*. Indeed the expression derives not from Old English but from Norman French, corresponding to the French "C'est moi," which in turn was not a Latin locution but a Celtic one (cf. Gaelic: *is mi*). The second reason is that the idiom "that's me" more naturally fits the foregoing sentence "he who stands upon his feet." "That is I" would not do here: one would have to say "I do that," which does not really translate the German. The third reason is that the rough, clumsy, awkward, stuttering king would naturally use such an expression rather than a highly "educated" one.

14. *oar*—German *Ruder*. *Ruder* is also a rudder though "rudder" is sometimes translated by *Steuer*. Originally boats were steered by a stern-oar which became the rudder—hence the double meaning in German. Small ferry boats are sometimes propelled by a single stern-oar. Altogether I think "oar" fits in better with the general imagery of the story than "rudder" would.

15. *Fair-seeming*—German *der Schein*. On the one hand *Schein* has the meaning of appearance (as Carlyle translates) or semblance, and on the other it means sheen or shining. It cannot really be stretched to mean "imagination" as Flatauer translates. In connection with the three powers that rule the world, Rudolf Steiner speaks of the three powers of the soul, and says that *beauty* (the beautiful *Schein*) reveals itself in feeling. (See "The Character of Goethe's Spirit," in the Floris Books edition of the *Fairy Tale*, p. 61.)

16. *Feed the sheep*—German *Weide die Schafe*. St. John 21.16–17 has "Feed my sheep" and the Lutheran Bible has *Weide meine Schafe*. *Weide* really means "pasture," but I have retained the biblical allusion.

17. *cultivates*—German *bildet*. *Bildet* expresses a much more comprehensive idea than "cultivates," and includes such ideas as are expressed by "builds, forms, fashions, develops, educates, brings out." A *gebildet* human being is one who is educated, cultivated, morally developed, and in a good sense, erudite. Stretching the translation one might say: "Love brings out the best."

Commentary

by Adam McLean

Goethe's *Fairy Tale of the Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily* is an allegory of transformation. Although it has fascinated literary scholars for almost two centuries, few of these scholars possessed background knowledge of the alchemical symbolism that was the starting point for Goethe's allegory; consequently, they were unable to penetrate to the heart of the *Fairy Tale*, and their various commentaries have only touched upon surface facets of the work. I believe it is important to provide, together with a modern translation of the *Fairy Tale*, this extensive commentary exploring the alchemical parameters of the work. As it is the sense of mystery that gives the *Fairy Tale* its stature and strength as an allegory, I shall not attempt here to reduce the work to a rigid interpretation, or give each symbol precise, hard-edged characteristics; rather my approach will be to explore the work on an archetypal level, and, in particular, to investigate the dynamics of the interactions between these archetypes. Thus we are concerned here with a process involving the dynamic interaction and transformation within archetypes, rather than a static one-dimensional viewpoint, and this process can be applied to many different individual expressions of these archetypes on various levels.

The *Fairy Tale* or *Märchen* arose in Goethe out of his study of various Rosicrucian-alchemical documents. Thus he wrote in *Zur Farbenlehre*,

If one deals with the poetic side of Alchemy, as we may well call it, with an open mind, it leads to very pleasant reflections; indeed, we arrive at a parable (*Märchen*) springing from universal conceptions and built upon the proper foundations of natural phenomena.

The *Fairy Tale* was completed in 1795, and published as the closing section of a series of short stories, *The Conversations of German Emigrants*, which for the most part are concerned with the

supernatural—haunting footsteps, ghostly premonitions, and so on. The *Fairy Tale* appears completely different in character from the other stories in this collection. By placing it in this context of supernatural stories, Goethe reveals an important aspect of the work; for the *Fairy Tale*, as I will show, concerns the proper form for humanity's inner relationship to the supersensible world. Goethe is concerned in his parable with showing the transformation of superstition into spiritual wisdom. *The Conversations of German Emigrants* also deals with the relationship of the masculine and the feminine. As Goethe wrote,

They treat as a rule, of the feelings by which men and women are united or separated, made happy or unhappy, by which they are often more confused than enlightened.

The *Märchen* at the end of this collection shows the key by which the male and female parts of the soul are united in a manner which leads to enlightenment and universal happiness.

In 1768, when Goethe (1749–1832) was nineteen and a student at Leipzig, he underwent a strange illness that precipitated an inner transformation. While recovering from this illness, he began to interest himself in the occult and, in particular, to immerse himself in the study of alchemy. Under the direction of Fraulein von Klettenberg he studied Georg von Welling's *Opus Mago-Cabalisticum*, Kirchweger's *Golden Chain of Homer*, and various Rosicrucian books. Later, in 1786, he was to write to Charlotte von Stein, mentioning that he saw in *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* the makings of a good story,

There will be a good fairy tale to tell at the right time, but it will have to be reborn, it can't be enjoyed in its old skin.

Goethe's Fairy Tale springs from his studies of alchemical symbolism and especially from the influence upon him of the tradition among the alchemists of expressing their work in elaborate allegories. So a true grasp of the substance and fabric of this tale can only arise once we look at it as an alchemical allegory, and

examine its symbols in this context.

As I indicated in my opening remarks, *Goethe's Fairy Tale* is an allegory of transformation, and when one studies it in depth, one perceives that every character in the story without exception is in some way transformed or transmuted into a higher state. From an initial state of latent potential, the archetypal figures, through the development of the story, are evolved into a more balanced state of being, and various relationships between different aspects of these archetypes are formed and fused.

The action of the story takes place on the Eastern and Western banks of a great river, and we are made aware, in the opening sections, of the gulf that separates these two realms. Goethe sets his *Fairy Tale* in a realm of Polarity. It is instructive to initially draw up a list of some of these polarities, before embarking upon a detailed examination of the symbolism.

Will-o'-the-Wisps	Snake
(vertical line)	(horizontal line)

Young Prince	Lily
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Old Man with Lamp	Old Woman
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Lamp's Power	Lily's Power
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Hawk of the Prince	Canary Bird of Lily
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Pug Dog	Young Prince
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Ferryman's Cottage	Temple Cavern
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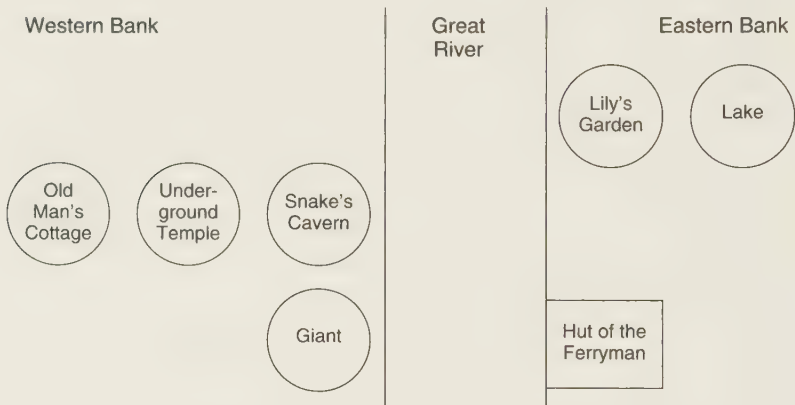
Lily's Garden	Old Man's Cottage
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Old Man	Giant
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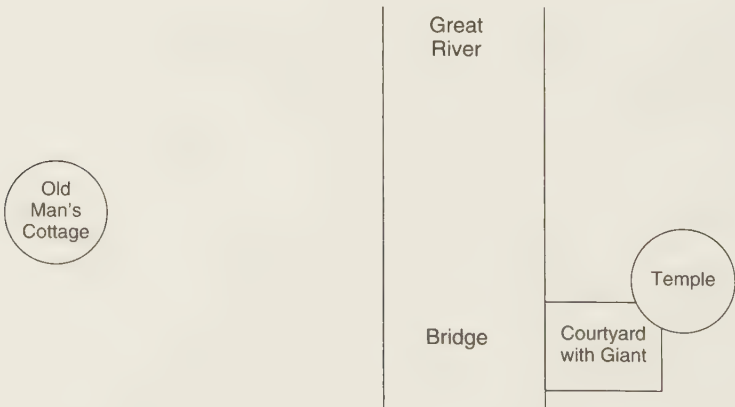
Young Prince	Fourth King
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Other polarities will also be discussed in this detailed commentary.

It will be of value to have a geographical picture of the lands wherein the events of the story take place. At the beginning of the tale the situation is as such:



At the end of the tale we see a transformation has occurred:



Counting the Wisps as one being, there are eight major figures in the drama, together with the three attendants of the Lily, the Four Kings, and the three animals—hawk, canary and dog—which add up to eighteen characters in all.

Of the major figures there are two triplicities involved directly in bringing about the transformation. Thus there are three female figures paralleled with three masculine archetypes:

Old Woman
Lily
Snake

Old Man with the Lamp
Young Prince
Will-o'-the-Wisps

Counting the four Kings together, we have a further triplicity of archetypes which link with the past tragedy of the divided realm and who are entirely transformed through the action of the *Fairy Tale*:

Ferryman
Four Kings
Giant

The River divides the two realms on the east and west banks. There are three ways of crossing this River:

By the Ferry
By the Snake Bridge
On the Shadow of the Giant

West←East only
at Midday only
at Sunset only

The story is set in a realm divided by the River which is difficult to cross, and one has the sense that this state of affairs has held sway for a great length of time. The story begins one evening after the River has overflowed its banks. Just at this time, when the River has revealed its full power to separate the divided realms on its east and west banks, two Will-o'-the-Wisps arrive at the hut of the ferryman on the eastern bank. These Will-o'-the-Wisps, Straylights, or in German *Irrlichter*, literally "erring lights," are (unbeknown to themselves one suspects) the catalytic agents that spark off the

process which will end with the permanent bridging of the river. In scientific terms, these Will-o'-the-Wisps are the phosphorescent flames seen over marshes, produced by the spontaneous combustion of gases released by fermentation of decomposing vegetation.

