# French Fairy Tales

## A Jungian Approach

Bettina L. Knapp

# FRENCH FAIRY TALES

SUNY series in Psychoanalysis and Culture
—Henry Sussman, editor

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Bettina L. Knapp

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To my beloved Mother
Emily Gresser Liebowitz

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I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE TO NORMAN CLARIUS, librarian at Hunter College, for his unstinting help in making certain important and rare texts available to me.

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# INTRODUCTION

THE WORLD OF FAIRY TALES opened its fantasies to me when I was four years old—in 1930. My parents, my brother, Daniel, and I were living in Paris at the time. It was spring and we were scheduled to leave for the south of France. Prior to taking the train, we had planned to greet Yvette Guilbert, the French *diseuse,* who would be returning from a concert tour at the same station from which we were scheduled to depart. During the 1880s and 1890s she had won international fame singing her naughty songs at cabarets such as the Divan Japonais and the Chat Noir. And indeed it was she who had been immortalized by Toulouse-Lautrec in his lithographs. At the outset of the twentieth century, however, Yvette Guilbert had changed her style—researching, setting to music, and singing poems and songs from medieval to contemporary times that were pithy, moving, acerbic, tragic, and frequently ribald; she performed these unique works to packed houses. It was in Berlin in 1914, at a gathering of royalty, diplomats, artists, and intellectuals, that my mother, Emily Gresser, a student of the violin, first met the *diseuse*. Two years later, on tour in New York, Yvette Guilbert, in need of an artist to perform classical works on stage for half the concert time, called upon my mother. For the next four years, they toured together throughout the United States and Canada, after which the singer returned to Paris. My mother married, and did not go back to France until 1930, where she again performed with Yvette Guilbert on special occasions.

While my memories of Yvette Guilbert stepping from the train to the platform in the Paris station, bending over and kissing me, then giving me a copy of *Perrault's Fairy Tales*, are relatively dim, the occasion remains engraved in my mind. As for the beautifully illustrated volume of Perrault's tales, I have treasured it all these years. I pleasured in the fantasies and the imaginary trajectories of the supernatural beings Perrault evokes. I was, I must admit, stunned and even terrified by some of his stories. Nonetheless, they constellated my waking and sleeping dreams.

After our return to New York in 1932, I was sent to the progressive Lincoln School, the brainchild of the philosopher John Dewey, which emphasized the imaginary and the creative factor in children. Studies in French,

comparative literatures, and history led me to Barnard College and to Columbia University, where I earned a doctorate. In time, my interests expanded to include world religions and the myths upon which they are based. Little did I realize that I was embarking on yet another adventure. A friend, Estelle Weinrib, suggested I read C. G. Jung's *Symbols of Transformation,* predicting correctly that they would fascinate me. Jung's psychological analyses of eternal and universal motifs and beliefs shed light for me on so many unanswered questions concerning human behavioral patterns. My unassuaged appetite for answers to all kinds of questions not only catalyzed my readings of Jung's writings, but encouraged me to turn to the works of those who had studied with him: Erich Neumann, Esther Harding, Marie-Louise von Franz, Jolande Jacobi, and others. Each volume contained a treasure of information; each provided me with new insights and a variety of perspectives that allowed me better to understand the meanings embedded in literature in general, and those secreted in myths, folktales, and fairy tales in particular. Cumulatively speaking, they yielded clues to the complexities impacting so weightily—deleteriously and/or positively—on today's individuals and societies.

Most arresting for me in my researchings and probings of hidden meanings locked in fairy tales were the innovative writings of Marie-Louise von Franz: her *Interpretation of Fairy Tales, The Feminine in Fairy Tales, Individuation in Fairy Tales, Shadow and Evil in Fairy Tales, The Golden Ass of Apuleius,* and so forth. A remarkable cryptographer of hidden messages and feeling tones, Franz was a scholar—conversant with Greek, Latin, alchemy, gnosticism, philosophy, and the mystical writings of ancient, medieval, and Renaissance creative spirits—and a psychoanalyst as well.

The uniqueness of C. G. Jung's approach to psychology is due in part to his involvement of the *whole being*—not solely the intellectual or sexual—in the psychological process. To this end, he studied myths, legends, and fairy tales—cultural manifestations of all kinds in both their personal and universal frames of reference. Explorations of this nature gave him insights into primordial images: *archetypes of the collective unconscious.* Drawing parallels between the workings of the individual unconscious revealed in images produced in the dreams of his patients, and the universal recurrent eternal motifs found in religions, works of art and literature, Jung enlarged the scope of psychotherapy. It became not only a curative agent that related to "the whole history and evolution of the human psyche," but a technique that could help develop the potential of well-adjusted normal and superior human beings as well (Edinger, "An Outline of Analytical Psychology" 1).

Jung's archetypal analysis lifts the literary work—in our case the fairy tale—out of its individual and conventional context and relates it to human-

kind in general. In so doing, it takes readers out of their specific and perhaps isolated worlds, allows them to expand their vision, relate more easily to issues that may confront them daily, and understand their reality as part of an ongoing and cyclical reality. Awareness of the fact that people in past eras suffered from alienation and identity crises—to mention but two problems—and went through harrowing ordeals before they knew some semblance of fulfillment, may help certain readers to face and understand their own gnawing feelings of distress and aloneness.

The archetypal analyses in *French Fairy Tales: A Jungian Approach* are designed to enlarge the views of readers, to develop their potential, and, perhaps, to encourage personal confrontations. Such encounters may be painful or joyous, terrifying or serene. Hopefully, they will prove enlightening. The very process of probing, deciphering, amplifying, and ferreting out coded or mysterious messages may help us to find new directions in life, thereby increasing our understanding of some of the eternal factors implicit in human behavior, and perhaps permitting us better to deal with the problematics of both our personal and collective situations.

While specialists in the field of folklore and fairy tale—V. Propp, A.-J. Greimas, and C. Brémond, J. Bédier, S. Thompson, and L. C. Seifert, to mention but a few—have served us brilliantly in the theoretics and evolution of this genre, I have chosen a different path in *French Fairy Tales: A Jungian Approach*. By basing my explorations on the peregrinations, inclinations, ideologies, feeling-tones, physical makeup, and interconnectedness or disconnectedness of the protagonists in the fairy tales probed in this volume, I necessarily included analyses of imagery, associations, and philosophical/spiritual intent. I felt that the probing of fairy tales, like an anamnesis, could open readers to new and pertinent information applicable to their own lives. Catalyzed in this manner, the fairy tale could become a free-flowing "mouthpiece" that neither imprisons readers in a single voice nor confines them to a specific linear time frame. Like an artifact of some past age, such as the waking or sleeping dream imaged by an individual, the intricacy of fairy tales may be experienced and responded to by contemporary readers with the intensity and power of a living imprint of the soul!

To set the fairy tales in a historical context permits increased understanding of the times in which they were written, underlying the problems as well as the spiritual and philosophical yearnings adumbrated in the works. With this in mind, I have included a brief and a very general "highlighting" of the historical and cultural events occurring in the five centuries from which I have drawn and analyzed the fairy tales in this volume. For further delineation, I have incorporated an *ectypal analysis*—a lean biographical sketch of the authors and of the settings of the works—followed by an *archetypal*

*analysis* of the individual fairy tale. The latter, making up the largest segment of each chapter, explores psychological, spiritual, artistic, cultural, actional, and empirical information, which, hopefully, will involve the reader closely in the fairy tale's dramatic unfoldings.