However, Goethe is not using the term "*Irrlichter*" merely in this sense, but touches upon the meaning preserved in the folk tradition of fairy or elvish lights. In this tradition, the Will-o'-the-Wisps or flames bear an especially strong relationship with mankind, over which they exert a fascination: the light they bring from the elvish world, a region of the spiritual, does not always lead to the immediate good of those who perceive it, for human beings can be led astray into seeming dangers by following this light. These Will-o'-the-Wisps are from the hierarchy of the Light Elves that are well-intentioned toward humanity, and seek to work for mankind's good, though often through a circuitous path. Here, Goethe brings before us the Will-o'-the-Wisps as the unknowing initiators, catalysts of the process outlined in his *Fairy Tale*. They set in train a chain of events which seemingly leads to disaster, but through this descent into danger the transformation brings a final, positive, and truly harmonious conclusion. These two Straylights appear at key points in the story, and their most mischievous pranks turn out to be formative catalytic actions in the overall process of transformation. If we come to see the action of the fairy story as taking place in the soul of man, then these "*Irrlichter*" correspond to those stray impulses, phantasms, dream visions or otherworldly experiences that initially seem dangerous and harmful—even to the extent of almost overwhelming one and precipitating a state of madness—but in the longer term can be appreciated as formative experiences that initiated a positive change in the direction of a person's evolution. In this sense, Goethe is indicating by these figures what the post-Freudian psychologists would describe as a "sudden irruption or intrusion of the contents of the unconsciousness into the consciousness of a person, initiating an inner growth." In more esoteric terms, the same event can be seen as an encounter with karmic energies, powerful forces working in the destiny of an individual that he or she has to come to terms with and inwardly digest if personal evolution is to take place.

So these two Will-o'-the-Wisps approach the ferryman, asleep in his hut on the eastern bank in the dead of night (which, of course, is the time when such unconscious forces like to be about and active) and demand to be ferried to the other bank.

The east bank is the realm of the sensible, the world perceivable by the senses; the western bank is the supersensible realm, the world beyond the senses, and contains aspects of the spiritual. Thus the ferryman is only able to take passengers from the sensible world into the supersensible, he cannot bring them back again. Goethe is perhaps here drawing upon the Greek idea of the river Styx with its ferryman Charon; however, he has transformed this picture somewhat. This is no longer the classical image of the ferryman of death, ferrying souls across the Styx to the realm of the underworld, but rather the ferryman between different states of consciousness. This ferryman, who exists in us all, occasionally takes us from our sense-oriented, outward worldly consciousness into another realm, the spiritual within us. For this we have to cross a threshold, here pictured as the Great River. Normally when one encounters this threshold one is swept away by the current of the river, but the ferryman-Guardian of the Threshold has the skill of steering straight across the river in spite of its strong current.

The gulf within us all that prevents us from simultaneously holding a consciousness of the inner spiritual and outer sensory is a kind of deep wound in the soul that has cast a curse upon humanity. Goethe was acutely aware of this wound, and he saw a potential for healing this deep sore through Romanticism. The source of this wounding is found to lie at the center of our Western culture and civilization, in the Judeo-Christian myth of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Through their eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, Adam and Eve, the representatives of humanity, are inwardly maimed by being pressed into outer sensory consciousness to the exclusion of their previous inner spiritual state in the Garden. I believe that in his *Fairy Tale* Goethe was attempting a resolution of this polarity in the human soul. In a sense, he was seeking a process for the redemption of the happenings in the Garden of Eden. He found the sources for this process in the alchemical tradition and particularly in the

Rosicrucian writings with which he was familiar. I shall return to the connection of the *Fairy Tale* with the expulsion from the Garden of Eden later in this commentary.

I propose to look at the events in the *Fairy Tale* by breaking them down into three sections, while a concluding section resolves the previous parts.

These three sections picture separate stages of the process, each involving a different kind of transformation. Once one has committed this *Fairy Tale* to memory and knows it intimately through meditating upon its substance, it is delightful to experience the craftsmanship with which Goethe has sculpted this work. There is not a spare line in the whole text, no ornate embellishments or diversions, but each incident clearly pictures a facet of the whole process. Facets are linked together as syzygies (polarized expressions), or in threefold groupings reflecting the material aspect of a process, its spiritual essence, and its resonance in the realm of the soul. With an awareness of these architectural elements we can easily find our way through Goethe's process.

In previous commentaries I have contributed on works of alchemical symbolism, I have often found it to be of value to take these emblems in a sequence or grouping and thus find the key to the symbolism of such emblematic figures. *Goethe's Fairy Tale* can be similarly seen as a series of such emblematic tableau, though described in words rather than in engraved symbolic pictures.

Three sections of the *Fairy Tale* correspond to the three transformations of the Snake—becoming luminous though eating the gold coins; forming the Ouroboros around the dead Prince; and finally transforming into a permanent bridge. In the first stage the essence of the process is laid in potential in the spiritual world. Then, in the second stage, this impulse is brought into the realm of the soul, the resonances of which produce there a calamity, the turning point of the whole process. In the final stage, this process is brought into incarnation and the polarities are resolved in the sensory world.

The First Stage: Preparation in the Spirit

Arrival of Will-o'-the-Wisps; Snake becomes luminous by eating the gold coins; Meeting with the Kings in the Temple; Old Man with Lamp.

The Second Stage: Resonances in the Soul

Old Woman meets Wisps; Debt to the River; Meets with Prince; Crossing River by the Snake; Meeting with Lily; Death or entrancement of young Prince; Snake forms Ouroboros around Young Prince.

The Third Stage: Incarnating the Impulse in the Outer World

The coming of the Old Man with the Lamp; Crossing the River on the Snake Bridge; Wisps open Temple Doors; Temple crosses under the River.

The Conclusion finds the final resolution of the Polarities

Gifts of the Three Kings; Wedding of Prince and Lily; Giant crosses the Bridge; Wisps distribute gold in courtyard.

The First Stage

This begins with the arrival of the Will-o'-the-Wisps into the divided realm of the human soul. They bring with them their strange light and quixotic, playful natures that cannot be held down to earth. (Jung pictured this element in the soul as the Trickster archetype.) They cross the River by the ferry to the supersensible world seeking the beautiful Lily. They are able to transform their strange light into gold coins. In the sensory world they appear as pale flames, hovering supernatural lights, the opposite of the down-to-earth sensory, but in the supersensible world their Trickster nature expresses itself in the production of material gold, the opposite of the spiritual. The ferryman is annoyed with them for producing the golden coins, for the River hates this metal and can only be satisfied with fruits of the earth.

The River thus can be seen as the stream of etheric forces in the human organism that separates yet also links the material and the

spiritual facets of the human being. This etheric body needs the energy of living substances, the fruits of the earth, for its nourishment, and is antipathetic to material gold, which does not provide etheric nourishment.

The Guardian of the Threshold demands from the Will-o'-the-Wisps the payment of three cabbages, three artichokes and three onions. Goethe names here three round vegetables. The number three is very significant, corresponding to the three realms of Body-Soul-Spirit, and Goethe has also incorporated this into the three kinds of vegetables. Each of these are of a rounded, spherical form, but the onion is a bulb, a kind of tuber or modified root structure; the cabbage is a rounded modification of the leaves; while the artichoke is a rounded, modified flower; and these three correspond to facets of Goethe's archetypal plant. In these three vegetables—onion, cabbage and artichoke—the etheric energies are focussed in root, leaf and flower respectively, which in turn are the reflection in the vegetable world of Body-Soul-Spirit. (We note here a parallel, to be elaborated later, of these rounded fruits of the earth with the Apple of the Tree in Eden. The Apple is a rounded true fruit, whereas these other three are rounded growths of lower structures in the archetypal plant below the fruiting stage. There is also a link with the rounded nature of the gold coins which the Wisps offer in payment.)

The Wisps cannot give such gifts, for they do not work within the natural world of plants. (Perhaps Goethe also intended here, being aware of the scientific explanation of the Will-o'-the-Wisps as phosphorescent gases over marshes and swamps, to suggest that they could not provide these gifts because they worked with the processes of decay in vegetable matter rather than the processes of growth.) They can only provide the gift of gold by transforming their light. The Ferryman binds them to a promise to pay their debt of the fruits of the earth and sets off to bury the dangerous gold coins in some cleft in the rocks. He finds a convenient spot and pours the gold coins into a rocky chasm on the western bank of the River. He considers the gold is now safely out of the way, buried in the supersensible world where it can do no harm.

In this chasm, the Green Snake has lain for aeons awaiting such

a moment. This snake is one of the central figures in the tale. Goethe seems to point to the events in the Garden of Eden initiated there by the Serpent, which led to the polarization of the human soul, and implies that this knot can only be undone by the will of the Serpent. During this first section of the story, the Snake comes to make this momentous decision. She—the Snake here is importantly a female character—has been living hidden in the inner recesses of the supersensible since the events which led to the polarization, buried in the spiritual past of humanity. She knows that she belongs to a nobler line of creatures but is resigned to her lowly fate, until the arrival of the gold coins. She eats them up and at once undergoes a transformation, becoming luminous and transparent. Here we have a syzygy. While the Wisps transform their light into gold, the Snake does the opposite, turning this gold into light. Goethe links these two together as cousins—the Snake being of the horizontal line of the family, while the Wisps are of the vertical line. Their meeting, their gift of gold, and thus light to the Snake, begins the whole process of transformation.

The Wisps ask her to direct them to the garden of the beautiful Lily with whom they are impatient to meet, and are dismayed when the Snake tells them that Lily lives on the other side of the River. They immediately wish to call back the Ferryman, but the Snake tells them that he will not carry passengers in that direction. She offers to carry the Will-o'-the-Wisps across the River on her back when at midday she spans the water in the form of a bridge; however, they are reluctant to travel in full daylight. The Snake informs them further that they can cross by the shadow of the Giant at sunset.

The straylights have made an error. In their quest for the beautiful Lily, they ended up on the wrong side of the River, in the supersensible and unconscious realm of the soul. This error fortuitously brings about their meeting with their horizontal cousin, the Snake, and the transference of their gold into her inner illumination. These two polarities of the same family have been separated for aeons, but have through this accident come together, and thus begins the process of universal transformation, uniting the polarities of the whole world.

The Green Snake hurries off to explore, with her new light, a secret cavern she had often visited which posed an enigma, as she had not been able in the darkness to see the strange figures she knew it contained.

Once in this cavern, her light reveals a great domed Temple containing the effigies of four Kings. These four Kings are the spiritual rulers of the aeons, the God-Kings or mythological archetypes. They have been walled up in the supersensible world. Goethe was aware of the lack of spirituality among his compatriots and was acutely conscious of the imminent onset of the Industrial Revolution. He could see being prepared in the culture of the late eighteenth century the potential for godless, material industrialization. In his journeys to Rome, he had seen the remnants of the old gods and spiritual guardians of a previous age. He knew they could not be encountered in the outer world, as they obviously had been during the height of Roman civilization, but now could only be found buried in the inner depths of our supersensible consciousness, which he pictures in the *Fairy Tale* through the image of the dark buried Temple. The Snake's presence there, or rather her light, brings the sleeping Kings to life.

These Kings correspond to the Aeons—the Gold King is the spiritual ruler of the Golden Age; the Silver King of the Silver Age; the Bronze King of the Age of Bronze; but the fourth King of Three Metals was incompletely fused, and because of this the spiritual energies of the previous Kings or spiritual rulers failed to incarnate a new ruler for the present age. The spiritual rulership of the present age had failed in the casting. Thus this Temple of spiritual rulership was destined to languish unknown, in the depths of the unconscious supersensible world, until a new spiritual ruler could come forth. It is shown in this tale that such a ruler can only come about by uniting the two banks of the River, and this new King arises as a reborn Adam as we shall later see.

Now, however, as the Snake contemplates these great effigies, a crack in the wall of the cavern opens and the important figure of the Man with the Lamp appears. This archetypal wise old man is a type of Guardian of the whole process. He knows the mysteries in which the human soul is immersed, but is powerless to affect change. He

can see the pattern and what must be done, but needs others to put this into practice. He remains always a guardian, never becoming an instigator or transformer of events. We will see a special relationship between the three figures of the Old Man with the Lamp, the Green Snake, and the Young Prince. They are, in a sense, three parts of the soul of humanity. The Old Man is the highest wisdom facet of the soul, the reflection in the soul of spiritual wisdom. The Snake is the feeling realm, the true kernel or heart center of the soul, and the Young Prince represents the soul forces in outer action. We will see later how these three facets come to work together.

The Man with the Lamp greets the statues of the Kings. The Gold King asks him how many mysteries he knows. He answers "three," meaning he knows the secrets of the three realms of Spirit-Soul-Body and the three Ages of the Kings. The Silver King then asks which is the most important of these, and the Old Man answers "the manifest one," meaning the mysteries of the outer world, the realm of incarnation, or sensory world, from which they are cut off. The Bronze King wishes to know this secret, but the Old Man cannot reveal this until he in turn knows the fourth mystery. Although one might expect a further question from the fourth King of Composite Metals, he can only mutter that it means nothing to him. At this point the Snake comes forward and whispers in the Old Man's ear the fourth mystery. The Old Man now knows that the time of transformation is at hand. This brings to an end the action of the first section.

Here we have seen the first transformation of the Snake through her eating the gold provided by the Will-o'-the-Wisps. In the visit to the ancient Temple, the Kings are awakened and communicate with the Snake and the Old Man. The Snake in her transmuted form can now reveal to the Old Man with the Lamp her secret that is the key to the whole process. Just what this secret is becomes obvious in the second part of the *Fairy Tale*.

The Old Man with the Lamp relates in a strange way to the Wisps. He is, however, no Trickster figure, but sure, steady and certain. As the Flames can transform their inner light to gold, so the light of his Lamp shining alone tinges all stones to gold. Thus, while the Old

Man is the consciousness of the spiritual in the human soul, the Wisps are the spiritual forces playing out in an unconscious way in the soul—an inner Mercury to the Old Man's spiritual Sulphur.

The Second Stage

The first stage closes with the realization in the Temple that the hour of transformation is at hand, and at this point the Old Man and the Snake leave and go in opposite directions, the Old Man to the West, the Snake to the East.

During the Old Man's absence from his house, the events which initiate the second stage of the process have taken place, again through the activities of the Will-o'-the-Wisps. When the Old Man arrives back at his cottage, he finds that these two wanderers have produced a calamity. They ingratiated themselves with his wife, she being not insusceptible to their flatteries, and gained access to the cottage, where these strange Flames ate off all the gold which covered the walls. In all this confusion, the Old Woman foolishly promised to pay their debt of the three cabbages, artichokes and onions to the Ferryman. As they were leaving, they shook off a shower of gold coins, one of which the Old Woman's dog ate and was poisoned. The Old Man arrived just after this commotion had taken place. With his inner knowledge of the pattern of events, he calmly set about clearing up the mess, and covered the fire so that his Lamp could shine by itself. The light of the Lamp then transformed the stone back into gold, and the dead body of the dog is transmuted into a precious onyx.

The Old Man's Lamp is the lamp of spiritual illumination. If it shines in the soul when other lights are present, that is, when the soul is turned outward, then it only refreshes and enlivens the soul, but when it shines alone in the soul, then it tinges with gold; that is, it precipitates its illumination into the more solid form of wisdom. The gold that the Old Man's Lamp produces is not material gold, but the gold of spiritual wisdom that tinges the soul. Thus the Will-o'-the-Wisps say that it tastes better than material gold.

The Old Man knows that the power of his Lamp is polarized with the power of the beautiful Lily who resides on the other bank of the

River. Just as he has turned the dead body of the dog into precious stone, so she can, in turn, transform this precious stone back into a living being.

The Old Man is the archetypal figure of the guardian and bearer of spiritual wisdom. He has been exiled on this far bank of the River, in the supersensible, and thus has little opportunity to bring his wisdom to mankind. Interestingly, the Snake lives in a chasm, the Temple of the Kings is entirely walled up underground, and the cottage of the Old Man is built against a mountainside—thus all these denizens of the supersensible realm are partly buried or overshadowed, cut off in the past. The beautiful Lily, who we are to meet later, is an archetype of the feminine forces in the soul. She also suffers a banishment and an imprisonment on the other bank of the River. She, likewise, is unable to unfold her energies freely, so we note a subtle connection between these two soul figures.

Through his recent experience in the underground Temple, the Old Man felt that the beautiful Lily should take heart, for her deliverance from the trouble that lay on her was imminent. He requests that the Old Woman take the onyx dog to Lily and at the same time fulfill her promise to the Will-o'-the-Wisps and pay their debt to the Ferryman. She places three onions, three cabbages and three artichokes together with the onyx dog and sets off. The Old Woman, being the wife of the Old Man, is the spiritual counterpart of his masculine wisdom facet. Her troubles are that she is old and the energies of her forces have declined. She is acutely aware of keeping up her appearance and is easily confused by the flattery of the Wisps when they called her their queen. She is the ancient archetypal feminine in the soul.

At this point we can interpose a strange fact. In the German text of the *Märchen*, Goethe uses the word "Mops" to refer to the pug dog. It seems more than likely that he was making a reference to the Mops Order, a secret society that existed in the eighteenth century. This Order arose as an antithesis to the masculine-dominated Masonic Order, from which women were, of course, excluded. The "Mopsorden" set up Temples of Love or Retreats, that were open to both male and female members, to celebrate Masonic-type mysteries and rituals. Its members were mostly Roman Catholics

and each carried a little porcelain emblem of a pug dog as a symbol of their membership in the Lodge. The Old Woman and the Lily are related by the exchange of the pug dog, the Mops, and these two figures bring the archetypal feminine into the tale. *Goethe's Fairy Tale* thus centers around the release of the feminine forces in the soul of humanity from the imprisonment they have experienced in the masculine-dominated Western civilization.

The Old Woman sets out on her journey. Her basket is heavy. This is not due, however, to the presence of the onyx dog, for dead things have no weight to the spiritual figure of the Old Woman; rather, she is borne down by the presence of any living thing. The etheric forces of living things pull down upon her spiritual energies, forcing them nearer to the material world, and she experiences this as a heavy burden.