## What is a Fairy Tale?

Marie-Louise von Franz defines the fairy tale genre as follows:

> Fairy tales are the purest and simplest expression of [the] collective unconscious psychic process. Therefore their value for the scientific investigation of the unconscious exceeds that of all other material. They represent the archetypes in their simplest, barest and most concise form. In this pure form, the archetypal images afford us the best clues to the understanding of the processes going on in the collective psyche. In myths or legends, or any other more elaborate mythological material, we get at the basic patterns of the human psyche through an overlay of cultural material. But in fairy tales there is much less specific conscious cultural material and therefore they mirror the basic patterns of the psyche more clearly. (Franz, *Interpretation of Fairy Tales* I, 1)

Focusing more directly on C. G. Jung's concepts, she adds:

> Every archetype is in its essence an *unknown* psychic factor and therefore there is no possibility of translating its content into intellectual terms. The best we can do is to circumscribe it on the basis of our own psychological experience and from comparative studies, bringing up into light, as it were, the whole net of associations in which the archetypal images are enmeshed. The fairy tale itself is its own best explanation; that is, its meaning is contained in the totality of its motifs connected by the thread of the story. The unconscious is, metaphorically speaking, in the same position as one who has had an original vision or experience and wishes to share it. Since it is an event that has never been conceptually formulated he is at a loss for means of expression. When a person is in that position he makes several attempts to convey the thing and tries to evoke, by intuitive appeal and analogy to familiar material, some response in his listeners; and never tires of expounding his vision until he feels they have some sense of the content. In the same way we can put forward the hypothesis that every fairy tale is a relatively closed system compounding one essential psychological meaning which is expressed in a series of symbolical pictures and events and is discoverable in these.
>
> After working for many years in this field, I have come to the conclusion that all fairy tales endeavour to describe one and the same psychic fact,

> but a fact so complex and far-reaching and so difficult for us to realize in all its different aspects that hundreds of tales and thousands of repetitions with a musician's variations are needed until this unknown fact is delivered into consciousness; and even then the theme is not exhausted. This unknown fact is what Jung calls the Self, which is the psychic totality of an individual and also, paradoxically, the regulating center of the collective unconscious. Every individual and every nation has its own modes of experiencing this psychic reality. (Franz I,1ff.)

## HUMANKIND'S NEED FOR THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE PARANORMAL

The *fée* or *faerie* (Prov. *fada;* Sp. *hada;* It. *fata;* med. Lat. *fatare,* to enchant, from the Lat. *fatum,* fate, destiny) has existed in one form or another since prehistoric times. Many theories have been expounded to explain the origin of the supernatural creatures we identify as fairies, appearing at times as ancestral spirits, elemental beings, incarnations of the Greek and Roman Fates, or otherwise (Krappe, *The Science of Folklore* 87). Known in a variety of forms—human, reptile, animal, bird, snake, ogre, giant, witch, Nereid, jinn, pixie, lamia, dwarf, Norn, gnome, fairies entered into the consciousness of individuals and of societies according to the psychological needs of the collective and the individual narration of the oral folktale or setting down of the written fairy tale: a rendering that also depended upon the locality, family, and class of the transcriber.

Fairies in whatever form have been associated with water, mountains, chthonic or heavenly worlds, deserts, forests, pastoral realms, and other topographies. Many fairies live away from humans, in their own kingdoms: in secret underground domains, in the sea, in enchanted forests, distant lands, mountainous regions, and as rulers in mysterious domains. To gain access to them has proven difficult at times, and, in other instances, surprisingly simple, depending on the unfolding of fortuitous happenings or, in Jungian terms, the *synchronistic event* (the meaningful coincidence) that triggers them into existence. A case in point is Mélusine, the beautiful protagonist in Jean d'Arras's fifteenth-century fairy tale by the same name, who appeared to her future husband standing in a forest beside a fountain, as if from nowhere. The fairy Viviane, well known in Breton tradition, lived under a hawthorn bush in the depths of the Bréchéliant forest, where she held Merlin bewitched (Maury, *Croyances et légendes* 18). Beautiful or hideous fairies were said to have inhabited Auvergne, Oise, Creuse, and other areas in France, in close proximity not only to fountains but to Druid monuments as well: grottos, mounds, menhirs, cairns, dolmens (Maury 30).

With the onset of Christianity, fairies, along with other supernormal figures, were said to have descended from ancient Gods and Goddesses, or in other cases from nymphs, fallen angels, unbaptized souls. Visualized as tall and beautiful, or as small and/or wizened female or male (like the leprechaun), or as terrifying anthropophagous giants (the ogre), they could easily transform themselves into animals, birds, or other living creatures. Each in his or her own way could be kind, gentle, tender, loving, nurturing, helpful, or its opposite—mean, destructive, death-dealing enchantresses, castrators, or man killers (the Lorelei, Morgan Le Fay). In the old days—and today as well, in certain remote areas of our globe—some supernatural creatures were believed to have become manifest as succubi and/or incubi, entering into love affairs with mortals. Saint Augustine reported that

> trustworthy Scripture testifies that angels have appeared to men in such bodies as could not only be seen, but also touched. There is, too, a very general rumor, which many have verified by their own experience, or which trustworthy persons who have heard the experience of others corroborate, that sylvans and fauns, who are commonly called "incubi," had often made wicked assaults upon women, and satisfied their lust upon them; and that certain devils, called Duses by the Gauls, are constantly attempting and effecting this impurity is so generally affirmed, that it were impudent to deny it. (Saint Augustine, *Basic Writings. The City of God* XV,xxiii, 307)

Ancestor worship was also considered a factor explaining the origin and the calling forth of fairies and other supernatural beings into the empirical sphere. Thus, a link may be established between them and human beings. In this context, we may associate fairies with certain religious beliefs—animism (Lat. *anima,* soul), fetishism (Lat. *facticius,* artificial), totemism (of Native American, Algonquin origin), transformationism (Lat. *transformare*, to change in shape), and cannibalism—as forms of assuagement of humanity's eternal need to confront what transcends human comprehension. Nor must we omit mentioning the importance of *hierophanies* (Gr. *hieros,* sacred; *phainein*, to show, reveal), the manifestation of living and active transpersonal powers in objects. For example, a human or supernatural spirit may be venerated in an inanimate plant, stone, metal, stick, or other object which becomes endowed with sacrality. Sometimes carved into special shapes, these objects have been transformed by tribes, individuals, and even highly sophisticated religious groups from meaningless entities into holy talismans. By extension, it may be suggested that anything that is believed to be provided with magic and/or sacred powers—trees, flowers, sun, moon, stars, lakes, mountains—is endowed as well with a conscious life and/or with human qualities capable of working in favor or to the detriment of individuals and collectives, depending upon how

humans honor, respect, or worship it (Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* 7). Well-known hierophanies, such as Pygmalion's humanized statue of Galatea; the doll in *The Tales of Hoffmann*; the sword, Durandal, in *The Song of Roland*; and less-known charms, idols, and wands, associated with Christian saints, blessed by popes or other religious figures, or allegedly dipped in sacred waters by supernatural powers, have attained sacrality (Yearsley, *The Folklore of Fairy–Tale* 51). In like manner, mirrors may be bewitched, as in *Snow White,* and horror chambers may work their evils, as in *Bluebeard*. So, too, in Mme d'Aulnoy's *The Bluebird,* incidents of homeopathic and contagious sorcery involving medicine men and shamans feed the fancy of readers.