On her way to the River she meets with the other denizen of this bank of the River, the Giant. The Giant is the unconscious will forces in the human organism. In his own nature he is powerless, but his shadow has power to act. Thus, we can identify the inhabitants of the western bank, the realm of the supersensible, as follows:

The Old Man and
Old Woman Syzygy

The archetypal wisdom
element in the soul

The Green Snake
and the Bridge

The archetypal feeling
element in the soul

The Giant
and his Shadow

The unconscious will
element in the soul

All these live under a frustrating affliction: they are not able to let their spiritual forces stream out into the world because it has become polarized into the two realms divided by the River. The green Snake lives in dark caves, though she knows she should be luminous and bear light, and for a short instant each day appears above ground in the form of the temporary bridge. The Old Man–Old Woman's powers are severely curtailed. The Old Man can only

watch events unfold, and though he knows the pattern of things he is powerless to act. The realm of the unconscious will in the soul is pictured by the clumsy figure of the Giant, unintegrated, unable to work with the other facets of the soul. As the Old Man has his lamp which shines out from him, so the Giant possesses a parallel facet in his shadow, the dark realm attached to him. This shadow has a power to act, though often in a destructive, or at least unknowing, clumsy manner.

Goethe, who lived long before the ideas of Freud and the psychotherapists came into being, was nevertheless aware of this unconscious facet in the human being. He places it, in the figure of the Giant, on the supersensible bank of the River. Modern psychologists, following Freud's patriarchal example, have tended to see the unconscious lying below the conscious part of a individual as a negative realm, and ascribe the spiritual concerns of humanity to a super-ego lying above consciousness. Perhaps Goethe's view of the soul, presented in his *Fairy Tale*, provides an alternative and less patriarchal psychological model for humanity. Goethe's picture is closer to that of Jung, who placed the realm he labeled the "collective unconscious," containing the archetypes, just below the personal unconscious.

When the Old Woman meets the Giant, he treats her courteously, but the hands of his shadow take one cabbage, one artichoke and one onion from her basket. This is the second calamity of her day after the affair with the Will-o'-the-Wisps, and while pondering on whether to go back and replace these items from her garden, she comes to the river bank and presently sees the Ferryman approaching. She gives the Ferryman the vegetable fruits of the earth. He said that he needed three of each item because he had to give the River a third part of each. This picture seems to further explain our view of the part of the Ferryman and the River, not as a ferryman of death—Charon and the Styx—but as the ferryman between different states of consciousness, and in particular between waking consciousness and dream and sleep consciousness. We sleep for approximately one third of our life (8 hours a day). Thus the River of sleep requires a fee of one third of our life's energy, one third of the vegetable etheric force.

The Ferryman binds the Old Woman to a promise to pay the River the missing vegetable etheric force by asking her to place her hand in the water. This produces the third calamity of her day, as her hand is blackened by this process and begins to shrink as the River withdraws etheric energy from her limb. This is, of course, a familiar alchemical picture of the Nigredo, the blackening, and we are reminded of an illustration from the series of pictures from the *Splendor Solis* (which could have been known to Goethe in its printed book version in German). The eighth illustration in this series shows a man tinged with black emerging from a swamp or river.

The Old Woman's calamities correspond to the three realms—she is taken in, during the absence of her partner the Old Man, by the false sparkle of the Will-o'-the-Wisps, the illusion of the spiritual; she is taken in by the Giant's courtesy, while his shadow, the distorted will forces, steals the vegetables; and she pledges herself to the River dividing the soul, which blackens her hand. This threefold correspondence is seen to unfold throughout the tale, each event having ramifications in these three realms. The Old Woman's calamities arise out of her own naiveté and her lack of inner solidity, which makes her susceptible to the influence of others, and all her calamities arise when she is apart from her husband and not under his guiding light and inspiration. In a sense, she is the old archetype of woman in a patriarchal society, and through the further events of this tale we shall see this archetype transformed.

The Old Woman's immersion in her troubles is temporarily checked by her interest in the passenger the Ferryman has just brought ashore. This sad young man seems under a most melancholy spell, but his outward appearance is striking, the splendid figure of a young Prince. It turns out that this Prince is so completely attracted to the beautiful Lily and caught up in a hopeless love for her that he is condemned to wander eternally to and fro across the River. He has lost his estates, his rights to kingship, his crown, scepter and sword, and his valor and the bravery of his deeds have now come to nothing. This sad Prince is a picture of the masculine forces in the soul of humanity, caught up in an eternal

quest for the unattainable. We can see the Prince as a fallen Adam figure, so hopelessly bound up in his attraction for his Eve that he cannot express the great inner resources of his soul.

The Old Woman and the Prince set out to visit the beautiful Lily. To do this they must cross in the opposite direction to that of the ferry. This they can do by using the bridge of the Green Snake. At midday, the Snake metamorphoses herself into a bridge across the River. The River can be crossed in three ways:

1. *by the ferry* from the sensible → one way into the supersensible (This necessitates a surrendering of 1/3 of one's life energy into the state of sleep.)
2. *by the Snake* at midday (This is the realm of the imagination or inspiration that works while one is awake.)
3. *by the Giant's Shadow* at sunset (through the unconscious will forces).

The ferry and the Giant's shadow are unsatisfactory means of crossing the River, the one requiring a fee of life's energy, the other only happening through the unconscious will forces at work deep in the soul. The impulse of this tale is toward the building of a permanent bridge, so that humanity can move easily between the polarities, between spirit and matter. The Snake bridge of the imagination can only transport people for a short time, a short instant of spiritual vision before one has to come back to the opposite bank.

However, on this special day—when so many calamities and so many positive happenings have come about—as they step onto the bridge, they marvel at its transformation. Through eating the gold of the Will-o'-the-Wisps, the Snake was changed, shining from within; now, in her form as a bridge, this also is transformed into a magnificent edifice. The semi-precious stones of which it formerly was composed are now seen as precious emerald, chrysoprase and chrysolite. The two travelers are overawed by its majestic appearance. The two straylights also cross with them to the other bank to visit the realm of the beautiful Lily, and once they have crossed, the Snake changes back into her usual form and accompa-

nies the party of travelers to visit the Lily.

This meeting with the Lily is the central focus of the *Fairy Tale*. The Lily is of the greatest beauty; she attracts and enthralls all who see her, but is condemned to a perpetual imprisonment, for if she but touches any living being then it will die. She lives in an eternal torment, alone and incapable of knowing the joy of human contact, human love. Her beauty also has a further curse, for if her eyes but glance upon anyone she draws their living strength and causes them great pain. She is the Judeo-Christian Eve figure—the beautiful woman who is dangerous to touch.

Goethe was acutely aware of this distortion that lay at the heart of the Judeo-Christian patriarchal myth of the Fall of humanity through the Eve figure. He could see that there had arisen in Western humanity a myth of the incompatibility of the quest for the spiritual and the quest of earthly love. Goethe's own spiritual perception and his experiences in his searching for love through relationships with women made him realize that these were not incompatible, as the prevailing myth implied. The equation celibacy = spirituality, or that unchastity bound one to a purely material view of the world, was impossibly wrong to Goethe. He found in the relationship of the sexes a source of transcendence. Goethe and the other formative figures in the Romantic movement in art, literature and music, rebelled against the narrowing prejudice of this prevailing patriarchal myth. He saw, also, that male and female facets live in our individual souls, and that each member of humankind must learn to experience and use both of these facets. The "Fall of Man" myth led to polarization, separating the male and female elements in the soul, and further stole from humanity the one method of experiencing these polarities, that is, in the relationship of man and woman. This relationship had been damned by the "myth of the Fall" as the source of sin and of working against the spiritual. Goethe and the Romantics saw this relationship rather as a source of transcendence, for uniting the polarities in the soul.

The name "Lily" is also perhaps a reflection of "Lilith," the first partner of Adam in the Garden, created at the same time as Adam from the same mud of the Earth. Lilith was seen by the patriarchs

of the Jewish religion as the figure of the obscene temptation of sexuality, the source of erotic dreams. In the Jewish tradition, Adam is supposed to have coupled with Lilith and spawned the race of such spirits as tempt humanity through erotic dreams, the incubi and succubi. Interestingly, the Jewish patriarchs reveal their own inner fear of their masculinity, in that Lilith was banished when she attempted to make love actively to Adam—that is, when she tried to place herself above him in their intercourse. Through Lilith's wish to at least equal Adam in lovemaking, she was banished from the Garden, and a new wife was created who would be more subservient.

The extreme patriarchal nature of this myth cannot be emphasized more than by this event. Eve is created from Adam to be subservient to him. All seemingly goes well in the Garden until Eve is tempted to eat of the fruit by the serpent. Then she tempts Adam into the sexuality which leads to them being expelled from the Paradisical Garden. Adam falls through the folly of Eve, through his attraction for her—so goes the myth of patriarchy. This myth held sway for thousands of years and led to the polarization of society into male and female domains; it led to the polarization of the soul into masculine, analytic thought, with its need to dominate the material world—an inner attitude that was given status and support by outer society—and the more feminine synthesis, intuition and inner sensitivity, which was denied as being of little value in the world. Both of these facets exist in each human soul, but through the development of Western civilization, humanity has been lead to deny their opposites—men to ignore their feminine side, and women to deny the masculine powers of their souls.

This polarization through the prevailing patriarchal myth is the source of the River in Goethe's tale, and it is this that must be spanned.

In the Biblical "myth of the Fall," the Snake acts as the agent of Lucifer, "the light bearer." Lucifer, who attempts to awaken Adam and Eve to their sexuality, is seen by the patriarchal God as a masculine rival and cast out of heaven, this jealous God's domain, with a host of fallen angels. In the folk tradition it is recorded that the elves and fairies were a part of this host of fallen angels, and so

we see a connection of the Will-o'-the-Wisps with the Luciferic element working in the world. Lucifer, however, brings a needed light. So in Goethe's tale, it is the Snake, now luminous with the gold of the Wisps, that must act to bring about the reconciliation of the masculine and feminine.

The three travelers visit Lily in her garden. This garden, being her blighted inheritance from the paradisaical Eden, is one in which no plant can flower; that is, even in the realm of the plant kingdom the sexual is not able to develop. Instead, the plants, great trees of oak, beech, pine and cypress, grow through vegetative reproduction by being planted as twigs upon the dead bodies of beings who have dared touch Lily and suffered her enchantment and death. She is attended in her garden by three female servants, reflecting aspects of the Triple Goddess. One of these servants has charge over her head-dress and parasol, another over her chair, and the third over her musical instrument, the harp which she holds to her breast. These three correspond to the head, limb, and heart centers.

Lily is singing as the Old Woman approaches. She tells of her grief at the death that morning of her pet canary bird who, startled by a hawk, dared to touch her breast and perished. This provides a parallel with the Old Woman's dog who also died that morning. The Old Woman takes out the onyx dog and suggests that this will provide a substitute companion, for Lily can bring it back to life by her touch.

The Old Woman gives Lily the message from her husband that she is to take heart, for the time is at hand, and to regard the greatest misfortune as the greatest fortune. Lily then sings a song which lies at the center of the *Fairy Tale*. In this she laments that she can find little comfort in such good signs and only feels more strongly her misfortune in being separated from human joy. She knows that her condition can only be redeemed when a Temple stands by the River and a permanent bridge is built between the two realms. Lily knows that she can only be released from her imprisonment when the material world of sense possesses its own Temple to the spirit, and the divided polarities in the soul are united.

The Snake comes forward at this point and impresses on Lily that the prophecy of the bridge is fulfilled and that the Temple has been

built, though it still lies in the depths of the Earth. The Snake tells her that she herself has heard the great words resound in the Temple—"the time is at hand."

Lily takes heart at this, for it is the second time she has heard these words this day. But if she is to be released then she must hear them three times; that is, they must sound out in the spiritual realm, the realm of the soul, and finally be heard in the material realm of the body.

Lily touches the dog and brings it back to life and is delighted to play with it, enjoying its companionship and affection. The sight of this ugly pug dog being cuddled by the beautiful Lily upsets the Young Prince and he comes forward to talk with her. He bears on his hand his hawk which earlier was responsible for the death of her canary bird. In a moment of jealousy, anger and despair at the fate which separates him from the embraces of his beloved and forces him eternally to cross and recross the River, he inwardly touches upon the spark of ancient heroism within him, the archetypal masculine energy, and resolves to sacrifice himself in a desperate attempt to reach out to her. He moves forward and reaches to embrace her, but as her outstretched hand, attempting to ward him off, touches his body, he sinks soulless to the ground.

The death of the Prince marks an important turning point in the tale. This is the great calamity that crowns a day of calamities. The Young Prince has attempted through his heroic masculine nature to unite the polarities of the masculine and feminine in the soul; however, this cannot be achieved through the masculine or the patriarchal, but only through the feminine. It will be through the deed of the Snake that the polarities will be united, for at this moment the Green Snake draws herself into a circle around the corpse of the Prince and grips the end of her tail in her mouth. She makes the ouroboros gesture. In alchemy this symbol is well known, being found in many alchemical illustrations.

The Snake, long and thin of body with a distinct head and tail, is a symbol of polarization in the soul. It is often used to symbolize the spinal column with the central nervous system (brain) at the head reaching down through the various chakras or centers of etheric-astral energies, to its basal center at the base of the spine.

This basal center is seen as the place where lurks the feminine energy of Kundalini—the serpent power, seen as dangerous by a soul immersed in the masculine pole. Thus the Snake symbolizes the polarities of masculine/feminine, thinking/feeling, consciousness/unconsciousness, the remote cold abstract/the vital hot sexual energies. She is the tendency of the astral substance of the soul to polarize, the inner feelings flowing from one pole to another in an ongoing antithesis. She belongs to the horizontal line of the same family as the Will-o'-the-Wisps. Her polarization works across the world, whereas theirs lies in an above/below, spiritual/material splitting.

The Snake is linked through the patriarchal myth of the Fall to Lucifer. As Lucifer is seen as the masculine rival of the patriarchal God, his ally and agent in the Fall is thus seen in this myth as the feminine Snake. (We note that in some sixteenth-century paintings and engravings of this Temptation in the Garden, the Snake is depicted as a Lilith figure—Cranach, Grunewald). The Will-o'-the-Wisps are in this sense the remnants of the Luciferic forces, which explains why they are masculine and like to tempt and tease the female figures they meet within the story. They also complete a circle in crossing the River from one domain to the other and back again. They bring material gold into the spiritual realm, and later take the spiritual gold from the walls of the Old Man's cottage into the material world, completing a cycle.

When the Snake seizes her tail, she unites the polarities which until now she has incarnated. In changing her form into that of the Ouroboros, she turns the polarities into a circle of unity. This act brings to an end the second stage.

The Third Stage

Lily is struck with grief at this death of her Prince and no help can be found from her at this point. The Snake knows that only the wise counsel and spiritual wisdom of the Old Man with the Lamp can aid them in their difficulties. The Old Woman, still fussing over her maimed hand, is too caught up in her own problems to be of aid to the Snake, and in vain the Snake wonders if the Will-o'-the-Wisps might act to bring the Old Man to the scene. For the Snake knows

that once the sun set, irreversible decay will set in and the Prince will be entirely beyond help.

Just at the moment when all seems lost, the Snake notes the Prince's hawk soaring high above the scene, its feathers purple-red in the last rays of the setting sun. She takes this as a good sign and, sure enough, soon after they see the Man with the Lamp gliding over the lake. The Old Man was guided by his lamp and the movements of the hawk to the site of the catastrophe. Now, his spiritual wisdom takes charge of the proceedings, uniting with the intuitive feeling dimension of the soul realm of the Snake. They require now only a third partner to bring the process of uniting the opposites to completion.

Meanwhile, they must await midnight. As an alchemical process, we can picture this as a Nigredo or death state, with a digestion stage following, while the Snake encircles its Ouroboros. Only at the deepest point of night, midnight, is the turning point reached. So the party awaits this important point. Lily wears a fire-colored veil, which in the darkness begins to glow with a reddish light. This corresponds to the Rubedo, or reddening stage in the preparation of the Philosophers Stone or Tincture. It indicates a certain masculine energy has begun to tinge her formerly polarized nature. This masculine energy, however, is still on the periphery, radiating inward from the veil. This redness is the complementary color to the green of the Snake. There were thus, now in the darkness, three lights playing on the body of the Prince—that of the Old Man's Lamp, that of the Snake, and that of Lily—all working spiritually to preserve his form.

The Old Man contemplates the stars and announces that midnight has come. He emphasizes that if each party performs what is needed then all will benefit. The process of transmutation cannot be achieved until all the facets, all the parts of the process, work together. Each one intones in chorus the duties they have to undertake, except for the three attendants of the Lily, who had fallen asleep. These three represent aspects of the Lily that hold her to her past role. These three sisters have supported her and have helped her come to terms with her former state. Thus the part they play, at this point of decision, is to withdraw themselves in falling

asleep, leaving Lily free to take part in her own and the universal metamorphosis. The feminine forces in the soul are thus now freed from their comforters. The Old Man requests the hawk to carry aloft Lily's mirror and reflect the rays of the rising sun upon these three sleeping maidens. They have to be transmuted, to adopt a new role, as their energies belong to the past. They represent all the social fabric that keeps the feminine within the bounds of its role in patriarchal society. Now, on this new day, a change has to take place.

Once these sleepers are awakened the party sets out for the River. The Snake uncoils itself and sets off first in that direction. The two Will-o'-the-Wisps follow and even they are transformed by having lost some of their trickster facet and are now solemn and serious flames. The Old Man and his wife take the corpse of the Prince and the canary bird and place them into the Old Woman's basket, which expands and glows with a subtle light. The Old Woman carries this basket hovering easily above her head, and follows the Straylights. The beautiful Lily, taking her pug on her arm, follows after, and the Old Man follows in the rear bearing his Lamp. Thus we have a train of polarities, each with a light:

Wisps—Old Woman—Lily—Old Man

Here we have the corpse of the Prince at the center between the two feminine poles, and the beginning and end of the train being filled respectively by the Will-o'-the-Wisps and the Old Man, the polarity of which we examined earlier.

This party, bearing their strange lights, crosses the bridge of the Snake, which at night is even more magnificently radiant than it was seen at midday. The Ferryman in his hut observes this unique event with amazement.

Once they cross the River, the Snake reconstitutes her proper form and again draws her circle around the basket with the dead Prince.

The Old Man asks the Snake what she has decided. She answers that she will sacrifice herself before she is sacrificed. This sacrificial act was the fourth mystery that she had whispered in the Old

Man's ear during the events in the Temple on the previous day.