In one of the most engaging of religious narratives, *The Tale of Two Brothers,* discovered on Egyptian papyri and stelae dating from c. 2000 B.C.E., magical powers are put to the inevitably successful test. Spells and enchantments are factors in *The Golden Ass* by the Latin writer Lucius Apuleius (155 C.E.). Included in this work is the famous *Amor and Psyche* tale, reminiscent in so many ways of our relatively modern and ever-popular *Beauty and the Beast.* In a Chinese version of *Cinderella* that existed in the ninth century, her golden slippers were awarded her by a marvelous fish rather than by a fairy (Delarue, *Le Conte populaire français* 7). Supernatural and/or paranormal beings able to transform themselves into humans or into animals, and comport themselves like normal men and women, were vastly popular fare for folktale tellers and fairy tale transcriptors. (The word *transcriptor,* rather than *author* or *transcriber,* will be used to identify writers who availed themselves of one or more versions of a fairy tale handed down from a single or multiple lands.) Some fairy tale figures became guides, assisting, protecting, and even saving those in peril. We may note that in the Bible, Balaam's ass talked at just the right moment (Numbers 22: 21–38); Solomon, and later St. Francis of Assisi, among many others, were believed to have understood the language of trees, beasts, fowls, creeping things, and fishes (Kings IV: 29–34). Nor should the animals in Aesop's Fables (c. sixth cent. B.C.E.) be omitted from the variety of creatures endowed with human traits or vice versa. The Gallic priestess Sena claimed to be able to change herself into any animal. Gods, saints, fairies, gnomes, pixies, banshees, elves, trolls, jinns, no matter their gender or name, populated not only revealed religions, but myths, folktales, and fairy tales as well. Swan maiden cycles featured birds transformed into beautiful maidens; humans magically assumed the shapes of werewolves; destructive or helpful dragons and other supernatural powers either devoured their victims to assuage their voracious appetites or disgorged and immobilized them, thereby saving them from annihilation. Witchlike creatures, such as the Medusa in the Greek myth of Perseus and Andromeda, were able to transform humans into hideous forms, or into stone, or condemn their victim to sleep for a hundred years, as in *Sleeping Beauty.*

Among other supernatural beings, godly creatures were also called upon via prayers, litanies, sacraments, and meditational or magical devices to help individuals or groups through calamitous situations and/or transitional life experiences. Visitations, annunciations, apparitions, hallucinations, or evocations of supreme beings and Creator Gods and Goddesses were basic to many organized religions. The Gods and Goddesses were also recipients of appreciation and/or gratitude for happiness bestowed upon individuals and societies. Thanks to divine intervention—or what was and is believed to be just that—supernormal beings have always functioned, for better or for worse, in the imaginations, beliefs, and/or realities of people since liminal time. In keeping with the notions of the Cyrenaic philosopher Euhemerus (fourth century B.C.E.), who suggested that Gods and Goddesses *were* deified beings, we may, by extension, suggest that fairy tales were and are largely based on real people and actual events as well.

Let us take one of Charles Perrault's fairy tales—*Tom Thumb*—as a case in point. A devastating famine having brought starvation to the land inhabited by Tom Thumb's parents, they were unable to feed their children. Rather than see their young ones starve, they set them astray in a great forest, hoping they would be able to feed themselves on berries, herbs, wild vegetables, and the like. Tom Thumb, so named because of his tiny size, had the genial idea of dropping white pebbles along the way into the heart of the forest. Forethought on his part enabled him and his siblings to find their return route home. When, however, his parents again purposely lost their children in the forest, Tom Thumb, perhaps unthinkingly this time, chose to drop along the way crumbs of bread, which birds unfortuntely gobbled up in no time. The hopelessly lost children wandered about, eventually happening upon the house of an ogre . . . And the story goes on!

While Marie-Louise von Franz scattered her white pebbles during the course of her psychological probings into fairy tales, she failed to spread bread crumbs as well, at times leaving her readers in a quandary. They, like Tom Thumb, may have attempted to return home—or at least sought to tread directly on familiar ground—but indirect and circuitous routes forced them to alter their course. So, too, with the analytical trajectories offered in *French Fairy Tales: A Jungian Approach*. Although frustrating, such roundabout and even oblique directions may prove to be beneficial to readers, compelling them to probe in order to grasp the broader perspectives. Regardless of the individual's assessment of the symbols and images implicit in a specific fairy tale, whatever the terrains and personalities involved, the events depicted, or the associations or family dynamics evoked, we may be sure of one central truth: the enormous complexity of everything relating to fairy tales. While some may seem utterly naive and infantile to the casual observer, they are all but that. In-

deed, it may be suggested that no single answer or interpretation of any supernatural tale is conclusive. In fact, no single answer to anything is conclusive! What we may aver, however, is that Tom Thumb's second and most dangerous circuitous return route, taking him and his family to the house of the ogre, eventually led to the saving of his siblings and of his parents. Such a positive ending, however, resulted in large measure from a powerful drive for survival on Tom's part, accounting as well for the development of his innate ingenuity, sensitivity, devotion, sense of responsibility, love for family and for life. That he survived the ordeals to which he and his siblings had been forced to submit eventually led to expanded consciousness on his part.

In like manner, may readers of the fairy tales presented in *French Fairy Tales: A Jungian Approach* find their own circuitous return routes according to their temperaments, personal values, assessments, and reactions to their own pressing problems. May their inner watercourses, like those in the ancient Cambodian myth imaging churning waters, be agitated to the point of turning the psyche and its contents upside-down. The waters may be turbid at first, but as they calm they will reveal new clarities, different junctures and perspectives, and recognition of the individual's formerly repressed, depressed, suppressed conflicts. Once the wall of silence and of stasis is dissolved, new adaptations may be ventured, encouraging individuals to peer into the conflicts facing them, or to see through nonexistent ones.

No panaceas are offered the reader. The psyche, no sooner divested of one problem, burgeons with new ones, like nature's growth factor. How many of us, for example, are "in denial" as we go our merry way? How many of us reject the so-called shadow factors within our personalities, aspects of ourselves that we cannot seem to accept but see very clearly in others? The reviewing of an individual's inner climate via projection onto one or several protagonists in *French Fairy Tales: A Jungian Approach* may serve, hopefully, to create unconscious connections between the reader and the character(s) involved, which may increase that person's awareness of him- or herself. Nor will human beings be spared an encounter with the Ogre or the Witch factor—that devouring blind force existing in both one's inner and outer worlds during the person's life process. To recognize the monstrously alienating powers of the uncultivated, so-called savage (Lat. *silvaticus,* wild, or belonging to a wood) nature existing in each one of us is to take the first step toward the enlightenment and refinement that transform the unworkable into the workable, the discordant into the harmonious, and the noncreative into the creative within the psyche. To help us on our way are the ever-present compensatory powers in fairy tales: the Fairy Godmother and Fairy Godfather. Nor may the intrusion of the *marvelous* and/or the *sublime* lived out by the believer be discounted in effecting a change in her or his outlook.

## Archetypal Images in Fairy Tales

As previously noted, *archetypal* or *primordial* images, emerging as they do from the deepest layers of the unconscious, are a key to an understanding of fairy tales and to the exploration of the *feeling values* aroused by the concomitant emotional reading experience. Dr. Edward Edinger has compared the archetype to the instinct:

> An instinct is a pattern of behavior which is inborn and characteristic for a certain species. Instincts are discovered by observing the behavioral patterns of individual organisms and, from this data, reaching the generalization that certain patterns of behavior are the common instinctual equipment of a given species. The instincts are the unknown motivating dynamisms that determine an animal's behavior on the biological level.
>
> An archetype is to the psyche what an instinct is to the body. The existence of archetypes is inferred by the same process as that by which we infer the existence of instincts. Just as instincts common to a species are postulated by observing the uniformities in biological behavior, so archetypes are inferred by observing the uniformities in psychic phenomena. Just as instincts are unknown motivating dynamisms of biological behavior, archetypes are unknown motivating dynamisms of the psyche. Archetypes are the psychic instincts of the human species. Although biological instincts and psychic archetypes have a very close connection, exactly what this connection is we do not know any more than we understand just how the mind and body are connected. (Edinger, "An Outline of Analytical Psychology" 6)

Franz adds:

> An archetypal image is not to be thought of as merely a static image, for it is always at the same time a complete typical process including other images in a specific way. An archetype is a specific psychic impulse, producing its effect like a single ray of radiation, and at the same time a whole magnetic field expanding in all directions. Thus the stream of psychic energy of a "system," an archetype, usually runs through all the archetypes as well. Therefore, although we have to recognize the indefinable vastness of an archetypal image, we must discipline ourselves to chisel sharp outlines which throw the different aspects into bold relief. We must get as close as possible to the specific, determinate, "just so" character of each image and to try to express the very specific character of the psychic situation which is contained in it (Franz, *Interpretation of Fairy Tales* I,2).