The Snake wishes her body of precious stones to be placed in the River, no stone of which is to be left on the land. She is willing to sacrifice her soul forces—now transformed into the uniting of the polarities—to the River that divides the two realms, so that she can there provide an archetype that will allow the human soul to find in itself the resources and ability to move freely between the polarized realms, thus uniting the world perceivable by the senses and that world which lies beyond the senses. Thus the human soul, bearing this archetype, acts to mediate between these realms: it enables the impulses of the supersensible to be expressed in the sensory world, and bears the experiences and achievements of the outer world into the spiritual. This is the center of the alchemical mystery. This is the Prime Matter, the Mercury of the Philosophers.

Goethe here turns the patriarchal "myth of the Fall" on its head. In the myth, the serpent is the tempter giving Adam and Eve experience of the polarities in their nature, and so they fall into the sin of recognizing their polarities; but here it is the Snake that brings the polarities together and unites the male and female in human nature. To the patriarchal unbalanced consciousness that cannot come to terms with the feminine, the snake is perceived as bringing a sinful lust of the sexual opposites into human nature. To Goethe and the Romantics, such a view of the sexual was a great distortion. Thus he makes the Green Snake—the soul energies of humankind that link with Nature and her immanent sexuality—the vehicle for bridging the gulf in the human soul between the spiritual and the outer sensory world. To Goethe, sexuality was no sin, but a means of experiencing the polarities, and thus relating the masculine and feminine sides of our souls.

Goethe chose well the name "Lily" for the feminine imprisoned by this "myth of the Fall." We noted earlier the possible connection with Lilith, and we can also note an alchemical parallel in that the lily often symbolizes the lunar-feminine White Stage of the alchemical process. The lily was a symbol of chastity and the spiritual purity of the Virgin Mary, an impossible archetype for women created by a patriarchal celibate priesthood. However,

there has always been an ambiguous side to the lily as a symbol of purity, which perhaps has never been better expressed than by Patrick Geddes, a nineteenth-century Scottish philosopher, when he said, "'Pure as a Lily' is not really a phrase of hackneyed sham-morals; for it does not mean weak, bloodless, sexless, like your philosopher's books, your curate's sermons. The lily's Purity lies in that it has something to be pure; its Glory is in being the most frank and open manifestation of sex in all the organic world."

Lily is told by the Old Man to touch the Snake with her left hand and her lover with her right. The left hand is her sinister feminine side, her right is the dexter masculine side of her being. With her left hand she causes the final transfiguration or death of the Snake, but her right hand raises her Prince to life. The Young Prince is not yet fully transformed; his spirit has not yet returned, only his soul forces. (The canary bird, not being human and having no individual spirit, is however entirely reborn and re-enlivened as before.) The Snake is decomposed into a circle of precious stones. The Old Man and wife gather these stones into her basket and take them to the River, where he empties them into the water and they float away like glittering lights into the distance.

Both remaining representatives of the feminine, the Old Woman, the ancient spiritual archetype cut off from outer expression, and Lily, the young woman in the sensory world, blighted by being cut off from spirituality by the curse laid upon her, are still not transmuted and still hanker after the old energies that are bound up in the Snake archetype. Thus they wish to possess a few of the precious stones of her body. The Old Man, however, makes sure that they do not succumb to this temptation, this second bite of the apple in a sense, for if any fragment of the Snake is kept on either bank and not united with the River, then the polarities would still remain unresolved and the human soul would continue in its former state of despair and hopelessness. The Old Man leads the procession to the underground Temple. This time, on the opposite bank, the order is reversed:

Old Man—Prince—Lily—Old Woman—Wisps

This procession enters the rock, which opens before the Old Man, and soon they encounter the great bronze doors of the Temple locked with a golden lock. The Old Man calls the Will-o'-the-Wisps to him and asks that they use their flames to consume the lock, for only they can open the doors to the Temple. A Temple is a vehicle for linking the spiritual to the material, and thus the Wisps, as remnants of the Luciferic element that dared in the patriarchal myth to attempt a uniting of the spiritual and the material, are just the very beings who can release the doors of the Temple and set it free from its entombment.

The party parades in front of the effigies of the Kings. The Gold King asks the Old Man, "Whence ye come?" He answers, "From the world," as they have just come from the other bank of the River. The Silver King then asks where they are going, and the Old Man replies that they are going back into the world. The Bronze King wishes to know, "What do you seek of us?" and the Old Man says that they have come to accompany the Kings on a journey into the world.

The Composite King of Three Metals asks who among them shall be Master of the world, and the Old Man gives answer: "He who stands on his feet." The Composite King of Three Metals is satisfied that this refers to himself. The Old Man, however, answers that this shall be revealed, for the time is at hand. Lily is astonished that she now has heard these words for the third time on this day of marvels—first from the Old Woman, then from the Snake, and now from the Old Man. She has heard it resound in the three realms.

Now the Temple begins to stir and, like a ship, moves underground through the rocks, travelling beneath the River to the other bank where it surfaces at the very point where the Ferryman's hut stood. In its surfacing it engulfs the wooden hut, which sinks down from the dome of the Temple and covers the Old Man and the Young Prince. The planks of the Ferryman's hut are shortly transformed by the power of the Lamp into an ornate altar or small temple within the space of the larger Temple. Out of this structure now steps the Young Prince, the Old Man with the Lamp and the transformed Ferryman, wearing a white robe and bearing a silver

oar. The Ferryman represents the inner power of the soul that guides from within the individual's quest for the spirit. Just as the Lamp shows the way, the oar, and the skill to use it, guides one in the right direction. Formerly, the Ferryman piloted souls across the River with his oar; but now the Temple stands in the place of his hut and he has become a guardian of this Temple, which will give his skill to all humanity. Now that this Temple stands by the River in the sensory world, all souls have the possibility of finding the inner source of guidance towards the spiritual. This event brings to a close the masculine mysteries which formerly dominated the lands. Thus the three male figures are separated from the women in the tale for a final transformation before the ultimate Coniunctio. The Ferryman who had previously tied people to the old order is metamorphosed into a teacher of the new mysteries, and the Young Prince is prepared for his coming role as the New King.

Concluding Section

Although Lily now wishes to embrace her beloved Prince, the task is not yet completed and still she has to stay apart from him. His ego, the spark of his spirit, has not yet returned into his soul, and he still remains inwardly unenlivened, a zombie.

The Old Woman feels that with all these strange marvels of transformation she has been left out, and her hand is still shrinking. The Old Man asks her to bathe in the River, but she is initially wary of such advice. The River, however, through this cycle of transformation and the deed of the Snake, has itself been changed, all debts are paid, and with this assurance she sets off.

At that moment, the light of the rising sun strikes the dome and the Old Man cries out for all to hear, "There are three which rule upon the Earth—Wisdom, Fair-seeming and Power." These correspond to the three facets of Spirit-Soul-Body or Thinking, Feeling and Willing. At the first word, "Wisdom," the Golden King rises; as the Old Man intones "Fair-seeming," that is, beauty of appearance, harmony of the inner and outer, the Silver King stands up; and when he says the word "Power," the Bronze King rises to his feet. The Composite King of Three Metals also tries to stand but suddenly collapses in a shapeless heap. The Will-o'-the-Wisps have licked

out all the golden veins of the statue and have brought about its collapse.

The Young Prince, still staring blankly before him, is led before the three Kings. With the collapse of the Fourth King there is now no obstacle to the potential energies of these ancient archetypal rulers of the soul being transferred to the Young Prince. The Bronze King gives him a sword of Power and tells him, "The sword on the left, the right hand free." He is to keep himself ready to act through the polarities in his being. The symbolic vehicle of his power of action, his sword, is to be on his left side, while his right side, the agent of his action, should be kept free. After girding on the sword, his posture seems to grow more firm and strong. The Silver King then gives his scepter to the youth and asks him to remember to "Feed the sheep." The bestowing of the scepter provides the Young Prince with a focus for the authority of his soul's forces, and the Silver King reminds him that this scepter gives the appearance of kingship and also confers its responsibility to nourish the people and treat them well.

Indeed, as he takes the scepter from the King his strength is modified, made more gentle, and his charm more powerful. The Golden King gives a wreath of oak as a crown and says "Know the highest." This is probably a reference to the mysteries of Zeus-Jupiter, the King of the Gods. Initiates in the Zeus mysteries perceived the highest spiritual wisdom and wore a crown of oak wreaths. The Gold King transfers to the Young Prince the ability to see into the highest spiritual realm, and as he places the oak wreath upon him, the Young Prince's features become alive as his spirit, his ego, returns to him. The first word he utters is "Lily" and he hastens to embrace her. Her death-dealing power has, through this process, been transformed. He turns to the Old Man and the three Holy Statues and says, "Glorious and sure is the Kingdom of our Fathers, but you have forgotten the fourth power which controls the world, sooner, more universally and more certainly—the power of Love."

The ancient energies of the archetypes ruled the powers of the soul—Wisdom, Beauty and Power of Will—but they had failed to incarnate a fourth King to meet the needs of the future. Their

proposed successor, composed of a mixture of these three qualities, was a failure in the casting, and through this they had been condemned for aeons to live buried in the supersensible world far beyond the outer perception of humankind. The Young Prince, however, through his suffering and torments, recognizes the new resource of the soul that has been blighted until now by the polarities impressed into the inner being of humanity through the failure of the prevailing patriarchal world to face up to these polarities. Love has, till now, been tinged by patriarchal mythology with a quality of sin. The patriarchal myth tried to drive a wedge between human love and spiritual love. The Young Prince realizes that these can be united again. The failure of the old patriarchal order of the Kings meant that the new power of Love arising in the human soul was to be placed under a curse. This laid the awful destiny upon the beautiful Lily and the Young Prince, who personify the archetypal vehicles for the unfolding of this power in the Soul.