Because fairy tale archetypal images focus on collective, universal, and eternal motifs, to omit studying the "human basis from which such motifs

grow," Jung and Franz maintained, would be to ignore their vital essence and fail to understand the specific variations presented in each individual tale (Franz, I,9). Just as farmers before they plant have to know the lay of the land and the type of soil with which they are working, similar groundwork must be laid by investigators of fairy tales. While many tales of enchantment have been structured in the same manner *grosso modo,* variations are forever being spawned from the so-called original versions. Why the differences? As the *Tao Te Ching* tells us, everything is as of necessity in a state of flux. Cultural factors, therefore, effect societal changes, certain values increasing or decreasing in importance with fluctuating times, some even dropping out completely from the collective eye. It follows, then, that styles, yearnings, hatreds, loves, goals, all alter as well. How and why, for example, did medieval fairy tales emphasize certain factors, while others, written in the nineteenth century, assign different ideations? One might even ask whether or not a real dichotomy exists between ancient and modern thematics. Might we, in our analyses of archetypal images, symbols, and associations, be fortunate enough to discover certain significant missing links?

## FRENCH FAIRY TALES

Folktales (oral) and fairy tales (written), delving as they do into the supernatural, have been alluded to as "the fossil remains of the thoughts and customs of the past" (Yearsley, *The Folklore of Fairy Tale* 16).

Troubadours, minstrels, jongleurs, bards, poets, scholars, clerics, novices, or simply storytellers from different areas of France, as well as transcriptors of written tales, entertained audiences throughout the thousand-year period marking the Middle Ages. Not only were they adept at conjuring preternatural forces; they seemed to be in touch with nature's mysteries, susceptible to a whole world of unknowns provoked by dense fogs, harsh seas, tenebrous forests, dunes, lush green pastures, star-lit heavens, dawns, and dusks. Some questioning individuals looked beyond the evident bark of a tree, aroma of a flower, sheen of a river, or enormity of a geological formation. What supernatural power, they may have asked themselves, had been responsible for creating these natural forces ? What unseen benevolent or malevolent power lay hidden within them? No matter, they may have concluded, these now *sacred* entities and spaces must be approached with care and awe. Transcriptor-entertainers regaled their audiences with clusters of fabulous happenings and supernal or chthonic presences: fairies, elves, pixies, witches, Gods, Goddesses, ogres, animals who could speak.

In time, the veneer of sophistication added notable elegance to the raw material emerging from the imaginations of transcriptors and *raconteurs*.

Fairies appeared beside an ancient Druid fountain, namely, that of Baranton, near the Bréchéliant forest. As the twelfth-century Norman poet Wace wrote: "Là solt l'en les fées veeir" (Maury, *Croyances et légendes du Moyen Age* 18). These happenings were believed to be as true as the Gospels. Hadn't Mélusine, standing near a fountain in the Colombiers forest in Poitou, appeared to Raimondin? Hadn't Marie de France's *Lais of Graelent* indicated that her eponymous hero had caught sight of his fairy standing near a fountain, that the two had fallen in love, then disappeared from sight, never to return? Hadn't Joan of Arc experienced her first vision near one of these "fairy fountains"? Hadn't a fairy appeared the night Ogier the Dane was born to bestow a special gift on him? Hadn't it been recounted that three fairies built the famous Castle of the Fairies, only three leagues from Tours? (Maury 23). That certain fairies had been identified as witches sent shivers up the spines of awestruck listeners. No sooner had these evildoers been identified with megalithic monuments than townspeople were warned to maintain their distance from the sites. How did it happen that the community of Bouloire (Sarthe), for example, boasted of a fairy's visible footprint on top of a rock formation? (Maury 38). Nordic, Anglo-Breton, Anglo-Norman, and Celtic beliefs, among others, endowed imaginative transcriptors with seemingly soaring poetic licence. "Mother-goddesses, nymphs, fairies, druidesses, sorceresses" lived their charmed follies and realities everywhere (Maury 40).

Religious, ethnic, and historical traditions blended to become nourishing food for transcriptors, who, driven by their own creative impulses, rarely failed to bring their supernatural creatures into sharp relief. Fashioning their tales with a plethora of miracles, phantasmagorias, and transformations, they heightened the sense of eeriness inherent in the marvelous. Frequent were encounters with the dead, with mysterious fraternal groups (some of whom had the power to transform themselves into animals), with heroes seemingly predestined to perform marvelous feats, and with others, who, having lost their way, reaped the glories of their misadeventures. Courageous or suffering young ladies, rescued by such famous heroes as Arthur, Tristan, and Merlin, elicited tales of love and grief before eager listeners.

French society was increasingly fascinated by the marvelous, the miraculous, and the world of magic, sometimes identified with satanic practices and witchcraft. Haunted forests, lakes, mountains, and caves, both above and beneath ground, instilled fear into the noblest knights. But belief in the good acts of fairies of folklore, vestiges of polytheistic deities, was so strong that it was not uncommon for meals to be prepared especially for these supernatural beings to celebrate a birth, a christening, or other Christian religious events. After all, the folk may have reasoned, wasn't it the fairy who decided an infant's destiny? (Maury 27).

Fairy tales, emanating from "popular" or "folklore" motifs, were reworked during the Middle Ages, particularly in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. While considered oppositional to the official vernacular writings produced by the learned classes and the Latin writings of clerics, folklore nonetheless permeated these milieus. Such infiltration furnished the élite with profane material, luring them toward other than clerical imperatives, and in so doing, enriched France's cultural heritage.

The paradoxical relationship between the disparate social classes—for our purposes, the folk and oral traditions, and the aristocrats in their written literatures—became evident in the development of what is called courtly literature. The "evolution of the Church's attitude toward popular culture and pagan beliefs" was instrumental in creating a period of "relative tolerance" during the early Middle Ages, to be superseded by one of repression in the High Middle Ages (Harf-Lancner, *Les Fées au Moyen Age* 7).

A plethora of fairies appeared in a variety of literary cycles in the twelfth century: the *Roman de Thèbes,* based on the writings of antiquity; the Breton cycle, depicting the marvels of enchantment, as in *Tristan and Iseut;* Chrétien de Troyes's *Erec and Yvain;* and the *Lais* of Marie de France: *Lanval,* a knight loved by a fairy, and *Guingamor,* who, while hunting in a forest, wounded a white hind, a genuine fairy in disguise. Tales of erotically motivated fairies featured these supernatural creatures falling in love with mortal men; imposition of fairies' interdicts on the relationships also became stylish. Other fairies identified with witches concocted unholy brews; still others entered both oral or written domains thanks to transcriptors motivated by a desire to spread Christianity.

Ambiguities and contradictions revolving around the origin of fairies have been, as previously mentioned, hotly debated. Were fairies remnants of supernatural figures preoccupying priest/philosophers in the Egyptian mystery schools? Or descendants of Greek and Roman Fates? Could they, like their possible ancestors, predict destinies in general, and those of children in particular? Had they the power to enchant? Had they been sent by God to intervene in earthly affairs? By nymphs? sorceresses? giants? or other types of fantastic beings? Had they been protectors of knights in armor, as in *Erec and Enide?* Had humans sacrificed to them? Had their mysterious presences been the object of tree or stone cults, or of cults centered around other venerated objects?

For the opening chapter of this book, I have chosen, I believe, one of the most fascinating and deeply moving French fairy tales—Jean d'Arras's *The Romance of Mélusine* (1392) (3). Not only does the text contain a plethora of fairy tale elements—love pacts, metamorphoses, fountains, forests, hunts, murders, births, and miraculous architectural wonders—but it narrates the fulfillment, albeit temporary, of the experience of love.

Oral and written folklore and tales of wonder of the sixteenth century differed in emphasis from those of the Middle Ages: extremes of fantasy, imagination, spirituality, symbology, and beauty were played down. With few exceptions, the modus operandi of Renaissance tale tellers, although preoccupied with spiritual matters, increasingly involved earth matters, empirical factors, the here and now. For these reasons, I have—perhaps unfortunately—omitted analysis of a fairy tale from the sixteenth century.