The Old Man who, indeed, knows the pattern of things, smiles and says "Love does not rule, it cultivates, and that is more." The old patriarchal order where great archetypal Kings ruled in the soul is now transformed by the new power of Love, which does not impose constraints from without, but flows out from within the soul.

Through the open door of the Temple they see the magnificent sweep of a wide and grand bridge spanning the River. This is the metamorphosed Snake. The Old Man wishes that the Young Prince would remember this Snake and that he owed his life to her, and his people owe her the bridging of the River through which the adjacent banks have been permanently linked. Through the sacrifice of the Snake the polarities have been united, and humanity must remain eternally conscious of its debt to the Snake if it is to remain able to cross its bridge. The inner ability of the soul to mediate between the sensory and the supersensible world can only be maintained if humanity remains aware of the sacrifice of the Snake, for this ability of the soul rests upon its inner balancing of the polarities within its own nature.

Just at that moment appears the Old Woman, rejuvenated by her

bathing in the River, now so youthful that none recognize her except her husband, the Old Man, who himself has been changed and appears as a younger man.

The archetypal figures of the Old Man and the Old Woman were the only couple living together as man and wife in the earlier part of the tale when the banks of the River were divided. They lived in the supersensible and their love could not be incarnated in an outer way. They were spiritual archetypes cut off from the sensory world. Indeed, the patriarchal myth of the Fall made all humanity illegitimate offspring of the unsanctified marriage of Adam and Eve. It is the element of the alchemical *Coniunctio*, the marriage of the opposites, that Goethe has taken from *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*. Now, as the tale closes, and the Young Prince and Lily are married as King and Queen, so the relationship between the Old Man and the Old Woman must be renewed. The Old Man, aware of this, says to his now-rejuvenated former wife, "You may choose another husband today, for from today no marriage holds good that has not been contracted anew." However, they decide to remain together, and their relationship is transformed by their participation in the universal process. (It is important that at the conclusion of the previous section, just as the Temple begins to move on its journey under the River, Lily clings to the Old Man, and the Young Prince to the Old Woman. Thus comes about a complementary exchange of the forces of the Old Couple with the opposite members of the New Couple. Their mutual embracing lasts until the descent of the Ferryman's hut from the dome of the Temple.)

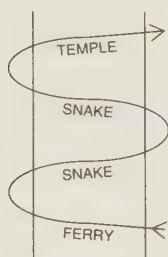
Suddenly the calm of this moment is shattered by a commotion. The Giant on waking had gone to his usual spot on the far bank of the River to take his bath, but, finding instead the grand Bridge, was stumbling across it. The shadows of his fists, as he attempted to wipe the sleep from his eyes, were in danger of harming the travelers on the Bridge. The new King involuntarily reached for his sword, then gains his composure by gazing at his scepter and at the lamp and oar of his companions. The Old Man is not dismayed, knowing that all their powers are useless against the Giant, and that it is essential that he cross the Bridge and come to reside on this

bank of the River. For on the supersensible side of the River he would remain beyond the outer knowledge of humanity. This Giant is the unconscious will forces, the sudden blind impulses of will that often arise in the human soul, appearing at transition points between different states of consciousness. Thus his influence through his Shadow is strongest at sunrise and sunset. As the Giant completes his chaotic journey across the Bridge, unseeing because the bright light of the sun is shining in his eyes, he strides towards the doors of the Temple, and just as he crosses the forecourt he is metamorphosed into a great statue. His volatile nature is solidified into stone. The will forces once within the sphere of consciousness become solid and surely founded. The shadow they cast is, however, still mobile but limited in its action and now capable of being used positively. This is well-pictured by Goethe in the Shadow being used to tell the hours, which were marked out on the paving in grand emblematic archetypal figures. (These are likely the zodiacal archetypes within which the will forces of humanity are structured.)

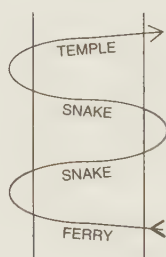
The common people of the world following this commotion now come into the Temple, and just at this moment the hawk, flying high above, catches the rays of the Sun and reflects them so that the New King and Queen and their attendants on the altar are illuminated. After this grand appearance as the New Archetypes, they depart through secret ways into the halls of their palaces. The people are amazed by this appearance and thus the New Archetypes are impressed into their souls.

Once they recover from this experience, the people begin to move around the Temple, examining the niches with the statues of the Kings. The crowd is particularly interested in the fourth niche where, instead of a grand effigy, only a sumptuous carpet covers the crumpled remains of the Fourth King. Even with all their curiosity, no one dares to raise the covering to see what lay underneath. Suddenly in the courtyard, gold coins seem to fall out of the empty air. The Will-o'-the-Wisps are casting off the gold they had licked from the limbs of the Fourth King and giving this to the people. The crowd runs hither and thither trying to catch these gold coins. The materialized essence of the Fourth Age, the gold from the Composite King is given freely to all humanity to use.

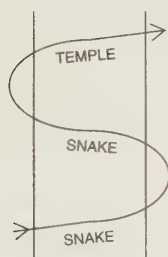
Now that we have completed a detailed commentary on the *Fairy Tale* it will be valuable to have a picture of the journeys made by the various characters. These different Archetypes in the soul undertake journeys through which they are transformed, moving from one bank to the other, from the supersensible-unconscious to the sensory-conscious realms within. The paths of their journeys thus throw light on the roles they play in the metamorphosis.



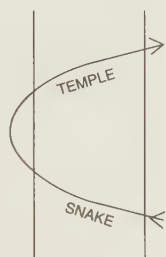
Will o' the Wisp



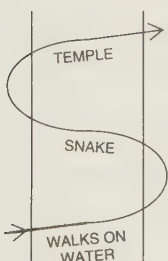
Young Prince



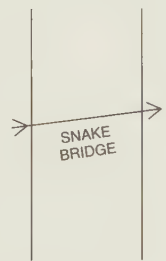
Old Woman



Lily



Old Man



Giant

Some Alchemical Parameters to the Tale

The alchemical process outlined in the *Fairy Tale* is quite traditional. It involves an initial bringing together of the substances for transmutation, the *prima materia*, the body of the Green Snake, which is worked upon by a reagent, the gold of the Will-o'-the-Wisps. This produces an initial spiritualization—the Snake becomes luminous from within. The Wisps, as we have earlier indicated, have a mercurial quality; they are like the living quicksilver of the soul. Through her experience in the Temple, the Snake knows she must be led through a sacrificial death process. This is, of course, the Nigredo, also pictured in the death of the pug and its transformation into black onyx, the blackening of the Old Woman's hand, and the death of the Young Prince in the premature Coniunctio. The Nigredo is the center of the process. The Snake then forms the Ouroboros around the corpse of the Young Prince.

Other facets of the process are borne by the beautiful Lily. Initially, she wears a white robe, symbolizing the Albedo, the white stage of the Lunar Stone, but as the party awaits the exact moment of midnight, when the process will reach its crucial turning point, she puts on a fire-colored veil, which, as the darkness falls, is seen to emit a red glow. This is the Rubedo, the formation of the Red Solar Stone. The Whiteness of the Lily is tinged with the reddening energies. (This part of the process reminds one of the famous series of woodcut illustrations to the *Rosarium Philosophorum* where the White Stone of the feminine appears first and then is tinged to the Red Solar Stone, all this occurring through a resurrection of a body in a sarcophagus.) Once they cross the River, the Snake's form is broken into shards or gems. Here we have a kind of picture of an alchemical vessel being broken and the pieces thrown into the universal solvent of the River. The final stage is the Coniunctio, the Alchemical Marriage of the King and Queen, and the spiritualization of the material.

So we see here that Goethe has used a quite straight and traditional version of the alchemical process as the skeleton structure for the unfolding of his ritual drama.

The Universal Process in the *Fairy Tale*

The *Fairy Tale* describes a process of transformation which Goethe has woven in such a way that there is pictured both a personal and a universal metamorphosis. The personal process can be revealed inwardly when one comes to see each figure in the tale as an aspect of one's own inner being, one's soul, spirit and bodily nature. The universal transformation can be seen as an evolutionary process working within humanity as a whole. Through the ongoing evolution of human consciousness, a point will be reached when the events pictured allegorically in this tale will indeed come about, and humanity in a global sense will be able to cross the threshold, and unite the spiritual and material through their souls.

One interpretation of Goethe's tale put forward soon after it was published was that it had referred to the events of the French Revolution. However, this view is rather limited, and seems to be based on a couple of lines from the tale, "...a universal happiness will dissolve our individual sorrows, as a universal wretchedness consumes individual joys." This error has, I believe, often clouded later interpretations of the tale. Goethe was not a revolutionary, but believed in the gradual evolution of human consciousness, which would grow like the Archetypal Plant through alternate stages of expansion and contraction, the "Sturm und Drang," the storm and stress of history. The *Fairy Tale* pictures, as we have seen, the synthesis of all that has become polarized in the soul of Western humanity.

Although Goethe had hopes that the Romantic movement might precipitate changes in outer culture, in the two centuries that have passed since he wrote the tale these polarities have not yet been united, and the further involution of mankind into industrialization and deepening materialism has put additional obstacles in the way of this synthesis. Thus his tale is still vitally relevant, especially today at the beginning of the post-industrial age when the feminine is being recognized again as an important facet of humanity, and people in general are attempting to find a new synthesis of the polarities. Because Goethe's tale is structured around archetypes, it will remain alive while people still work inwardly with these forces. Seen as a universal process, each character in the

drama can be interpreted as a force working through outer society for the spiritual evolution of Western humanity.

The Personal Process in the *Fairy Tale*

The *Fairy Tale* is perhaps easiest to approach as a map of an inner personal process for transforming one's inner being through uniting the flow of polarities within oneself. This constant flow of polarities can be experienced as the eternal splitting of our inner feelings into opposites, with sympathy becoming antipathy, then returning in an ongoing cycle.

If we inwardly distance ourselves just a little from the flow of our feelings, we can see our feelings tumbling through a constant flow of polarities, eternally splitting into the opposites, our sympathy or attraction for some inner or outer event becoming antipathy or repulsion in a never-ending cycle. This ebb and flow is the primal unrefined nature of our soul forces, the astral substance of our being. It is the source of the division of the land into two realms by the onflowing River. This River is our dedication to the flow of life, to incarnation. By being alive, being incarnated, we every moment feel the flowing of events in time, the irreversible momentum of the River. This River has to be bridged, and it is our soul's task to unite these two realms within us.

The process is put into motion by the Will-o'-the-Wisps, those seemingly flitting uncertain lights in the soul which are the harbingers of creative inspirations and impulses we must take note of. Following these often leads one astray, for the Will-o'-the-Wisps of our inner world can be tricksters and lead one on a merry dance, but nevertheless we must recognize them and have the courage to use them and follow their inspiration.

They give this strange gold, their uncertain, unrefined wisdom, to the Green Snake within our being—the polarized soul forces—the primitive natural forces in the soul. The Snake within ourselves is made luminous, made self-aware, inwardly experiencing its own quality of polarity; then it forms the Ouroboros, biting its own tail, uniting the polar form into the wholeness of the circle; and finally it is transformed into a great bridge between the polarities in our souls. This self-sacrifice of the primal soul forces of the Snake

within ourselves is only achieved through cooperation with other facets of our inner being.

Initially we have to turn to the inner guidance of the Old Man with the Lamp. He is the spiritual wisdom unfolding in our souls. We have to trust his inner vision of the unfolding of events. True spiritual development can unfold when one recognizes the Old Man with the Lamp in oneself. His lamp is steady, unlike the ever-flickering light of the Wisps, who are the inner Mercury stirred into action; the Old Man, however, is rather like a spiritual Sulphur, radiating sure within our beings. For an individual he could be projected onto an outer Master, Guru, or spiritual teacher, or remain within us as an inner guide. There are dangers, however, in such projections or introjections, for they can still produce polarities. The Old Man with the Lamp can be experienced best as the spiritual tradition, the body of spiritual wisdom handed down through the ages. Thus this Old Man exists both outside our souls as the vast body of spiritual wisdom we are heir to, and within our souls as that part of this wisdom which we have absorbed and made our own.

Further, this integration of our being through the sacrificing of the Snake within ourselves requires other facets of the soul than the Old Man with his Lamp reflecting the higher wisdom aspect of our being. This task requires the meeting of two inner facets, and can only come about in a dramatic form. These polarized facets of our innermost beings, the Prince and the Lily, which we can perhaps most easily identify by perceiving them as male and female aspects, active and passive, penetrative and receptive, live within us in a state of dynamic tension, eternally circling around each other, each frightened of being engulfed in the forces of the other. It is this polarity that has inwardly wounded humanity and can cast a blight over our inner landscape, making it a barren wasteland rather than a paradisaical garden. Only when these two come together in an initial Coniunctio can the Snake be transformed. The Prince within ourselves must seek to unite with the Lily. We must have the inner courage to grasp this facet of our being, though initially it may mean a kind of inner death. Only once we have taken this courageous step towards the Lily can the Snake continue

its transformation, forming the Ouroboros. The Ouroboros is a symbol of the soul feeding upon itself, turned in upon itself, transforming its own substance. This is a process that can best be experienced through meditation (though it also can take place in other ways in the soul). The Ouroboros gesture is the soul turning in upon itself and, through meditation, upon its own substance, uniting the polarities.

As a result of this inward dwelling of the Snake, the primal polarities, the Prince and the Lily, are metamorphosed. When we cast off our ego in this way, we can then be given inner powers. These powers given to the Young Prince by the Old Rulers in the soul, the Kings in the Temple, would lead to egoism and personal aggrandizement were the soul not prepared to receive them in an unpolarized way. Thus they can only be given as wedding presents, that is, at the moment the polarities in the soul are to be united, for before that point the unbalanced soul would easily slip into egoism and be tempted to use these powers in a self-oriented manner. When the two facets are united, this danger is avoided.

Thus if we can get to a point in our inner work where we begin to unite the Prince and the Lily elements in our souls, we will then naturally come to inherit the powers of the Old Kings—that is, we will inwardly free ourselves and receive what is our spiritual inheritance.

Through this inner process the Giant in ourselves, our unconscious will forces—a vast resource within our beings—can be brought into our consciousness. Before we are integrated through this process, the inner source of will, that is the Giant, blunders about in our unconsciousness. We only perceive him by the Shadow he throws into our consciousness. These are the often inexplicable impulses that take hold of us, completely out of the control, or even the perception, of our conscious nature. The Giant now comes across the Bridge within our beings and is solidified in our consciousness. Thus, through this inner development, we gain a degree of conscious control of the vast resource of will that lies within our souls.

All the characters in the *Fairy Tale* can be experienced in this way as facets of our souls. Enough indications have been given in the

extensive commentary to enable the readers to use this as a basis for meditative exercises that will allow them to penetrate to the heart of the *Fairy Tale*, and if conscientiously followed, enable them to work through Goethe's process of soul metamorphosis, at least in a small way.

The *Fairy Tale* and the Faust Legend

Goethe's *Fairy Tale* is a profound document, a map of a process of inner transformation deeply relevant to our present age. It rises above the sentimental moralizing that is often found in other writers who have consciously used the form of an allegory as a vehicle for exploring inner development. (One of the most obvious failures in this sphere would of course be Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*.) Goethe transcends any specious moralizing and grasps the archetypes of the soul. In this he was without doubt aided by his study of alchemical and Rosicrucian ideas and allegories.

In the *Fairy Tale*, Goethe shows that humanity in this polarized, patriarchal age must recognize the power of the inner feminine, and individuals must integrate this facet into their beings. He seemed satisfied with this allegory and did not have any wish to later amend or alter it in any way. He had given a clear, carefully sculpted expression to this need to integrate the feminine component of the soul of humanity.

I believe, however, that he was not satisfied that he had given a cogent and wide-ranging expression to the masculine polarity of the soul, the dangers inherent in it when it is allowed to range free, and that this was the impulse that gave rise to his work with the Faust legend. It may help to throw some light on his *Faust*, particularly the enigmatic second part, if we come to see it as having a connection with the *Fairy Tale*. Both have at their center an alchemical transformation, the *Fairy Tale* being concerned with the recognition and integration of the feminine, while *Faust* attempts to find a resolution of the masculine forces in the soul.

Goethe worked on the Faust legend from early manhood till the end of his days. He was never satisfied with the result. He was making a grand attempt to identify and resolve the problem of the masculine polarity of the Soul. He tries in Part II of *Faust* to outline

a spiritual developmental process for the masculine polarity that did not need the same inner meeting with the feminine as is found in the *Fairy Tale*. I believe it can be instructive to study these two works as different ways in which Goethe attempted to resolve the same problem of polarity. With Goethe we always have a recognition of the existence of polarity, never a sanctioning of dualism. There is no element of evil in his *Fairy Tale*, nor in *Faust*. Although *Faust* is well known, regrettably the *Fairy Tale* has not received much attention in recent times. I do hope this commentary might inspire others to work with the tale in their own way.

After the *Fairy Tale* was published, many of Goethe's contemporaries produced interpretations of what they believed was the meaning of the allegory. Goethe was amused by this attention given to his tale and did not comment on these "interpretations," promising to provide a solution only when ninety-nine others had failed. His solution being long overdue, I do not feel too intimidated in putting my own ideas on the subject into print.

I do not offer this commentary as "the solution" or an absolute interpretation of the *Fairy Tale*, but would rather it was seen as a way of working with the same archetypes that Goethe perceived when he structured his tale. Thus in this commentary I have been able to outline these archetypes seen from my point of view as a Hermeticist, and the ways in which they are transformed through the process. Others may find other ways of working with the same material. The *Fairy Tale*, outlining an archetypal process, is carved and fashioned like a precious stone or beautiful multi-faceted jewel. It can be looked at from many different angles simultaneously and show its beauty in different ways to different people.

Although, in criticism, it might be put forward that I here am reading too much into a simple fairy story, I am convinced that Goethe wrote this *Fairy Tale* out of a deep immersion in the problem of uniting the polarities in the soul, and that he touched upon the archetypes of a process of transformation. In this way, his *Fairy Tale* transcends being merely a work of literary imagination and should be seen as a mystery document, to be placed alongside great Hermetic allegories such as *The Chemical Wedding of Chris-*

tian Rosenkreutz.

In his spiritual perception Goethe reached the archetypal level, and his *Fairy Tale* is an eternal document presenting us with a ritual of transformation that Goethe saw in the spiritual world.

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