Mention, however, must be made of the great François Rabelais (1490–1533), humorist and satirist, physician, monk, lawyer, scientist, and philologist, whose legendary boisterous and licentious giant Gargantua, and his son Pantagruel, were movers of mountains, scoopers of rivers, displacers of megaliths. Levity, satire, irony, and a unique feel for humor interspersed with profoundly philosophical, political, religious, and scientific asides, transformed his work into something much more than a compendium of the legendary aspects of the world of giants.

A Norman, Noël du Faïl, purveyor of popular culture for adults and author of *Rustic Tales* (1548), was less smitten with the glimmer of magically oriented deeds than with the domain of reality. As Counselor to Parliament in Brittany, Faïl enjoyed regaling his listeners at evening gatherings with strange occurrences attributed to extraterrestrials, but he was more impressive in his presentations of daily happenings. Bonaventure des Périers, humanist and poet, and protégé of Marguerite de Navarre, was believed to have authored tales and short stories (1588), among which was a "very altered" version of the Cinderella cycle (Delarue, *Le Conte populaire français* 17).

By the seventeenth century, the more educated higher classes having made their needs manifest, literary genres such as the inordinately lengthy novel *The Great Cyrus* and tales of wonder flourished. Mme de Sévigné, quoting her daughter in a letter (6 Aug. 1677), recounted the enjoyment of the ladies of Versailles at their get-togethers as they listened to tales revolving around the peregrinations of fairies, among other supernatural beings. Even "the austere Colbert" took pleasure in the relating of fairy tales and the miraculous events associated with them during social gatherings (Storer, *La Mode des contes de fées* 13).

While fairy tales were fare for adults in the seventeenth century, the "association of folk- and fairy tales with an archetypal story-telling for children was an integral part of the salon game" (Seifert, *Fairy Tales, Sexuality, and Gender in France* 45). Written mostly by and for the *mondain,* fairy tales evolved within the framework of the parlor game. Witty and polished, these narratives were intended to charm and entertain guests at receptions. Their publication was effected in "waves": the first, from 1690 to 1715; the second, from 1722 until 1758. The more than 250 fairy tales published in seven-

teenth- and eighteenth-century France included such well-known works as *Beauty and the Beast, Little Red Riding Hood*, and *Sleeping Beauty*. Because these works were designed to suit the needs of sophisticated adults, it may come as no surprise to learn of the publication of a forty-volume collection of tales, *Le Cabinet des fées* (1785–1789) (Barchilon, *Le Conte merveilleux français de 1690 à 1790* 9).

Outside of the illustrious Charles Perrault—whose *Donkey-Skin, Sleeping Beauty,* and *Bluebeard* have been chosen for analysis in this book—mention may be made of François de la Mothe-Fénelon and Claude-Prosper Crébillon, two writers less known for their fairy tales than for their other works. The seventeenth century, however, may boast of a plethora of highly sophisticated female writers of this genre: Charlotte-Rose Caumont de La Force, Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier de Villandon, and Henriette-Julie Murat, to mention but a few. I have chosen Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy's *Bluebird* for scrutiny. While dramatizing and analyzing their fabulations in delicate and precise classical prose, their intent in many cases was to entertain and to educate their listeners and/or their readers and encourage them to draw moral lessons from the tales. The interweaving of ethical contents into their narratives, however, in no way detracted from the wit, spiciness, and enchantment of their captivating writings (Robert, *Le Conte fées littéraire en France* 8).

Since women in the seventeenth century were sequestered for the most part in their homes—the better to fulfill household obligations including those of breeding—feminists have commented on the fact that their importance as authors of fairy tales did not, strangely enough, diminish their reputations as writers, even though the fairy tale genre was considered inferior to the novel, poetry, and essay. Because of this perceived low status, fairy tales posed little threat to male writers, so the men did not bother to criticize the female writers severely enough to damage their reputations.

Women such as Mme d'Aulnoy found themselves in the position of being obliged to earn a living via their pen. Being forced to face the vagaries of life encouraged her and some of the other ladies mentioned above to firm up their yearnings, to draw on their principles and philosophical credos as they took pen in hand. Their serious use of the fairy tale genre was definitely intended for adults. Until the latter part of the seventeenth century, fairy tales as we know them today were not geared to the entertainment of children. Indeed, it was Mme Le Prince de Beaumont, the author of *Beauty and the Beast,* who was considered responsible for inaugurating children's literature in France (Seifert, "Fairy Tales," in Sartori, ed., *The Feminist Encyclopedia of Literature* 199).

By the eighteenth century, the social climate had so altered in France that women could no longer boast of having authored the preponderance of

fairy tales. While the tales of Denis Diderot, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Jacques Cazotte, Claude-Prosper Crébillon, and Voltaire had trappings of the supernatural, these authors aimed their humor and satire at adults, their intent for the most part being to destabilize their readers by debunking religious and political institutions. Cerebrality, satire, irony, and sexually explicit scenes characterize Diderot's *The White Bird,* which has been chosen for analysis in this volume. His images and cataloguing of distinctive truths would have been highly offensive to the "pure in heart" if he had published the work during his lifetime; he wisely secreted this tale among his other private unpublished papers. Not to the same degree but still shockingly licentious was Rousseau's fairy tale, *The Fantastic Queen,* which likewise will be discussed in this book.

Generalizing, it might be fitting to suggest that nineteenth-century France returned to a spiritual/mystico/romantico fairy tale genre, reminiscent to some extent of the deft and imaginative fantasies of the Middle Ages. Identified frequently with what was known as the "poetic principle," fairies in postrevolutionary France were conjured up to fullfill the dreams and yearnings of writers. That these supernatural beings reflected the author's own *état d'ame* is a given, as shown by the following two works, which were chosen for scrutiny in this volume. To heal or to destroy a young lad who was fighting insanity was the thrust of Charles Nodier's *The Crumb Fairy.* The resurrection of a Muse to inspire a protagonist whose creative principle was on the wane was the focus of Théophile Gautier's *Arria Marcella.*

Women writers, such as Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, turned their attention to children in *Contes en prose* and *Le livre des mères et des enfants*, among others. Similarly, the Russian-born emigrée to France, Sophie Rostopchine, countess of Ségur, wrote nearly exclusively for children. Her *New Fairy Tales*, although riddled with extreme moral and spiritual conservatism—and with scenes of brutality, as evidenced in *Rosette,* a work I have elected to explicate in this volume—enjoyed great appeal in her day, and still does for some contemporary readers. Nonetheless, her writings, paradoxically, also underscore a need for female independence, even pointing to ways of avoiding prearranged marriages and of retaining doweries.

While George Sand may be considered the very antithesis of the conservative Ségur, she had deeply maternal, artistic, and socially oriented interests, and she lauded family values, love marriages, and harmonious relationships between parents and children. *The Castle of Crooked Peak,* chosen for discussion because of its gem-like quality and healthful cast, was written for and told to her daughter and grandchildren.

An analysis of Maurice Maeterlinck's metaphysically oriented *Pelléas and Mélisande* is included in our volume for its dramatic rendering of the

birth and burgeoning of love and of the destruction of its protagonists by this same passion.

Although fairy tales are still in vogue in the twentieth century, lovers of the genre rely to a great extent on the reprinting of traditional titles, such as *Blue Beard, Cinderella,* and *Tom Thumb*. Nonetheless, some well-known writers, namely, Guillaume Apollinaire, Paul Valéry, Jean Cocteau, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Jean Giraudoux, Romain Weingarten, Michel Tournier, and Andrée Chedid have used this genre as well. Cocteau's reworked film version of Mme Le Prince de Beaumont's *Beauty and the Beast,* and Andrée Chedid's *The Suspended Heart*, dating back to ancient Egyptian times, have been singled out for probing for their striking relevance to today's readers—young and old.

What of the future? Has the reality of interplanetary travel—formerly Sci Fi—usurped the dominion of fairy tales? Or have they commingled? May beautiful or handsome, kind, and gentle fairies—or their opposites—live someplace in outer space? After all, haven't they always been implicit in our psyches? Like astronauts, readers may enter space, their own inner cosmos, and enjoy the luxury—or terror—of meandering about amid their own incredible fabulations!

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PART

# I

# THE MIDDLE AGES

## FEUDALISM AND "LA SOCIÉTÉ COURTOISE"

THE MIDDLE AGES, A PERIOD WHICH EXTENDED from about 400 to 1500, was breathtaking in its intellectual, scientific, political, social, commercial, and artistic achievements. Feudal leaders, having actively extended and consolidated their power in surrounding domains, brought fiefdoms into existence. They contracted with farmers to render them service in exchange for protection from marauders and invaders. As fiefs became hereditary and great landlords sought to increase their rights, political balance altered, leading ever so relentlessly to the diminution of the king's authority. Meanwhile, fortified stone castles and monasteries, abbeys, and houses of worship dotted the landscape.

Monastic life injected not only a note of stability in the politically uncertain climate of Europe, but was instrumental in preserving learning. Religious orders, namely, the Benedictines of Cluny (tenth century), the Cistercians (twelfth century), and Dominicans (thirteenth century), were known for their classical and patristic learning, for their asceticism, and for their high moral standards. Theologians and philosophers, such as Abélard and Hugh of Saint-Victor, taught at cathedral schools in Paris, which, thanks to the efforts of Robert de Sorbon, grew into the University of Paris. The resulting climate of intense intellectual, architectural, musical, and artistic fervor attracted other European teachers of note—Alexander of Hales, Bonaventura, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas. Paris became not only the capital of France, but the mercantile center of northern Europe as well.

Religious fervor, in consort with the great building boom, led to the erection of memorable Gothic structures such as the spectacular cathedrals of Chartres, Rheims, Amiens, and Beauvais, and the choir of Saint-Denis (1140) in the royal abbey near Paris. Christianity became the chief unifying force following the disarray created by invading Saracens, Norsemen, Magyars, Germans, and Anglo-Saxons. As a result, popes such as Gregory VII and Innocent III acquired inordinate secular authority.

The notion of chivalry, having allied itself with military, political, and religious institutions, paved the way for what has been alluded to as "divinely inspired violence," or the Crusades. Pope Urban II, motivated to a great extent by St. Augustine's writings, preached the first Crusade in l095 at the Council of Clermont. Ostensibly aimed at reconquering the Holy Land, the Crusades, lasting even until the latter part of the sixteenth century, turned into bloody massacres of Muslims and Jews, and pillagings of lands for material gain. The Black Plague, thought to have been brought to Europe by returning Crusaders, introduced the deadliest of dismal times to France. The Hundred Years' War, the name appended to military battles waged between England and France from 1337 to 1453, resulted in the latter's devastation.

The emergence of a new feminine mystique was in the process of altering psychological and societal dividing lines between the sexes. The patriarchal nature of medieval chivalry, with its emphasis on military feats and male friendships as attested to in such epics as The Song of Roland (eleventh century), was in the process of yielding its hegemony to a new zeitgeist. The increasingly popular courtly romances and love songs delivered by celebrated troubadours, such as Bernard de Ventadorn (twelfth century) answered an underlying need for increased equity in love relationships. Although hailing from the Limousin, Bernard spent much time at the court of Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122–1204). An intelligent, strong-minded woman, Eleanor married Louis VII only to have her sacramental bonds annulled, after which she wed Henry, duke of Normandy, later Henry II of England. Due to his infidelities, their relationship grew strained, and Eleanor established her own court at Poitiers in 1170. Known as the center of artistic creativity, it drew under Eleanor's aegis such great figures as Wace, Benoit de Sainte-Maure, and Chrétien de Troyes. The emphasis placed on courtly manners encouraged the burgeoning and later preeminence of courtly love, with its special ritualized code. True love, or the fin d'amors doctrine, identified mainly with Christianity, motivated lovers to emulate godlike morality, aspire toward virtue, and devote themselves to the service of Lady Mary. The celebration of the oneness of woman's *celestial* and *earthly* qualities increased the popularity of an already growing cult of the Virgin. Fals'amors, or false love, on the other

hand, the lot of the majority, was said to be plagued by jealousy, hypocrisy, and vacillation (Fierz-David, *The Dream of Poliphilo* 14).

Just as a lover submitted to his lady, a knight to his lord, so the Christianized and sublimized female was bound by convention as well. While such behavioral patterns underscored the nobility of love, the at times unattainable lady in question was expected nonetheless to yield some favor(s) to her lover. Nonetheless, so strict had the codes become that Andreas Capellanus's *De Arte Honeste Amandi* (twelfth century) became the standard treatise on courtly love. In cases of infraction or blatant disregard of etiquette, the courts based their arguments and verdicts on this volume. It comes as no surprise that the verdicts of these special love courts led to the glorification of women by heroes such as Tristan, Arthur, Launcelot, Yvain, and Perceval. No longer simply a source of sexual gratification, nor merely a means of fulfilling their childbearing functions, the woman's new image included a fresh understanding of esthetic, moral, and social principles—behooving the lover to devote himself to her as a "perfect lady" (Harding, 1973, *Psychic Energy* 104 ff.).

The growing yearning for feelings of relatedness and understanding between male and female led to a revision of moral principles: the male was required to exercise great control in sexual and family matters. No longer were instinctuality or immediate gratification compatible with the new code of ethics. Instead, a sense of equality in love relationships had taken root by the fourteenth century. While courtly etiquette required the banishing of brute force except in battle, automatic and unthinking behavioral patterns were equally unacceptable. A valiant nobleman and/or husband had to make certain he had gained dominion—or was capable of doing so—over himself by moderating rather than by being enslaved to his sexual impulses. An increasing demand for commitment and responsibility in relationships was anticipated by both partners as well. Even as a husband was expected to serve a wife, she was assigned similar authority over her own and her beloved's physical and spiritual well-being.

In many instances, Jean d' Arras's *Romance of Mélusine* points to moral, religious, social, and esthetic questions dating back to a period extending roughly from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries, when faith and a sense of chivalry reigned in France, but an undercurrent of melancholy—of life's transience—may be noted as well. Although living hundreds of years before Jean d'Arras, the sixth-century Roman philosopher, Boethius, prophetically conveyed the dominant mood implicit in Jean d'Arras's romance: "The beauty of things is fleet and swift, more fugitive than the passing of flowers in the spring" (Eco, *Art and Beauty* 9; from Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* III.).

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CHAPTER

1

# Melusine

## "The Beauty of Things is Fleet and Swift"

Variations of the story line and theme of Jean d'Arras's deeply moving *The Romance of Mélusine* (1392 or 1393) date back to ancient times. Associations have been made between the French protagonist, Mélusine, and the Vedic heroine Urvasi, a beautiful and voluptuous Apsara, or heavenly nymph; the Japanese Shinto Toyo-tama, daughter of the sea god, married to Hoori, deity of the hunt; to Psyche, Eros's wife, as depicted in Apuleius's *Golden Ass,* and others. Be it in Jean d'Arras's version of the Mélusine legend, or others appearing during the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and even prior to that time, couples who respected the pact into which they entered prior to their wedding were awarded joy, love, fulfillment, and prosperity. Violation of the contract cast misfortune and suffering on both.

### Ectypal Analysis

Duke Jean de Berry, count of Poitou and brother of Charles VI of France, ostensibly to amuse his sister, Marie, duchess of Bar, had commissioned Jean d'Arras to write *The Romance of Mélusine* (Nodot, *Histoire de Mélusine* vff.). In his prologue, the author cited a similar tale written in prose two centuries earlier by the monk Gervais of Tilbury (c. 1152–1234), first, a protégé of Henry II of England, then entering into the service of Otto IV of Brunswick. Mention must also be made of the rhymed octosyllabic version

of *The Romance of Mélusine* composed by Coudrette in c. 1401 for Jean Larchevêque, lord of Parthenay.

Poitiers, the ancient capital of the province of Poitou, was the seat of much of the action in *Mélusine*. A stronghold of orthodoxy under its first bishop, the fourth-century St. Hilary of Poitiers, the area was also known for its monasteries, Roman amphitheaters and baths, the baptistery of St. John (fourth to twelfth centuries), the Cathedral of St. Pierre (twelfth to fourteenth centuries), and the royal residence (twelfth to fifteenth centuries). Plundered by the Normans (ninth century), and twice by the English (1152–1204, 1360–1372), Poitiers was nonetheless as previously noted, the location of Eleanor of Aquitaine's brilliant court. Indeed, certain critics maintain that Eleanor of Aquitaine had been the inspiration for Jean d'Arras's protagonist, Mélusine.

Some scholars whose names appear in the vast literature on Mélusine theorize that the tale was strictly of Poitevin origin; others, that it was of Scythian provenance, having been brought to the West by returning Crusaders. These maintain that Mélusine (or Mélisende) is to be identified with one of the daughters of Baudoin II, king of Jerusalem (Marchant, *La Légende de Mélusine. Jean d'Arras* vii).

Jean d'Arras is divided into two parts: the first, focusing on Présine, and the second, on her daughter, Mélusine, the ancestress of the famed Lusignan family of Poitou. The stirring lives of these two hauntingly mysterious women veer from dream scheme to actuality, their earthly trajectories taking them from deeply forested areas to cleared terrains, from shadowy caves to mountainous heights and flat lands. Nor are the psyches or physical makeups of these two extraordinarily beautiful feminine figures clear cut. Présine, endowed with prescience, is blind to the realities of human nature. Like her mother, Mélusine is intuitive and provided with inner sight which, when subjectively motivated, dims her thinking principle, blinding her to otherwise evident truths. Unlike her mother—and most surprisingly—she takes on the form of a snake from her waist down, but only on Saturdays!

Due to the changing status in love relationships, as has been mentioned, women were acquiring greater equality vis-à-vis their husbands. Both Présine and Mélusine in Arras's *The Romance of Mélusine* (referred to henceforth as *Mélusine)* imposed ethical and social adjustments on their partners. Might their comportment be labeled intransigeant? Just as knights of old had to learn to curb their ardor for fighting, hunting, and for sexual matters in general, so increasing restrictions were foisted on husbands in *Mélusine,* heightening tension in these changing times. On occasion, both partners gained physical and spiritual support from each other, each cognizant of the love, feeling, and respect due them as individuals and as an ideal/real couple. At other moments, mercurial changeableness prevailed, with dire results!

Présine and Mélusine, as well as the members of their families, were firm believers in Christianity and adherents of church ritual, yet were bogged down in superstition and taboos. Animism, a strikingly important factor in *Mélusine,* opens readers up to a universe in which natural phenomena are not only considered living entities, but are endowed with souls that, under certain circumstances, exist apart from their material bodies. The mélange of attributes of earth people and supernatural beings was acceptable not only to the masses in the Middle Ages, but also to certain highly placed individuals and, frequently, to the clergy. Hadn't Godefroy de Bouillon (1061–1100), leader of the first Crusade, prided himself on descent from a fairy on his maternal side? And hadn't Henry II Plantagenet claimed ancestry from King Arthur? Richard the Lion Heart asserted proudly that "the sons of demons" had been responsible for the birth of his dynasty (*Jean d'Arras*, *Le Roman de Mélusine*. Mis en français moderne par Michèle Perret 9).

Occult yet vitreous, audible although silent, static despite their motility, Présine and Mélusine were, like many archetypal figures, a complex of opposites who, although living in the Middle Ages, survive in our contemporary city-jungles and dwindling forests.

## ARCHETYPAL ANALYSIS

### Part I: Présine

Our tale opens as the valiant King Elinas of Albania (the ancient name for Scotland), recent widower and father of several children—the eldest of which is Nathas (Mataquas)—has gone out hunting. Seeking distraction after the death of his beloved wife, he makes his way on horseback ever more deeply into a thickly forested area near the sea, loses all sense of direction and of time, realizes he is thirsty, and stops to drink at a fountain. No sooner does he approach the fountain than he hears a voice "more melodious than any siren" (*Mélusine* 18). The virtually hypnotized Elinas first believes he is listening to the music of angels on high. Deeply touched by its tender quality, he follows it to their source. Dismounting from his horse, which he secures to a tree, he walks closer to the fountain and notices the most beautiful woman he has ever seen standing next to it. He observes her from behind a cluster of trees. So mesmerized is he by the vision that he does not know whether he is awake or dreaming. Having forgotten his thirst and his hunt, he sinks ever more deeply into a state of seeming somnolence—or a hypnotic trance state—and awakens with a start to find his two dogs frolicking about him. Moments later, both his memory and his thirst return. He walks toward the fountain,

drinks its waters, is greeted by the lady, and is told her name—Présine. Soon her valet arrives to spirit her away. She mounts her horse and leaves.

So overwhelmed is Elinas by the aura of "The Lady of the Fountain," that, after her departure, he follows her almost mechanically to her forest retreat. The two meet again. Much to his surprise, she knows his name, and asks him what brings him to the forest. He responds by requesting her love and good will. Not easily persuaded by amorous intent, she replies forcefully, that his intentions must be honest, for "no man will make her his mistress" (*Mélusine* 22). Aware that he is deeply smitten, she considers it appropriate to impose her conditions. If he seeks to marry her, she tells him, he must promise never to visit nor to look at her during her lying-in period. He swears to abide by her interdict. They marry and live out a profound love relationship. Not only is she a perfect wife, but she even surprises and delights Elinas's "people" by her wise and ethical rule of her household domain (*Mélusine* 9). Only Mataquas, Elinas's son by his first wife, despises her. In time, she gives birth to three daughters, Mélusine, Mélior and Palatine.

**The Hunt.** Hunting, one of the most popular sports of medieval times, held special allure for knights, and the bereaved Elinas was no exception. Not only had the art of the hunt become a test of physical dexterity and endurance, it was of spiritual and psychological value as well; hunting was understood as the symbolic trapping and killing of the animal within each being. Only after expelling the beast within, or, paradigmatically, the aggressive instincts buried inside an individual, could one experience feelings of redemption. If the hunter Elinas was successful in catching his prey—the animal within—he would become master of his "mount" and would be able to encourage the rule of the rational and/or conscious. A new and more fruitful orientation of his life might very well lead him to his center, bringing balance and harmony to his now empty and one-sided world. As on a journey or pilgrimage, a knight such as Elinas, having entered the forest on horseback, was being put to the test: that is, to the search, or the quest (Lat. *quaestus,* and "question," *quaestio*, the two being associated in this connection). Like Druid priests, poets, and knights of old, Elinas, the hunter entered his shadowy forest world on horseback, happened upon a fountain, and suddenly grew thirsty for want of its spiritually/psychologically nutritive regenerative power.

**Forest.** Since time immemorial forests have been considered the habitat of an ever-nourishing, ever-thriving, ever-relational, and at times ever-voracious lunar force, that of the Great Mother. Fertility, in all of its colorations and manifestations—verdant green grasses, red, mauve, or yellow flowering or non-flowering plants, along with molds, mildew, and rot—luxuriate chaoti-

cally in her darkened domain. Identified at times with the nonregulated and hidden womb-like *unconscious,* the forest stands antipodally to the consciously cultivated solar-fed garden with its ordered, planned, and restricted vegetation. As the great dispenser of rain and water, the forest—or "green world"—and the animals thriving within its parameters, exists and flourishes thanks to the sustaining power of the Great Mother, as lunar force. Associated with the most primitive levels of the feminine psyche, this protective, relatively obscure maternal shelter holds many a lonely wanderer in its thrall.

Even as the forest's uncultivated growth has become a paradigm for the regressive spheres of the psyche, its nonlinear time schemes and rhythmical behavioral patterns follow their own quixotic motifs as well. Understandably, then, did oracles, sybils, mediums, and other supernatural figures—including fairies—choose this relatively obscure and uninhabited realm to murmur their ambiguous prognostications. In this darkened liminal, no-time sphere, prophets, seers, and world creators were known to have lost their direction or rational outlook, thereby allowing them the luxury of tapping into their transpersonal spheres—or collective unconscious.

**VISION.** Visionaries, poets, philosophers, theologians, scientists, seers, and artists have for centuries chosen remote and sparsely inhabited realms to allow their resplendent inner materializations to take on concretion. Elinas's visionary experience, having given him access to his collective unconscious, thrust a much-yearned for archetypal image into his mind's eye. Overwhelmed by the sight of the beautiful woman standing next to the fountain, he felt himself inexplicably imbued with a sense of lightness and well-being. So powerfully had these sensations encapsulated his psyche, that he seemed to have fallen into a remarkably deep slumber, losing contact with reality. Was this the path chosen by the Great Mother to assuage his sorrow? By severing his ties with the empirical domain, was she ushering him into deeper subliminal dimensions, inviting him to cohabit with eternal and universal spheres? Having blocked out Elinas's reason and concomitant feelings of loneliness, sorrow, and abandonment, the Great Mother had created a fertile field for his trance state, which served to release him from the troubling dichotomies in the differentiated world and the weight of his obsessive feelings of bereavement. Now capable of communicating with natural forces, he was attuned to his own matrix: that womblike, containing, and "dynamic aspect of the unconscious" which has the capacity to move and to "act on its own accord," and is even responsible for the composition of dreams (Franz, *On Divination and Synchronicity* 20). As long as the "no-man's land" of the collective unconscious prevailed, Elinas's diminished intensities and reduced agitations, virtually cut him off from the domain of discord.

Explaining the "dynamic" aspects of the unconscious and its active participation in the composition of dreams, Franz writes:

> One could say that composing dreams while one sleeps is an aspect of the spirit; some master spirit or mind composes a most ingenious series of pictures which, if one can decipher them, seem to convey a highly intelligent message. That is a dynamic manifestation of the unconscious, where the unconscious energetically does something on its own, it moves and creates on its own, and that is what Jung defines as spirit. (Franz 20)

When finally Elinas did awaken, or emerged from his inner-forest world, he was so disoriented that he was hard pressed to decide whether he had seen an actual woman before him, or whether, as previously mentioned, his vision of her was the outcome of a waking or sleeping dream. Either way, while giving birth to his vision, he also internalized a much-yearned-for *anima* or soul image which would serve to inject a new life principle into his depleted affective psyche.

Both his entry into the forest and his emerging vision of Présine may be looked upon as the outset of an initiation (Lat, *initiatus,* "gone within") ceremony, a descent into the Self, defined psychologically as a submersion into the total psyche, or in religious parlance, into God. Elinas's rite of passage had, therefore, taken him from one level of consciousness to another. His new sense of connectedness, experienced as a *katabasis,* or inner descent, would encourage him to link up with both his own personal past and with the primordial existence of humanity. His participation in the forest's mysteries concretized his vision and invested it with broader perspectives: new qualities garnished his formerly limited understanding of truth and beauty.

The altering of one's concepts following a traumatic visionary experience is in keeping with the propensity of medieval theologians and philosophers to link ethics with form. Indeed, as experienced by Elinas, the two had become virtually interchangeable. According to the thirteenth-century English Franciscan scholar, Alexander of Hales, "[T]ruth was the disposition of form in relation to the internal character of a thing; beauty was the disposition of form in relation to its external character" (Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* 23. From Hales, *Summa Theologica* I, no.3).

The greater were the feelings of love Elinas projected onto *form*, or onto his anima figure standing at the fountain, the more powerful was the hold this image would have on his psyche. Indeed, Présine's power, even at the onset of his visionary experience, had succeeded in routing him from his hunt. Not that his life force had been depleted by his foray into his uncon-

scious—rather, the reverse had taken place. Her image, as associated with the fountain, may be said to have flowed into him, thereby renewing, nourishing, and sustaining his entire being.

The Greeks might have defined Elinas's sudden feelings for the feminine power standing before him as a case of overwhelming lovesickness, an example of Eros's powerful arrows having pierced his flesh. But his was an endopsychic experience, one "belonging to the subject," whose effect on the spirit became "transsubjective," that is, appearing as if from some spiritual or spirit world (Franz, *Projection and Recollection in Jungian Psychology* 34).

**MUSIC.** The melodious voice of Elinas's vision-lady produced in him nearly endless varieties of resonating pulsations, which increased his awareness of the myriad foreign elements in his mind's eye. The combination of the visual image and the oral sonorities altered the components of his psyche, reaching deeply into his inner void—that area of his subliminal sphere which had remained vacant following the death of his first wife. As the stirrings of the tonalities filled his inner vacuum, they catalyzed in him a need to involve himself with the apparently gentle woman appearing to him in his vision.

The mood-altering effect of the pitches, amplitudes, and rhythms flowing into him, moreover, aroused his body/psyche/mind complex to what we would today call a "high," actuating unknown contents within the folds of the psyche. Elinas's vulnerability and need of healing had virtually transformed him into a kind of receptacle, attracting him to the musical strains issuing forth from "The Lady of the Fountain." A parallel may be drawn between Elinas's reaction to music and the effect of the tones emanating from Orpheus's lyre—an instrument that was deemed to have the power of mesmerizing animals and moving stones.

The more Elinas was exposed to what he considered to be celestial harmonies, the greater was his devotion to his soul figure. Like hallowed tonal phrases of medieval music, so Présine's verbal sonorities drew Elinas's feelings toward supernal spheres, encouraging him to identify the strains he heard with angelic voices. His associations reflect St. Hildegarde of Bingen's "'symphonic' organization of nature, and how the experience of the Absolute unfolded in the manner of music" (Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* 36), as well as Boethius's notations on the connection between musical modes and their rhythms, which affects people in various ways. Boethius cited the Spartans who claimed that certain sonorities modified their souls, an effect which we may identify as changes in their moods! We may add that Pythagoreans "made use of certain lullabies to help them get to sleep, and when they awoke they shook the sleep from their eyes with the help of music" (Eco 31). As an advocate of "the music of the spheres," had not Pythagoras

connected micro and macrocosm, soul and body, love and hate, thus uniting the disparate in transcendence? (Eco 32).

The greater the reality of Elinas's fantasy figure, the greater the increase of her saintly attributes. Having previously allied ethics and form, he now assigned to tone and cadence moral and esthetic characteristics. How such a transformation constellated in him and how it may be explained, is moot. Jung compared "the musical movement of the unconscious" to "a sort of symphony" whose dynamics still remain unfathomable (Jung, *Seminar on Dream Analysis* 440).

**Music and Sirens.** Elinas associated Présine's singing not only with the spiritual images of angels, but with the song of sirens, adding destructive sexual inuendoes to the heretofore godly ones.

As airborne and water-borne creatures, sirens allegedly were endowed at times with the heads of women, and at other instances, with their breasts. The rest of their bodies bore the shape of birds. Aristotle, Pliny, and Ovid, on the other hand, had depicted sirens as women endowed with fish or serpent tails. Of several types, many of these semi-human females were known for their mesmerizingly seductive powers. Although tantalizing the male, sirens were in all cases unable to fulfill their own or their partners' sexual desires. While Orpheus and Odysseus were said to have survived the hypnotic chants of bird-women, other navigators, less well centered did not.

The image of the siren throughout history—whether or not associated with aspects of the Great Mother Demeter/Ceres, Aphrodite/Venus/Cybele, to mention but a few—has come to indicate a handicapped physical and/or emotional condition. Because the charge for sexual failure always fell on the female, the siren image was created as a symbol of female deformity. Instead of assuming accountability for his acts, the male was forever pictured as devoured and enslaved by the female, victimized by a formidably evil temptress. Such a notion is fantasized in the biblical Book of Revelation with its depiction of the city of Babylon as woman:

> Come hither; I will shew unto thee that judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:
>
> With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication . . .
>
> . . . and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.
>
> And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: